

## **The Use of Synonyms in Parliamentary Speeches in Jordan**

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### **Abstract**

This study investigates the use of synonyms in Parliamentary speeches in Jordan and explains their main functions. Together with other important rhetorical devices used by politicians in their speeches such as repetition, metaphor, personification, rhetorical questions, and irony, synonyms were found to abound in political speeches in Jordan. More than 270 such synonyms were unveiled in only twenty speeches, which were the source of the data of the present paper. The study has revealed that the most important functions of synonyms used by politicians include emphasis and assertion, expressing emotions and feelings, praise and esteem, clarification, criticism, dissatisfaction, and others. Many synonyms have been found, however, to express no specific function and are considered redundant.

**Keywords:** emphasis, functions, political speeches, praise, rhetorical devices

**Cite as:** Bader, Y., & Badarneh, S. (2018). The Use of Synonyms in Parliamentary Speeches in Jordan. *Arab World English Journal for Translation & Literary Studies*, 2 (3).

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awejtls/vol2no3.4>

## 1. Introduction

The power of language is well-acknowledged as influential and permanent compared with other instruments of power. Indeed, some consider language as a political instrument and a key to dominating others. Lakoff (1990, p. 13) indicates that “language is power,” is a force that can create change and, therefore, must be feared and reckoned with. Even the Holy Scriptures like the Bible and the Holy Quran, with all their mighty and everlasting influence on people's lives, have been revealed in the form of language.

Politicians, whether government officials or parliamentarians, manipulate language and linguistic devices to convey various messages like emphasis, praise, warning, sharing grief, sympathy, laying blame, etc.. In politics, it is clear how language is used to convey certain functions. Mocanu (2011, p. 325) says: “The political art being essentially an art of the language, and the language in its turn gets a conscience of its own self, of the rules, of its efficiency through the political function”. Lakoff (1990) maintains that “language is politics, politics assign power, [and] power governs how people talk and how they are understood” (p. 7). A similar opinion is held by other linguists like Lemke (1995), Chudinov (2008), van Dijk (2008), Bacchi & Bonham (2014), Macias-Amoretti (2014), and Alexiyevets (2017). In this respect, politicians use a variety of formulations, expressions, specific rhetoric or an appropriate voice, i.e., a certain prosody, to facilitate reaching their goals (Freydina, 2015; Fedorev, 2016; Alexiyevets, 2017; Lee, 2017). As listeners, we can immediately recognize this type of language and differentiate it from others used by an artist, a scientist, or a medical doctor.

Political speech is characterized by the frequent and wide use of stylistic devices such as repetition, metaphor, rhetorical questions, metonymy, synonymy, and alliteration (Issers, 2011; Enyi & Chitulu, 2015; Freydina, 2015). The aim of this paper is to investigate the functions of the use of one of these devices, namely, synonyms, in political speeches, in specific parliamentary speeches in Jordan. One may easily notice the frequent occurrence of synonyms in such speeches, the functions of which may vary according to the nature of synonyms and the context in which they are used. According to the *The Oxford Companion to the English Language* (2008), speech is defined as “a usually formal occasion when a person addresses an audience often with the help of notes or prepared text”. Indeed, political speeches happen in a formal, rather than in an informal, setting, and the success of elected politicians is dependent on the effectiveness of their speeches (Schaffner, 1996; Issers, 2011; Enyi & Chitulu, 2015; Lee, 2017). Therefore, any speech must be carefully prepared to achieve its goals.

Schaffner (1996), Chudinov (2008), van Dijk (2008), and Bacchi & Bonham (2014) indicate that speeches are part of political life and are usually determined by the political membership of the speaker. These speeches can be addressed to political groups, the public or to the whole nation. The aim of the politician is to communicate his message to his or her audience and achieve a specific political function (Schaffner, 1996; Enyi & Chitulu, 2015; Lee, 2017). Beard (2000:18) points out in this regard that political ideas cannot be separated from language and language is used to shape ideas. However, Bacchi & Bonham (2014:173) contradict this position

and argue in favor of the argument that calls for "redirect[ing] attention to political analysis" with less focus on language.

Lucas (2008) divides speaking functions into three: speaking to inform, speaking to persuade and speaking on special occasions. Specifically, the purpose of informative speech is to share knowledge and ideas, and the purpose of speaking to persuade is to influence or change audience's beliefs, values, attitudes or behavior. The last type is connected to certain situations in our daily lives. All these types can be found in political speeches as well.

As normally understood, political speeches are carefully prepared so that they attract audience's attention. In these speeches the use of rhetorical devices such as repetition, metaphor, metonymy, and synonymy (Al-Hamad & Awad, 2011; Enyi and Chitulu, 2015; Lee, 2017) is frequently observed. Rhetorical devices are linguistic devices used in a figurative or non-literal sense.

Political discourse exerts a significant influence on the mind and behavior of the members of a speech community (Al-Hamad & Awad, 2011; Bacchi & Bonham, 2014). In the Arab world, more and more people are involved throughout their daily life in political actions by, for example, being asked to cast their votes in an election, watching the news on TV, reading a newspaper or simply talking with a friend about the sequences of any political event.

Arab politicians, like other people of the same occupation, use emotive expressions in their speeches as a powerful means of conveying their feelings and attitudes to the world's political issues (Al-Hamad & Awad, 2011: 151; Freydina, 2015). As Wilson (1990) states, "certainly, politicians use words and sentences in an emotive manner; it is part of their aim to create a feeling of solidarity, to arouse emotions such as fear, hate or joy." (pp. 18-19) One way to achieve this goal is the use of synonyms.

Synonymy simply refers to words that have the same meaning, for example, "big" and "large" are words which differ in sound-form but are identical or similar in meaning. Palmer (1988: 83), for instance, defines synonymy as "sameness of meaning". For Ullman (1972, p. 62), it is "one sense with several names". Synonyms have been defined by Lyons (1968, p. 440) as those which have the same sense. Harris (1973) also defines synonymy as "sameness of meaning of different expressions". For his part, Taylor (2003) finds synonymy a 'very puzzling phenomenon' and no less problematic than polysemy; he indicates, though, that synonymy has received little attention from linguists.

In the case of Arabic, it is important to note that this language is characterized by the over use of synonymous lexical items. Arab linguists, both ancient and modern, have given definitions of synonymy. Sebaweh, an ancient Arab linguist and grammarian, describes it as "two different utterances with one meaning." Ibn Jinni, another old Arab linguist, defines synonymy as "differences in words and arguments in meanings." For example, (الخليقة) (?alxaliiqa), (السجبة) (al-sajba)

(?alsajjiyya), and (الطبيعة)- (?alTabii9a) are considered equivalents to “nature” or “instinct”. (Ibn Jinni (2.188), as cited in Affaneh, 1995, p. 34).

The phenomenon of synonymy has been a subject of controversy among both European and Arab linguists. In English, for example, there are two points of view regarding synonymy: the strict point of view and the flexible one. In the strict one, linguists deny the very existence of synonymous lexical items and claim that no two words are identical in all types of meaning (Bolinger, 1977; Bloomfield, 1932 among others). In the flexible view, on the other hand, linguists believe in the existence of synonymy. They state that one word can sometimes be freely substituted for another which has the same meaning. Still, those who believe in the existence of synonymy also believe that the existence of what is called “absolute synonymy” is very rare. Palmer (1976:66) maintains that there are no real or absolute synonyms, i.e. that two words have exactly the same meaning.

For Arabic, one group takes synonymy for granted and believes or justifies its existence with the richness of the Arabic language (Al- Saleh, 1960, pp. 292-301, cited in Shehab, 2009). Another team or group of linguists reject the notion of synonymy, and claim the existence of differences or “Furuuq”. The term “difference” here refers to the different use of similar words. (Abdellah, 2003). This team believes in the slight differences between synonymous lexical items.

It is widely believed, however, that the idea of perfect synonymy both in Western and Eastern linguistics is somehow rejected. Palmer (1976) argues that it would be unlikely that two words with exactly the same meaning would both survive in a language. For his part, Newmark (1981) distinguishes between two types of synonymy. The first is grammatical synonymy, where two sentences of different syntactic structure have the same meaning ( e.g. a- Shakespeare composed great plays and b- Great plays were composed by Shakespeare (Shehab, 2009, p. 872); in (a) the focus is on Shakespeare, but in (b) the focus is on “Great plays”, yet the two sentences still have the same proposition). The second type is lexical synonymy, where different lexical items share certain semantic properties and refer to the same topic.

Shunnaq (1989) distinguishes five sub-types of lexical synonymy according to their degree of similarity in meaning, as shown in figure 1:

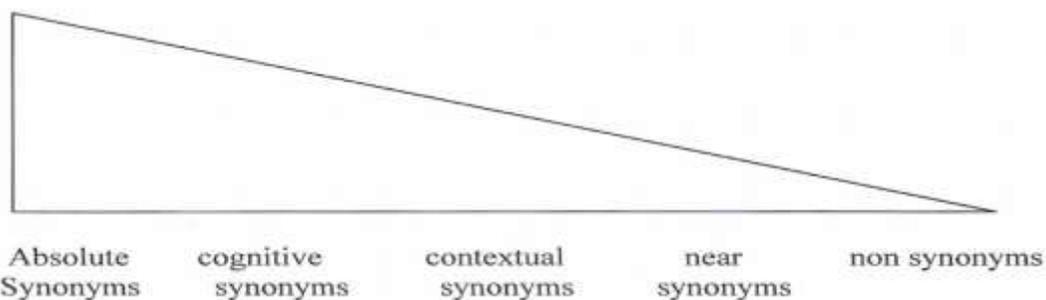


Figure 1: Degrees of Synonymy

The first level in the figure is an indication of antonymy or oppositeness of meaning. The second level represents near-synonyms: words that are almost synonyms but not quite. (Shehab, 2009). Lyons (1977) defines near-synonyms as “Expressions that are more or less similar but not identical in meaning.” An example is:

“Answer” and “reply”

(Rababah, 1995, p. 16)

The third level represents two lexical items that can be interchangeable in a certain context. Lyons (1977, p. 452) calls them “context-dependent synonyms.” The Arabic words:

/qiyuud wa Huduud/ (i.e. restrictions and limitations) قيود وحدود are examples, as shown in the following:

a. الحدود بين الاقطار العربية من صنع الاستعمار

/?alHuduud bayna ?ala?qtaar ?al9arbiyyah min sun9 ?al?isTi9maar/ “The borders between Arab countries are the result of colonialism.”

b. وضع الشرطي القيود في يد اللص

/waDa9a ?alshurTiyy ?alqiyuuda fii yaddi ?alliS/

“The policeman handcuffed the thief.”

Now consider the two lexical items in the following context:

نريد العلم النافع منفتحة له الأبواب على مصراعيها دون تمييز ولا قيود ولا حدود خاصة الدراسة الجامعية.

/nuriidu ?al9ilma ?alnafi9 munfatiHa lahu ?al?abwaabu 9ala miSra9ayha duuna tamiiz wala qiyuud wala Huduud xaaSah ?aldirasah ?aljami9iyyah/.

"We want the benefits of science for which the door should be widely open without discrimination, limitations and restrictions especially at the level university education." (Obeidat, 1992, p. 11).

It is clear that the two lexical items "qiyuud wa Huduud" are contextually synonyms in the last example.

The fourth level represents cognitive synonyms. According to Shehab (2009, p. 873), when they are intershifting in a sentence, these preserve their truth condition but may change the expressive meaning of the sentences. Examples are:

"قنوط ويأس" (despair) /qunut wa ya?s/

"ريح ورياح" (winds) /riiH wa riyaah/

"يحسد ويغبط" (to swear) /yaHlif wa yaqsim/

"غيث ومطر" (rain) /ghaith wa maTar/

"أليم وموجع" (painful) /?aliim wa muuji9/

(Shehab, 2009, p. 873)

The last level is absolute synonyms; these represent an exactly identical meaning shared by two lexical items. Example "جاء / أتى" /jaa?a / ?ata/. (come), and "رأى / أبصر" - /ra?aa / ?abSara/, (see). (Rababah, 1995, p. 14).

## 2. Functions of Synonyms

If there are such differences between any two similar expressions, why is it the case that writers, especially in literature, and people in every day life communication use different words to mean the same thing? Some of the reasons behind the use of synonymy are the following: (Ullman, 1972)

1. To hear good words in succession.
2. Poets use synonyms motivated by the exigencies of meter.
3. To produce a contrasting effect, either serious or humorous.
4. To correct one's use of words when one wishes to replace a word by a more appropriate one.
5. To formulate thoughts and ideas, especially by poets.

It is clear from the previous functions that synonymy is generally used for stylistic purposes rather than for real need for different words to refer to the same object or idea.

In Arabic, synonyms and other rhetorical devices such as antonymy can be repeated to create a cohesive link between different segments of the text (Lahlali, n.d.). They can be used to serve specific functions and purposes; however, in politics the success of a politician's speech is dependent on the effectiveness of this speech. Therefore, the speech is done in a way that should attract audience's attention. Below are discussed some of the functions served by political speeches:

### a. Praise and hope

Consider the following example:

"يا أشرف الناس وأكرم الناس وأطهر الناس"

Oh most honorable people, most generous people and the most righteous people (Speech 29, July 2007).

In the above example, Hezbollah's leader, Hasan Nasrallah's praise of the Lebanese people is clearly demonstrated in the underlined near-synonyms, أشرف، أكرم، أطهر. Consider another example:

"إلا ينصر من الله وعون من الله وتأييد من الله سبحانه وتعالى"

A victory could not have been achieved without God's help, without God's aid, without God's support. (Speech 22, September 2006).

Nasrallah repeats the synonyms *بعون*, *بتأييد*, *بنصر* to refer to divine support and assistance, seeking to link his religious belief to the outcome of the conflict.

### b. Glorification

Synonyms can be used to glorify a person or group of people as in the following example.  
"إنكم شعب عظيم، وإنكم شعب أبي، وإنكم شعب وفي، وإنكم شعب شجاع."

You are a great people, and you are a proud people, and you are a loyal people and you are a courageous people. (Speech: 22, September 2006).

Nasrallah in the above example uses four near-synonyms to glorify the Lebanese people in an attempt to motivate and rally them behind his leadership.

### c. Persuasion

In the following example, the repetition of the expression (*بضعة الآف من ابنائكم*) is used to express the speaker's satisfaction with the achievement of his fighters.

"كيف يمكن لعقل بشري ان يتصور ان بضعة الآف من ابنائكم المقاومين .... ان بضعة الآف من ابنائكم المقاومين اللبنانيين.."

"How can the human mind imagine that a few thousands of your (Lebanese) resistance sons, a few thousands of your (Lebanese) resistance sons ..." (Speech 22, September 2006)

The repetition of the words (*بضعة الآف من ابنائكم*) is used to persuade the Lebanese people that a small number of faithful fighters can defeat or at least bloody a powerful army (like the Israeli one).

(All the previous example are taken from Lahlali, undated).

## 3. Politics and Speeches

It is commonly known that politics is concerned with power: the power to make decisions, to control resources, to control people's behavior and even to control their beliefs. In politics, words can have a strong influence on attitudes; words do not only affect people's ideas but also steer their thoughts and beliefs (Jones and Peccei, 2004).

Chilton (1993) defines politics from two broad stands. On the one hand, he views politics as a "struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it" (p. 25) On the other hand, he defines politics as "a cooperation, as practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over many, influence, liberty, and the like." (p. 26) It is thus believed that politicians have their own language, and they are aware of the importance of language used to convey their messages.

Some decades ago, David Bell said that "we are all political beings in our everyday life" (Bell 1975, as cited in Chernades, 2011, p. 125 ). He added that if politics is communication, we

must study who talks to whom and what they say (Bell, 1975). Shaffner (1997, p.1, as cited in Chernades, 2011, p. 125) admits that political speeches are not a homogeneous genre, so we may find a wide spectrum of texts delivered in different situations. We may affirm that politicians try to achieve their goals through them and simplify their ideas to help create the communicative function (Lakoff, 1990, p. 4).

Newmark (1996) makes clear the field of politics and its two extreme manifestations when he says that political activity is “the most general and universal aspect and sphere of human activity and in its reflection in language it often appears in powerful terms, or in impotent jargon.” (p. 146)

Political texts or political speeches are political because they are the result or a part of politics, i.e. they have instances of language use for political activities and thus instances of political discourse (Schaffner, 1996). Such political text or discourse fulfils different functions determined by history and culture. Moreover, Schaffner (1996) argues that political speeches tend to possess many cultural- specific references such as references to history, important places or persons. According to her, a political discourse, as a subcategory of discourse, can be based on two criteria: functional and thematic. Political discourse is a result of politics and it fulfills different functions due to different political activities, political ideas and political relations. Bayram (2010) indicates that words can have strong influence on our attitudes; which word is chosen affects people’s perception of others and of themselves.

It is clear from previous studies of politics and political discourse that the main purpose of politicians’ speeches is to persuade their audience of the validity of their political claims by using various linguistic techniques like presupposition, implicature, synonyms, antonyms, and figures of speech. Bayram (2010) also affirms that the most successful way to analyze political discourse in general and political speech in particular is by relating the details of linguistic behavior to political behavior. In this case, Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA - Henceforth), can be used for describing, interpreting, analyzing and critiquing social life in text. CDA is obviously not a homogeneous model, nor a school or a paradigm, but a most shared perspective of doing linguistic, semiotic or discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1993 p. 131, cited in Bayram, 2010).

From the definition above, it is obvious that CDA tries to study the connection between textual sentences and their functions in interaction within the society. Fairclough (1992, p. 135) in this respect defines CDA as: "Discourse analysis which aims to systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between (a) discursive practice, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structure, relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles and society is itself a factor securing power and hegemony".

In what follows, we sum up the main linguistic characteristics of political speech whose ultimate goal is to persuade the audience of the righteousness or truthfulness of the politicians' claims.

### 3.1 Repetition

Repetition is one of the most obvious characteristics of political speech. Politicians normally use parallel clauses and repeat words or whole phrases within a single sentence to emphasize particular points or make sentences or phrases more memorable:

Example: *“That is Israel’s interest, Palestine’s interest, America’s interest, and the world’s interest.”* (Nguyen, 2010)

The word “interest” was repeated four times in the above speech by US President George W. Bush, in which he was emphasizing the need for a solution for the conflict between Israel and Palestine. The word was repeated to highlight the importance of peace and persuade hearers / readers of Bush's point of view.

Al-Rabbai (2008) indicates that repetition is used to produce emphasis, clarity, amplification or emotional effect. This technique may involve repetition of a variety of verbal or nonverbal elements such as words, figures of speech, shapes or gestures, metaphors or even events and senses. ( Al-Rabbai, 2008).

Another example is from US former secretary of State Colin Powell’s speech on terrorism. *“I think what this illustrates is that there is a war on terror that must be fought. Nobody’s immune. Turkey’s’ not immune. Indonesia’s not immune. Spain’s not immune. Germany, France.”*

The phrase “not immune” is repeated to emphasize Powell’s idea of the danger of terrorism everywhere. According to him, terrorism is very dangerous for nations he mentioned, so he repeats the word (not immune) to warn everybody of the dangers coming from terrorism.

Repetition is also used by politicians to justify their actions or attitudes toward certain issues. Consider the following:

*“Well, I was surprised, because we thought there would be stockpiles. David Kay thought that there would be stockpiles when he went to look for them. And the body of intelligence, the body of evidence that we had, not just the USA, the UK and other countries, the previous administration, the UN had established that Iraq had not accounted for stockpiles we know it had and we simply had every reason to believe that stockpiles were there”.*

In the example above, former US Secretary of State Colin Powell repeated the word "stockpiles" to justify the 2003 war on Iraq, because people in his country, in the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe considered these weapons as a threat to them. So, Iraq should be faced and stopped from using these weapons.

Another usage of repetition is for clarification, i.e. to rephrase or explain one’s ideas. Consider the following example from a speech by former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair:

*“it means tackling poverty in Africa and justice in Palestine as well as being in opposition to terrorism. It means an entirely different view of self-interest. It means reforming the UN so it represents the 21st century reality. It means getting the UN to understand that we should do all we can to spread the values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law”.*

In the previous example, Blair repeats “it means” to clarify and explain his idea or the motives behind it, with the ultimate aim of making the audience understand and comprehend his point of view.

Repetition can be used for persuasion, as in the following example by former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice:

*“I think that we’ve hurt them, clearly, and we’ve taken a lot of their territory. They cannot operate in Afghanistan, certainly with impunity, maybe in little, small groups, but they can’t operate in Afghanistan. They cannot operate in Pakistan the way they once did. They cannot operate in Saudi Arabia the way they once did. So we’ve hurt them and we’ve taken down a lot of their key leadership and we have hurt them in terms of their financing “. (Speech 2005)*

Repetition is also used to express affection, i.e. to express one’s feelings or affection towards certain people or issues. The following is an example from the same Powell’s speech above: *“I’m very proud to be working for this president. I’m very proud to be serving my country again. I’m very proud to be part of this administration and work with my colleagues within the administration”.*

Powell in the above example expresses his warm feelings and attitudes towards his country, his president and the US Administration.

The last usage of repetition to be mentioned here is amplification. In amplification, politicians use rhetorical devices and figures of speech to extend or expand their information, argument or narrative as in the following example:

*“I’m never going to underestimate al Qaeda- never. I think that we’ve hurt them clearly, and we’ve taken a lot of their territory. They can’t operate in Afghanistan certainly without impunity, maybe in little, small groups, but they can’t operate in Afghanistan. They cannot operate in Pakistan the way they once did. They can’t operate in Saudi Arabic the way they once did. So we’ve hurt them and we’ve taken down a lot of their key leadership and we have hurt them in terms of their financing”.*

Condoleezza Rice is here repeating at least three different expressions to convince her audience of what she wants them to believe.

In Arabic, repetition is more often considered part of the Arabic language structure. (Lahlali, undated) Repetition can be used for naming and shaming, as in the following example taken from the same Nassrallah's speech above.

لن تقاتلوا لا من أجل لبنان ولا من أجل غزة ولا من أجل الضفة الغربية ولا حتى من أجل القدس.

*You will not fight, not for the sake of Lebanon, nor for the sake of Gaza, nor for the sake of the West Bank, nor even for the sake of Jerusalem (speech: September 2006).*

Nasrallah in the above example associated the then (2006) Arab governments' lack of support for Hezbollah's resistance with passivity, when he used the same negated phrase *la + min ajli* 'not for the sake of' to achieve his goal.

Another example, in which he uses repetition of negation to defend his allies and supporters, is the following:

أنا أكتفي اليوم بالقول أنهما يعني إيران وسوريا، إنهما لم يجرا أحد على لبنان، ولم يساهما في تقديم أي غطاء لهذه الحرب وأنهما لم يساويا يوماً على المقاومة في لبنان وفي فلسطين لا في الماضي ولا اليوم ولا في المستقبل.

*Today I will confine myself to saying that they, that is Iran and Syria, did not spark this war, they did not help to provide any cover for this war, and they never haggled at the expense of resistance in Lebanon and Palestine, neither in the past, nor today, nor will they in the future" (29 July 2006).*

### 3.2 Use of Metaphors

Metaphors are linguistic symbols which give concrete labels to abstract ideas. (Kulo, 2007) A metaphor - like a simile - involves a topic, an image, and a point of similarity, but it does not use "like" or "as". According to Nguyen (2010), metaphor is preferred by the speaker due to its special effect on the audience such as emphasizing and appealing to our imagination.

Example: "America is a friend of each nation and every man, woman, and child who seeks a future of peace and dignity...."

Metaphors can be used by politicians to provide vivid examples, to clarify meaning and to give indirect message (Al-Rabbai, 2008). Consider the following example, in which former and late UK Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher uses metaphors to get her listeners' attention:

"He belongs not to the bees but to the wasps and butterflies of public life. He can sting and sparkle but he cannot work. His place in the arena is marked and ticketed for ever".

She compares a certain politician to a wasp not to a bee to say that this person is making noise and fuss not honey (something useful), as a bee would do.

Consider also the following example taken from a speech by Syrian President Bashar al-Asad:

أرحب بكم في سورية... سورية التي يطلق عليها الكثير العرب اسم قلب العروبة النابض."

(From the speech before the general Congress of Arab parties on March 4, 2006).

*I would like to welcome you to Syria, the country called by many Arabs as the beating heart of Arabism.*

In the above example, the expression "قلب العروبة النابض" is used as metaphor in order to express deep emotion and impress the audience at the beginning of the Syrian President's speech.

### 3.3 Personification

Personification is another rhetorical device that is used by politicians to personify images. Consider the following example from one of former US President George Bush's speeches:

*America is never wholly herself unless she is engaged in high moral principles. The United States can mention her interests intact and can secure respect for her just demands".*

In the above example, President Bush personifies "America" or "the United States" as a woman to underscore the feminine characteristics of gentleness and softness, in addition to women's need to be supported and protected.

According to Al-Hamad (2011), the main purpose of personification is to avoid abstraction by achieving animation. Consider the following example taken from Al-Assad's speech at the opening session of the Arab Bar Association Conference in Damascus on January 21, 2006, Al-Assad criticizing the international community:

يضاف إليه الانتهاكات الإسرائيلية للأجواء والأراضي اللبنانية أمام أنظار المجتمع الدولي الصامت.

*Added to that are the Israeli violations of Lebanese airspace and land before the eyes of a silent international community.*

In the above example, the international community is figuratively described as a person (eyes) who has the ability to see and speak out but keeps silent on purpose.

### 3.4 Rhetorical Questions

Rhetorical questions usually take two forms: Yes - no and WH questions. Both types are used to produce an effect on listeners and get their approval and support. Consider the example below taken from a speech by former US president Bill Clinton:

*Will we be one nation, one people, with one common destiny, or not? Will we all come together, or come apart?*

Here, Clinton utters a couple of yes- no questions with the first personal pronoun “we” to get listeners to agree with his ideas and policies.

Some rhetorical questions might be used to encourage and motivate. Consider:

*“Who shall live up to the great trust ? Who does fail to try?”*

Moreover, some rhetorical questions are used for persuasion. Consider the following:

*“What we are going to do now? What will we do?”*

### 3.5 Irony

Irony refers to the practice of saying something or one thing while meaning another. Al-Rabbai (2008) thinks that the most important function of using irony in political speech is “Making fun or ridiculing”. (p. 145) She believes that “through irony, politicians can say whatever he/ she wants indirectly but forcefully”, as in this speech by Tony Blair:

*“We are not old fashioned or wing- right to take action against the social menace.”*

Blair, in the above example, is ridiculing in an indirect way the right wing as being old fashioned and working against people’s interests.

### 4. Purpose and Methods

This paper aims to investigating meanings conveyed by the use of synonyms in parliamentary speeches in Jordan, with focus on the rhetorical functions of such synonyms and their contribution to the understanding of meaning.

It is believed that no single study has been devoted to investigate functions of synonyms in parliamentary speeches in Jordan. This gives the present study more significance as it tries to investigate an important semantic feature and its effect on the power of persuasion in parliamentary speeches. Thus, this study will be the first one studying such function. Further, it is hoped that this study will answer many questions regarding the usefulness of rhetorical devices in political speeches, and will be of significance to parliamentarians themselves to be aware of where and when to use or not to use synonyms that serve their meaning. Finally, it is expected that the study will make a modest contribution to Arabic studies of meaning, since studies on political speeches, especially Arabic ones, are still scarce.

To achieve the goals of the study, twenty political speeches by different Jordanian parliamentarians from different areas of the country have been investigated; they were picked out from the Parliamentary Library in Amman. The synonyms gathered were refereed by a panel of three professors of Arabic Language at Yarmouk University to judge their suitability for the purpose of the study. The number of synonyms gathered were 270 expressions, mostly consisting of two words, but some were made up of three or four synonyms. After being refereed, 60 expressions were discarded for "not being true synonyms", which made the data of the study stand at 210 sets. The data were classified into categories reflecting their actual functions.

## 5. Findings and Discussion

Table (1) shows the frequencies and percentages of synonyms found according to their functions.

Table1: *Functions of Synonyms: Frequency and Percentage*

Functions of Synonyms	Frequency	Percentage
Persuasion: Emphasis and assertion	25	11.9
Expressing feelings and emotions	32	15.2
Praise and glorification	30	14.3
Clarification	20	9.5
Showing eloquence	23	10.9
Criticism	18	8.5
Dissatisfaction	17	8.1
Metaphor	10	4.7
Redundant usage	35	16.7

The table above shows eight different functions for the use of synonyms in parliamentary speeches in Jordan. The most frequent function (32 occurrences, or 15.2% of the expressions) is expressing feelings and emotions of sadness, fear, and sympathy, which is consistent with the nature of such speeches in which the speakers try to tell their audiences that they feel with the public in facing problems. The next most frequent function is praise and esteem (30, or 14.3%) of leaders and countries (it is typical of parliamentarians in many third-world countries to express loyalty to leaders), followed by emphasis and assertion, showing eloquence, then clarification, criticism and metaphor. Thirty five sets of synonyms, representing 16.7% of the data have been found by a panel of judges to express no real function and are considered to be redundant. In what follows each function is discussed with examples.

### 5.1 Persuasion: Emphasis and Assertion

In speeches, speakers used certain words, synonyms and near synonyms to emphasize their ideas and try to persuade people of what they say. As Lakoff (1990) indicates, this is typical of political discourse in general. The same point is maintained by Kulo (2007), Lucas (2008), Nguyen (2010), Al-Hamad & Awad (2011) and Fedorev (2016). Twenty-five sets of synonyms (11.9% of the whole data) were found in the present study to support this finding. Consider the following example:

" وإن موقفنا الحساس في قلب الوطن العربي ليستحق كل الدعم والموازية ليبقى الحاجز الفعلي..."

" Our (Jordan's) sensitive position at the heart of the Arab World deserves all support and assistance to remain a strong barrier..."

In the above example, the occurrence of the two underlined synonyms meaning 'support and assistance' stresses the idea of the importance to help Jordan which stands as a barrier against

evil forces that may threaten other Arab countries. The purpose is to convince rich Arab countries to offer support and help to Jordan.

Another example is the following:

"وأذكر أن البطالة والفقر ظاهرتان يجب التصدي لهما بكل حزم وعزم"

" I also recall that poverty and unemployment are phenomena that must be tackled firmly and decisively ".

Once again here, the speaker emphasizes and asserts the necessity of fighting poverty by using the two synonyms حزم وعزم /Hazim wa 9azim/ to persuade his audience. One can notice that the two Arabic words used here rhyme, which is an important characteristic of many Arabic synonyms. This agrees with Ullman (1972), who considers rhyme and meter important in synonyms, and with Freydina (2015) and Alexiyevets (2017), who consider prosody an important feature of public presentations.

More examples are given below:

"وقد طالبنا مراراً وتكراراً"

" We have requested often and repeatedly ".

In the previous example, the speaker asserts that he keeps repeating his requests again and again to emphasize his idea that pollution must be minimized. One can notice here also that the repeated near-synonyms, like the previous ones, rhyme (/miraaran watakraaran/).

"أننا في عالم جديد لا مكان فيه لغير الأقوى والأفضل والأقدر والأجدر"

" We are in a new world where only the strongest, the best, the most capable and the most deserving have a place ".

Here, the speaker tries to emphasize the well-known idea that the present world accepts and respects only the most capable, in order to urge and convince his people to work hard to be the best. Four synonyms in the superlative form are used here to focus on this issue. All four superlative adjectives are formed according to the Arabic canonical pattern (?af9al), i.e. they all rhyme to form a kind of prosody aiming to attract more attention.

ونحن لا نستطيع إلا أن نكون في الموقع المؤيد المساند والداعم لهذا الشعب وقيادته الشرعية وسلطته الوطنية وخياراته السياسية.

" We cannot but stand in a supportive, assisting and helping position for this people and its legal leadership, National Authority, and political choices ".

In this example, the speaker uses three near-synonyms / المؤيد والمساند والداعم / to emphasize the importance of supporting the Palestinian people, leadership, National Authority and choices.

## 5.2 Expressing Feelings and Emotions

Through synonyms, politicians can express feelings and emotions toward different people and different issues. This is in agreement with Wilson (1990), Schaffner (1996), Bacchi & Bonham (2014) and Lee (2017), who indicate that political discourse is often emotive. Thirty-two sets of synonyms, representing 15.2 % of the data under study were found to convey this function. The following are examples from politicians' speeches:

"فلا بد من الإشارة إلى حادث السير المؤسف والمؤلم الذي وقع على طريق دير أبي سعيد قبل عشرة أيام وأودى بحياة ثمانية أشخاص".

"It's worth noting the regretful and painful traffic accident that happened at Dair Abi Saeed [a town in north Jordan] ten days ago, resulting in eight deaths".

In this example, the speaker is expressing his sorrow and pain towards the accident which happened in Dair Abi Saeed, using the near synonyms المؤسف والمؤلم.

"أريد أن يحكم الضمير ويقارن بين ظروف أبناء البادية القاسية وبعد المسافات والمشقة والمعاناة التي يعاني منها أبناء البادية الأردنية....".

"I want us to look into our consciences and compare between the circumstances of the people of the Badia [desertic or semi-desertic, sparsely populated area of Eastern Jordan], the long distances, and the difficulties and hardships they face".

In the above example, the speaker expresses his feelings of pain at the situation of the Badia people and the difficulties they face in traveling, using the Arabic synonyms corresponding to 'difficulties and hardships'.

"أما أن نتحدث عن الوحدة الوطنية وتصبح قميص عثمان يلبسه كل من يبحث عن الولاية فهذا أمر حقيقة سئمناه وتقرزنا من سماعة كمواطنين".

"But talking about national unity as hallmark for those seeking authority, is something we, as citizens, are really sick and disgusted of hearing".

In this example, the speaker uses the synonyms سئمناه and تقرزنا to show that he is really tired of the people who play on the tune of national unity to hide their personal ambitions.

"نظن بها الخير، فتظن بنا ظن السوء، نحاول أن ننصح، فيجاب علينا بالاستغراب والاستهجان وكأن أحد لا يعرف المصلحة العامة إلا من يجلس في مقاعد الحكومة".

"We think well of them, but they think bad of us; we try to offer advice, but we are faced with astonishment and surprise as if nobody knows the public interest except those who sit on the government benches."

In the above example, the speaker emphasizes his/her feelings of astonishment about the supposedly negative government's attitude towards "well-intentioned" parliamentarians by using the two underlined synonyms.

### 5.3 Praise and Glorification

Another function of synonyms is to express praise and esteem towards other people and countries. This finding is in agreement with those by Lahlali (n.d.), Al-Hamad & Awad (2011) and Lee (2017) that political discourse abounds in expressions meaning praise and glorification. Synonyms showing this function in the present study amounted to thirty, representing 14.3% of the data. Consider the following examples:

"من على هذا المنبر الحر أوجه تحية إجلال وإكبار إلى قائد الوطن، جلالة الملك عبد الله الثاني."

" From this free platform I extend a salutation of deep praise and glorification to our country's Leader, His Majesty King Abdallah II".

In the above example, the speaker offers praise and appreciation to King Abdullah II of Jordan for advising the government to raise civil and military employees' salaries. For that purpose, he uses the synonyms إجلال وإكبار that are reserved to elevated people.

"أما في مجال العلاقات الخارجية فإن جهود جلالة الملك عبد الله الثاني الداعم للشعب العربي في فلسطين هي موضع الفخر والاعتزاز."

" As for the domain of foreign relations, His Majesty King Abdullah II's efforts to support our people in Palestine are a source and matter of pride and appreciation".

As apparent in this example, the speakers praises his Leader's policy towards the Palestinian people by the use of the near-synonyms الفخر والاعتزاز to express feelings of pride and appreciation.

" أن لا قوة للأردن دون اشقائه العرب وعلى رأسهم العراق عراق الصمود عراق الإباء والعزة والأنفة."

" Jordan is powerless without its brother Arab countries, at the head of which is Iraq, the Iraq of steadfastness, the Iraq of loyalty, pride and detachment".

It is clear in this example that the speaker is trying to convey his highest praise for Iraq, using the three near-synonyms الإباء والعزة والأنفة to convey the message that Arabs, especially Jordan, have no power without Iraq.

### 5.4 Clarification

Synonyms can be used by politicians for clarification or explanation of certain ideas. This technique is important since it is a way to influence others' opinions and beliefs. This function is also in agreement with those found by Beard (2000), Lucas (2008) and Nguyen (2010). It revealed itself in 20 synonymous expressions, representing 10.9% of the data. The following are examples:

" وما أرجوه من الله سبحانه وتعالى أن لا تتحول هذه الجريمة إلى ظاهرة يصعب وضع حد لها أو القضاء عليها "

" I hope that this crime will not turn into a phenomenon that would be difficult to terminate or put an end to " .

In the example above, the speaker tries to clarify his idea of putting an end to a crime before it becomes a widespread phenomenon by using the synonyms underlined.

" نظام تعليمي يحتاج إلى إعادة نظر... وقواعد منهجية متينة لكي يستطيع الطالب إنهاء المدرسة بكفاءة واقتدار فيدخل الجامعة وهو مؤهل تأهيلاً صحيحاً" .

"An educational system that needs a retitling....and solid methodological bases, so that the student can graduate with proficiency and competency and enter the university with the correct qualifications" .

As apparent in the example above, the speaker uses the synonyms بكفاءة واقتدار to clarify that the Jordanian learning system should be built on scientific rules to produce well-qualified university students.

### 5.5 Showing Eloquence

Sometimes politicians use synonyms to reveal their fluency and proficiency in language. This finding further confirms those by Ullman (1972), Al-Rabbai (2008), and Fedorev (2016) who indicate that oration and rhetoric are part of politicians' strategies. This function was found in 23 sets of synonyms, representing 10.9% of the collected expressions. Consider the following examples:

"غالية هي فلسطين السلبية...وهي أن التفتت يسرة، تجد الأردن شامخاً حراً كريمًا، ما تردد أو تخاذل، ولا يوم سلم أو تنازل،...وطنا لم يثنته كرب أو خطب عن أن يكون لفلسطين النصير، وطن ماهان ولا دان...ولم يفتته ماكر أو نكير عن أن يكون لفلسطين الأخ والناصر والظهير" .

"Precious is Occupied Palestine... If it looks to the left, it will find Jordan, Lofty, Haughty and Generous, having never hesitated or lagged behind, having never capitulated or surrendered, a homeland never dissuaded by a plight or tragedy from being Palestine's supporter, a homeland that never softened or melted, and was never seduced by a tricky or ungrateful side not to be Palestine's brother, supporter and helper."

It is clear from the example above that the speaker uses a variety of expressions of the same meaning: synonyms or near synonyms, which are more rhetoric than any other thing. Actually, these expressions are presumably meant to show the speaker's linguistic competence because they indeed add nothing to the basic idea that Jordan is a strong supporter of Palestine. Such expressions, most of which rhyme, are meant to demonstrate linguistic skills which are common in political speeches to impress others, gain their approval, and ultimately win the elections or win a political argument.

" نحن نواب الأمة، بالأردن ننمو ونكبر، وبالمملك الشهم الهمام نزهو ونفخر".

" We, representatives of the people, in Jordan we grow and become bigger, and in the generous and magnanimous King we lay our pride and esteem."

Using such synonyms or near synonyms in the example above indicates how linguistically competent the speaker is; the use of sophisticated and formal vocabulary like the last two synonyms is a clear sign of that.

### 5.6 Criticism.

Politicians may use synonyms to criticize something or someone's action. Eighteen expressions, or 8.5% of the collected data, were found to show this function. Consider the following examples:

" تعرضت محافظة البلقاء ومدينة السلط بشكل خاص لحملة مبرمجة ضدها وضد أبنائها ممن كانوا يحتلون مواقع قيادية وهذا الظلم والاضطهاد الذي أحزم أنه مقصود ومتعمد ضد البلقاء..."

" Al- Balqa'a governorate in general and Salt City in particular were subjected to a programmed campaign against its people who occupied leadership positions, and this injustice and persecution which I firmly believe is intended and intentional against Al – Balqa'a..."

In this example, the speaker uses synonyms or near synonyms shown in the underlined vocabulary to criticize an unjust campaign of defamation and deformation against Al-Balqa'a governorate (west and northwest of the capital Amman) and its men.

" فهذا النفاق العربي المرير، لدولة الشر والإرهاب الدولي الأمريكي، وهذا الاستكانة والخنوع لإدارتها التي شجعت الآخرين على التمادي..."

" This bitter Arabian hypocrisy and flattery towards the country of evil and international American terrorism, and this submissiveness and capitulation to its Administration that encouraged others to persist and go too far in aggression..."

Again in this example, criticizing stems from the synonyms الاستكانة والخنوع, which the speaker is using to criticize those who surrender to US demands and requests.

### 5.7 Dissatisfaction

In politics, it is common to find politicians not satisfied with the efficiency of certain policies, persons or even countries, and use certain synonyms to express their dissatisfaction. Consider the following examples:

" إن الحديث عن الموازنة هو الحديث عن كل شيء عن هذا الوطن، حديث عن الفساد والظلم والتمييز."

" Talking about the budget means talking about everything in the country, i.e. talking about corruption, injustice, and discrimination ".

The speaker in the example above is signaling his dissatisfaction with the government's budget. His dissatisfaction is clear as he uses the synonyms *الفساد، الظلم والتمييز* to indicate how the government's policy is not just but rather discriminating.

"الأموال والسيولة في جيوب الغالبية العظمى من المواطنين قليلة بل شحيحة وذلك بفضل التقدم الحضاري وما رافقه من تضخم في الأسعار عالمياً".

"Most of our people suffer from little or rather scarce cash and liquidity, and this was a result of civilization progress and the international price inflation that accompanied it".

As apparent above, the speaker is not satisfied with his government's economic policy towards citizens by raising prices, claiming with the help of synonymous expressions that the people have very little or barely any money left.

### 5.8 Metaphor

Through metaphors, one can show the best qualities in a person. As indicated by Kulo (2007), Nguyen (2010), Al-Hamad & Awad (2011), and Bacchi & Bonham (2014), use of rhetorical devices, especially metaphor, is a major characteristic of political discourse. The findings of this study confirm these results. Synonymous expressions that involved metaphor were 10, representing 4.7% of the collected data. The following are illustrative examples:

"اسمحوا لي في البداية باسمنا جميعاً أن نرسل باقة من الورد مضمخة بأنواع العطور إلى أشبال وأسود الانتفاضة المرابطون في الأرض المحتلة".

"Allow me first to send in all our names a bouquet of flowers mixed with all sorts of perfumes to the cubs and lions of the Intifada who stand firm in the occupied land [Occupied Palestine]."

The synonyms *أشبال وأسود* in the example above are used by the speaker to refer to the courage and strength of the Palestinians (cubs and lions) resisting the occupier. He is trying to give the impression that they deserve honor and respect.

"إننا في الجبهة الوطنية نقدر غالياً ونثمن جهود الملك المعظم الذي يصول ويجول في بقاع الأرض شرقاً وغرباً...".

"We in the National Front greatly appreciate and value the efforts of His Majesty the King who wrestles and fights east and west on Earth..."

The speaker is glorifying his Majesty's strength, using the synonyms *يصول ويجول* to reinforce his attributes and efforts to motivate and rally people behind his leadership. The King is compared to a strong fighter who defends his country's interests wherever he goes in the world.

### 5.9 Redundant Usage

While synonyms in Arabic can be used to serve different functions as shown in the above subsections, they may be used by politicians to serve no functions and may be considered redundant or without purpose. The study found 35 such expressions, synonyms or near synonyms, that did not add to meaning as in the following examples:

" فتحية إلى الحكومة التي حوصرت بسبب لونها الإسلامي ونقول لهم اصبروا، لا تكلوا لا تهابوا أو تخافوا..."  
 "Salute to the government that was besieged because of its Islamic colour; we say to them: be patient, do not get tired, do not fear or be frightened."

"فالوطن له واجب علينا أن نحافظ عليه ونفديه بالمهج والأرواح"  
 "We have a duty towards our country, to offer our souls and spirits for it"

"كان لمواقف جلالة الملك الحسين رحمه الله في الوقوف إلى جانب العراق الشقيق ضد الخطر الشعبي العجمي واضحاً وجلياً..."

"His Majesty King Hussein's, may his soul rest in peace, position to stand with Iraq against the Persian danger was clear and transparent."

"اما الموضوع الذي لن أكل ولن أمل من الحديث فيه فهو موضوع لفقير والبطالة."  
 "The subject I will never get tired or bored of bringing up is the subject of poverty and unemployment."

"إن الأردن بقيادته الحكيمة وشعبة الأصيل من شتى المنابت والأصول سيكون وحده وطنية صلبة تتحطم عليها هذه الخيالات والأوهام."

"Jordan with its wise leadership and true people from all sources and origins will be one national solid unit against which all dreams and fantasies will break."

All the previous underlined synonyms or near synonyms do not seem to add to the meaning of the speech, hence they are considered redundant. This confirms findings by Beard (2000), Nguyen (2010) and Lee (2017) that repetition is a major characteristic of political speeches.

## 6. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the functions of the use of synonyms in parliamentary speeches in Jordan. The findings revealed at least eight different functions for the use of synonyms in such speeches. The most noticeable ones were expressing feelings and emotions, praise and glorification, persuasion and emphasis, showing eloquence and clarification. Less important ones were criticism, dissatisfaction and metaphor. The important ones (first four) in addition to metaphor were all shown by earlier studies to be typical of political discourse in general. Criticism and Dissatisfaction were found to be relatively common but no earlier studies found them to be functions of synonyms in political discourse. Thirty-five sets of synonyms, out of a total of 210 expressions, were found to add nothing to the meaning of the discourse; hence, they were considered redundant. This is also in agreement with earlier findings that indicate that repetition is a characteristic of political speeches. In addition, the study revealed that some speakers tried to embellish their speeches by using sets of synonyms that rhyme. Generally speaking, synonyms carried with them various rhetorical effects and strategies needed by politicians for the purpose of persuasive and interesting speeches. Moreover, synonyms were important in signaling affection, helping to understand the speaker's emotions and feelings. Synonyms were also used by

speakers because of their special effects on the audience in order to persuade, emphasize, appeal to the audience's imagination and create a vivid picture in the listeners through the use of three or more synonyms and use of rhetorical devices like metaphorical synonyms. Some of synonyms were especially employed for the purpose of invoking urgent support for their cause; others were used to produce sound and musical effects on listeners/readers through rhyming synonyms; still, others were used to arouse emotions and interest, to stimulate desire, to create conviction and to get action in the audience.

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### Appendix: Phonetic Symbols

The following phonetic symbols are used in this study for transliteration of Arabic words and texts:

#### Consonants:

Arabic Alphabet	Symbol	Description
ء	ʔ	Glottal stop
ب	b	Voiced bilabial stop
ت	t	Voiceless dento-alveolar stop
ث	θ	Voiceless inter-dental fricative
ج	j	Voiced post-alveolar affricate
ح	ħ	Voiceless pharyngeal fricative
خ	x	Voiceless uvular fricative
د	d	Voiced dento-alveolar stop
ذ	ð	Voiced alveolar fricative
ر	r	Voiced alveo-palatal trill
ز	z	Voiced alveolar fricative
س	s	Voiceless alveolar fricative
ش	sh	Voiceless alveopalatal fricative
ص	S	Voiceless alveolar emphatic fricative
ض	ḍ	Voiced alveolar emphatic stop
ط	T	Voiceless dento-alveolar stop
ظ	Z	Voiced alveolar emphatic fricative

ع	9	Voiced pharyngeal fricative
غ	gh	Voiced uvular fricative
ف	f	Voiceless labio-dental fricative
ق	q	Voiceless uvular stop
ك	k	Voiceless velar stop
ل	l	Voiced alveolar lateral
م	m	Voiced bilabial nasal
ن	n	Voiced alveolar nasal
هـ	h	Voiceless glottal fricative
و	w	Voiced labio-velar glide
ي	y	Voiced palatal glide

**Vowels:**

Short		Long	
al fathah	a	al ?alif	aa
al kasrah	i	al yaa?	ii
al dammah	u	al waaw	uu