Mitigation in Prime Minister's Questions of the British Parliament

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Dedication

To the memory of my late father and uncle

With love and eternal appreciation

And to my mother for her ongoing love and support

Acknowledgements

Abstract

This study draws on theories and methodologies from the fields of pragmatics and parliamentary discourse studies to explore the role of mitigation as a form of politeness in the British Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons (2016-2017). Using a dataset of exchanges between the Leader of Opposition (LO) and the Prime Minister (PM), this work investigates the use of mitigation in question-response sequences; the ways in which leadership style and identity can be (re)presented, enacted and maintained by using mitigation features and strategies with respect to appropriate parliamentary language. Therefore, qualitative and pragmatic approach is adopted building on insights from traditional approaches to politeness and from the discursive approach of relational work to identify the form and function of mitigation in PMQs. The findings reveal two kinds of mitigation: routinised and non-routinised linguistic features which are represented by a variety of formulaic lexicogrammatical features and discursive/ stylistic strategies. However, the use of mitigation is impacted by the confrontational interaction of PMQs, which is governed by institutional norms and conventions. Consequently, mitigation is used strategically as a means of displaying politic, appropriate behaviour to refrain from unparliamentary language. It provides an institutionally acceptable polite packaging to attenuate the negative impact of inevitable face threatening. In other words, mitigation serves to disguise the offensive effect of the leaders' messages while making requests or responding to critical comments to show the orientation of face concerns. This allows them to project effective leadership style and leadership qualities, and thus contribute to establishing a positive image and enhance their own face among colleagues and supporters. For the questions that are addressed by the LO to the PM, the dataset represented a variety of question types that build on presupposition and implicature, which embed FTAs in the propositional content of these questions. This results in different response strategies to deal with potential threats. The findings suggest that incorporating insights from traditional with post-modern approaches contributes to uncovering the role of mitigation strategies in PMQs interaction as an excellent pragmalinguistic resource for performing indirect FTAs to the addressee while adhering to the institutional norms of conduct.

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Transcription Conventions

Jeffersonian transcription conventions (Jefferson, 2004)

Symbol	Name	Use
[ ]	Brackets	Overlapping talk e.g. interruption
(0.0)	Time paused	Length of pause by seconds
(.)	Micropause	A brief untimed pause
↑	Up arrow	Indicates rising pitch
↓	Down arrow	Indicates falling pitch
(( ))	Double parentheses	Nonverbal features e.g. smile, laughter, body gesture, cheering and jeering
word	Underscoring	Indicates some form of stress and emphasis
-	Hyphen	Indicates an interruption in utterance

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction

This chapter will introduce the rationale behind the current research which offers an examination of the use and function of mitigation in adversarial interaction. Adversarial interaction arises when interactants reveal their different standpoints and disagreement to one another. As a result, face-threatening (and face-saving) acts can purposively be constructed. One form of adversarial interaction that inspires this study is Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) of the British Parliament, in the House of Commons. The study investigates the discourse of PMQs from qualitative and pragmatic methodological perspectives to demonstrate how mitigation emerges in this interaction. Using a qualitative pragmatic approach, I first examine linguistic resources that encode mitigation used by three political leaders: the former Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron, the current (at the time of writing) PM Theresa May and their main rival, the current (at the time of writing) Leader of Opposition (LO) Jeremy Corbyn. Second, I investigate relevant concepts, such as facework, self-presentation, leadership identity and power, that are constructed when using mitigation. And third, I consider insights from traditional approaches to politeness and from the discursive approach of Locher and Watts' (2005) 'relational work' to interpret the meaning of mitigation in the dynamic of PMQs interaction. In this introductory chapter, I explain the motivation for the study, provide the background, aims and objectives of the study; describe the institutional context of PMQs; and give a brief outline of the analytical frameworks on which I draw.

1.2 Background of the Study

Language does not simply mirror reality. During interaction, we often modify our language with respect to situations through which we are faced with challenges. These challenges are labelled by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) as "Face Threatening Acts" (FTAs). We respond to these acts in a way which often has an impact on our language. This modification of language is called 'mitigation'. As such, contextualised and sequential texts of question-response pattern are investigated to demonstrate what communicative functions are served by using mitigation in PMQs interaction.

Previous research on mitigation has been largely considered from a social perspective. Accordingly, mitigation has been studied mainly as a means of reducing potential FTAs within interpersonal contexts (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Unlike Brown and Levinson's

(1987) view of polite behaviour as cognitive (avoiding FTAs), the concept of relational work views politeness as discursive and linked to the contextual norms of discourse (Locher and Watts, 2005). In adversarial contexts, the debates of parliamentary discourse are constrained by institutional rules of politeness that forbid straightforward threats to the addressee (de Ayala, 2001: 143). Consequently, the interaction is marked by performing either intentional face-threatening, when directed at the opposing party, or face-enhancing, when addressed to one's own side (Harris, 2001). This indicates the 'strategic' use of politeness, which means, according to Brown and Levinson (1987), deviation from Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle. Therefore, the current study acknowledges prior research on mitigation and considers it as a special form of politeness (e.g. Fraser, 1980; Caffi, 1999, 2007; Locher and Watts, 2005) to examine to what extent mitigation contributes to the adversarial interaction. With this in mind, mitigation will be investigated in PMQ interaction to find out in what ways mitigation features reflect institution-specific constraints along with the communicative goals of interaction.

Although several studies have considered pragmatics at PMQs, few have investigated mitigation specifically. There has only been limited research carried out so far into the relation between mitigation and parliamentary discourse. This study will discuss the connectedness between mitigation and leadership identity by examining the ways MPs use relational work, the discursive approach to politeness to negotiate their identities in the institutional interaction of parliamentary discourse. However, non-discursive pragmatics (e.g. Grice, 1975; Aijmer, 1996; Leech, 2014) will be combined with the discursive approach, drawing on contextual and sequential question-response patterns. This combination will allow the analyst with a toolkit and a vocabulary to examine talk-in-interaction (cf. Grainger, 2013: 27). The focus of the analysis is to examine what linguistic resources the participants draw on to construct and define the situation, while negotiating their way through their interaction with each other (Grainger, 2018: 20).

This study will also explore the relationship between mitigation and specific contextual factors of institutional interaction. Adversarial exchanges of PMQs "excite more public interest and discussion than other parliamentary events," as they are "an occasion when rhetorical performances reveal about the public characters of the party leaders" (Reid, 2014: 45). Within the public setting of PMQs, the use of communicative strategies, including those that potentially encode politeness, is shaped by the existence of specific institutional norms and expectations of the House of Commons that govern the flow of the

interaction. Therefore, the public nature of PMQs discourse and the institutional constraints need to be taken into consideration when interpreting the use of linguistic resources that involve mitigation.

Prior research on politeness has examined the association between mitigation and face (Brown and Levinson, 1987; Kim and Nam, 1998), politeness and power (Harris, 2001; Chilton, 2004), face and identity (Holtgraves, 2002) and facework and leadership (Fetzer and Bull, 2012). However, postmodern views on politeness (Watts, 2003; Locher, 2004) have brought attention to the essential role of context in interpreting behaviour because no behaviour is inherently polite or impolite (*ibid*). Although mitigation is a special form of politeness (Haverkate, 1992), it can be interpreted with respect to the contextual factors (e.g. norms, expectations, and topic of talk) that surround the behaviour. Mitigation has been investigated as a means of persuasion (Holmes, 1984), minimising responsibility (Schneider 2010) and as a means of indirectness (Fraser, 1980; Ng and Bradac, 1993; Crespo-Fernández, 2014). However, these approaches have solely focused on verbal communication. What is overlooked in mitigation research is nonverbal and paralinguistic features that can be used conjointly with verbal features to encode mitigation.

Mitigation can be used for different orientations in different forms of discourse. For example, in clinical interaction, mitigation is described as an instrumental tool to reduce the discomfort of giving and receiving bad news (Caffi, 1999). In legal interaction, it is described as a "verbal fight," which is oriented to defensive reaction of accusations. On the other hand, in other forms of discourse, mitigation is directed to facework (Martinovski, 2006). To demonstrate how mitigation is employed to display facework, the current study has chosen the parliamentary interaction as an example of "discourse mitigation", where politicians (often the opposition) engage in a "political fight" (de Ayala, 2001).

The current study draws on prior research on mitigation in political and parliamentary discourse (Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014). However, these studies have only identified few mitigation strategies used in LO-PM interaction. Therefore, this study seeks to look at the pragmalinguistic features that represent frequent mitigation strategies and the ways these features are employed with respect to the norms of appropriateness in Locher and Watts' (2005) framework of relational work. In this framework, facework covers only a small subset that necessarily involves mitigation strategies (Schneider, 2010).

'Relational work' is defined as the work that interactants invest in interaction while negotiating their interpersonal relationships with one another (Locher and Watts, 2005). It covers the whole spectrum of interpersonal linguistic behaviour, ranging from polite to aggressive and rude behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008). These forms of behaviour contribute to a person's identity construction (Locher, 2008). However, the current study aims to shed light particularly on the interplay between language use and mitigation and leadership identity construction in PMQs interaction and by extension in adversarial political discourse more generally.

As mentioned above, PMQs can be a platform for the party leaders to display their rhetorical skills and leadership qualities, and the purpose can be to influence a wider and general audience. This study attempts to examine mitigation strategies in relation to other concepts, such as facework, self-presentation and leadership identity. In doing so, the study acknowledges the essential role of mitigation in shaping the linguistic repertoire of the MPs in the House of Commons. In the next section, I will present the rationale and research context of the current investigation.

1.3 Rationale and Research Context

In this section the rationale for the research is outlined in greater detail, by considering mitigation as one communicative means of constructing facework in adversarial interaction, more specifically parliamentary interaction. The study proposes that mitigation is not only used for politeness per se, but also for displaying politic appropriate behaviour to achieve communicative goals. The current research looks closely at contextual factors that determine the flow of political communication in PMQs discourse with potential implications beyond this specific setting.

Disagreement is an intrinsic feature of parliamentary debates where contradiction and opposition are acceptable (Harris, 2001). The most heated part of PMQs interaction usually occurs between the adversaries, LO and the PM. The confrontational interaction can be attributed to their competitive roles in the British parliament. The competition can be presented through the adversaries' attempts to tell the public about what the opposing party have not been able to achieve and highlight what their own party have been able to achieve. During the weekly sessions (i.e. Wednesdays) of PMQs in UK Parliament, the LO is permitted to ask six questions which pertain to issues that fall under the responsibility of the PM as the head of government (Mohammed, 2008). However, the aim of asking these

questions seems more about challenging the PM than seeking information (Bull and Wells, 2012).

Nonetheless, the challenge is not only directed to the PM, but can also be reciprocal between the LO and the PM, and thereby, PMQs debates are known for their adversarial nature. As a result, impolite behaviour is what often becomes the focus of research (Harris, 2001; Ilie, 2004; Murphy, 2014). Even though PMQs interaction is one manifestation of democracy in the UK through which the LO stands in direct confrontation with the PM, this interaction is governed by institutional conventions of parliamentary language (rules of politeness in the House of Commons Chamber) to which MPs should adhere within the interaction. A distinction should be made here between impoliteness that reveals an indirect form of aggressiveness (Bousfield, 2008) and nonpolite behaviour that displays neither impolite nor polite behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005). As such, this study argues that, due to the restriction imposed by institutional rules of conduct, the existence of impolite behaviour can be problematised and what we see is nonpolite and politic behaviour. Such behaviour appears to be dominant in the LO-PM interaction. This is likely due to the party leaders' need to achieve their political goals, while remaining within the scope of parliamentary language.

The main goal of PMQs is holding the government to account as it allows the opposition to "put pressure on the government to respond to issues they might rather avoid" (Bevan and John, 2016: 60). However, there are further aims that can be associated with the argumentative practice of parliamentary sessions. One of these institution related aims is the leaders' self-presentation skills to attract the attention of "the media rather than to hold the government of the day to account" (*ibid*). This sounds a strategy the serves as a means of maintaining and enhancing politicians' public image (face). From this perspective, mitigation can be one possible means to negotiate impression management. Thus, PMQs can be an opportunity for the MPs to promote the self while indirectly threatening and challenging that of the adversary. An effective performance of the PM and the LO can boost their own position and their party's morale and hence success becomes:

> "vital to a Prime Minister and even more so to a Leader of Opposition [...] The ranks of MPs are there to cheer on their champions. To be tripped or wrong-footed, to let down one's supporters in those battles of wits can be the beginning of the end- especially for a new Leader of Opposition lacking the trappings of office which lend authority to the Prime Minister" (Alderman, 1992: 68).

This reveals the competitive and conflictual type of interaction that requires further investigation. However, research on the use of mitigation in parliamentary interaction, to my knowledge, is particularly sparse. No prior attempts have been made to establish the relation between mitigation and political leaders' self-presentation with respect to aspects of Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work. Therefore, this study seeks to investigate how mitigation is used by the politicians, how it can contribute to the adversarial contexts of interaction and to establish to what extent mitigation can be relevant in constructing facework within interaction. Accordingly, the rationale for this study places the research of mitigation and facework within the institutional context of PMQs, which directly informs the aims and objectives of the research, which are discussed in the following section.

1.4 Aims and Objectives of the Study

This study provides an integrated approach to mitigation that proposes a unified treatment of different linguistic features based on their pragmatic function. Therefore, it aims to contribute to knowledge in the field of language use, and more specifically, in the field of pragmatics. In other words, it aims to describe what politicians do with language, how they respond to each other's utterances and what they might have done to gain familiarity and support. Although prior research on politeness has treated mitigation as simply a means of softening potential threats to the addressee, the current study will expand this to consider other functions of mitigation within adversarial contexts of parliamentary discourse. The findings of the study will provide insights into how political leaders approach facework (or face management) in association with a variety of features that convey mitigation.

Drawing on existing research on mitigation, this study seeks to better understand the use and functions of mitigation in parliamentary discourse with respect to political leaders' exchanges. As such, the characteristics of institutional contexts of this discourse are considered, which leads to a more insightful examination of mitigation in PMQs exchanges. The research questions are constructed by analysing the dataset of PMQs interaction with the aim of exploring the way these leaders use mitigation. The research design benefitted from having access to an existing dataset of videos of PMQs debates of the British Parliament between the LO and PM, collected between January 2016 and April 2017.

In this thesis, it is argued that mitigation is not only used to lessen possible causes of offence (FTAs) in contexts where these causes are sanctioned and rewarded, but it also serves as a means of achieving communicative goals. At its most basic, this thesis is concerned with the relationship between mitigation and politicians' self-presentation to

demonstrate these goals. To have a deep insight into this relationship, the study examines the linguistic features that serve as mitigation (as will be explained in chapter 4) and the way they can be employed discursively (as will be explained in chapters 5 and 6).

This investigation has been conducted from a pragmatic and qualitative perspective, using a discourse analytic approach to interpret the data. The findings should therefore be of relevance to not only parliamentary communication, but also to other adversarial contexts, including everyday interactions. Thus, this study is an attempt to consolidate the research on mitigation with three key aims that can be summarised as follows:

1. To study theoretical approaches to mitigation and explore how they can inform our understanding of institutional interaction.
2. To demonstrate the linguistic resources that entail mitigation strategies used in parliamentary discourse and explore how these strategies might reflect the institutional nature of British Parliament.
3. To investigate the role of mitigation in the adversarial interaction with respect to the institutional constraints of parliamentary language and norms of appropriateness.

To address the objectives of this research, this study is guided by the overarching research question: *how do political leaders employ mitigation in the ongoing interaction of PMQs?* This is complemented by the following sub research questions:

1. What linguistic devices serve as resources for mitigation in parliamentary communication? (Chapter 4)
2. How can leadership style and identity be enacted by using mitigation strategies and relational work? (Chapter 5)
3. How can mitigated questions be interpreted as relational work in the ongoing PMQs interaction? (Chapter 6)

In answering these research questions, the analytical approach will demonstrate the role of mitigation in the rule-governed parliamentary interaction. Focusing on the pragmalinguistic aspects of mitigation, the purpose of this study is to understand how specific linguistic patterns are used and how mitigation can be employed as a communicative means within parliamentary discourse. As such, this research discusses the concept and the use of mitigation through a combination of non-discursive pragmatics and

discursive approach to politeness with respect to other aspects of institutional interaction. In the section that follows, I present the scope of the research.

1.5 Scope of the Research

My study is situated in line with previous frameworks which analyse FTAs and mitigation in contexts that are "power-laden" and "conflict-sensitive" (Limberg, 2008). Debates in PMQs present incidents of high adversarial interaction through which MPs should retain parliamentary language and obey institutional rules and conventions. While complying with parliamentary constraints, the LO and PM may insist on their right in terms of democracy to protect their self-image (face) and challenge others to gain popularity to prove that they deserve the leadership. Accordingly, the combination of the linguistic choice and institutional rules and conventions can shed significant light on the discursive functions that mitigation serves in the adversarial interaction of PMQs.

1.6 Significance of the Research

This study's importance resides in its comprehensive investigation of mitigation patterns and strategies along with their essential functions in the confrontational interaction of PMQs. This study is important in gaining more insights into how language is manipulated to achieve interpersonal goals. It stems from a need to acknowledge the linguistic and pragmatic perspectives of mitigation and its interplay with other contextual aspects of interaction, such as facework, self-presentation (impression management), leadership identity, power and conflict management. Therefore, it is anticipated that this study will provide new insights into the political communication of the UK parliamentary interaction.

This study will also contribute to existing knowledge by adding to the growing body of politeness and pragmatic research, especially that relating to the study of mitigation and relational work. Hence, to sum up, the present study supplies further evidence for:

1. Defining mitigation as a special from of politeness.
2. Providing insight into discursive purposes of mitigation in parliamentary discourse and wider political discourse.
3. Highlighting the relevance between mitigation, facework and self-presentation in constructing leadership identity.

Accordingly, this study reflects the importance of demonstrating the strategic use of mitigation which may lie in the leaders' attempt to achieve more supporters and popularity. As such, examining the connection between mitigation and other linguistic and

contextual factors of the interaction allow the analyst to provide a thorough interpretation of how the conflictual interaction unfolds. The next section describes the procedure of the study.

1.7 Procedure of the Study

It is essential to specify the approach to mitigation analysis that makes specific contributions to the present study. The study is based on the overarching assumption that when political leaders engage in the adversarial interaction of PMQs, they employ mitigation to refrain from unparliamentary language (e.g. abusive and insulting language). Although the study draws on some theoretical bases in the research literature that have examined mitigation in political and parliamentary discourse as a discursive feature (e.g. Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014, Leech, 2014), this study expands this trend by providing an extensive investigation of mitigation in PMQs.

The dataset on which the discussion will be based comprise forty videos and their transcripts of PMQs sessions (2016-2017), focusing on the exchanges between the LO and the PM. The first part of the dataset represents the final 20 sessions with Conservative PM, David Cameron, before his resignation. The second part of the dataset represents the first 20 sessions of his successor, Theresa May. In all forty sessions, their opponent is Labour LO, Jeremy Corbyn. The videos and Hansard transcripts are available from the official website of British Parliament. Hansard transcription is the official record of British parliamentary proceedings. Since PMQs interaction is governed by institutional rules of politeness, the data will offer excellent material for the study of mitigation and facework in parliamentary interaction.

In the current study, the use of the linguistic devices that encode mitigation and their functions will be analysed by drawing on Locher and Watts' (2005) framework of relational work and Leech's (2014) framework of politeness. Relational work is defined as the work people invest during interaction. It comprises four aspects of behaviour: polite, nonpolite, impolite and overpolite. According to Locher and Watts (2005, 2008), polite behaviour is only one variant of relational work and thus, mitigation as a means of reducing potential FTAs represents only the polite aspect of the whole spectrum. However, the communicative function of mitigation can be shaped by the existence of the institutional constraints on the flow of the interaction, i.e. the parliamentary rituals and conventions. Therefore, the current study finds it necessary to extend an approach to mitigation in parliamentary interaction by combining the discursive framework of relational work with

Leech's (2014) framework of politeness. The purpose is to establish a taxonomy of the most used linguistic features that serve as mitigation in sequences of LO-PM exchanges. The taxonomy allows the researcher to examine the relationship between the form of mitigated utterances and what it achieves in interaction.

Within politics, it is important to look beyond the words themselves to see how language is being used to create a particular effect and how and why politicians say things that they do not literally mean. However, far too little attention has been paid to examine the relationship between mitigation and parliamentary discourse. No research, to my knowledge, has considered this relation from the perspective of relational work. The study proposes that the greater the use of mitigation strategies, the more one's own face is maintained and the less likely it is for the speaker to break the rules of acceptable parliamentary language. Therefore, this study accounts for how institutionally restricted norms shape the use and functions of mitigation in contemporary politics.

In bringing mitigation and relational work together, this thesis is based on the premise that mitigation plays a vital role in PMQs discourse and is integral to politicians' self-presentation. I start from the position that it is unproductive to see mitigation as merely a means of softening FTAs to demonstrate politeness and face concern to the addressees. Mitigation in its various strategies is integral to the way these strategies are employed and interpreted during the ongoing interaction. Below, I will outline the structure of the thesis and how this will allow for such a wide-ranging discussion.

1.8 Outline of Thesis

Following this chapter, chapter 2 has been devoted to an overview of theoretical accounts of politeness and mitigation, with a special consideration to Locher and Watts' (2005) framework of relational work, which represents the analytical framework for my qualitative pragmatic approach. Within this framework, as well as Grice's (1975) maxims of politeness, Aijmer (1996) and Leech's (2014) frameworks of politeness, mitigation (or politeness) is treated as one means of regulating conflictual communication with respect to the contextual norms and expectations of interaction. This chapter intends to situate the research aim, to provide the reader with a background on mitigation, the concept of face, PMQs discourse, aspects of relational work and other relevant topics in different forms of discourse. This chapter also introduces the relationship between mitigation and politeness presenting the consideration of prior research which contributes to identifying the gap that this study aims to fill.

Chapter 3 deals with the research methodology, including the methodological approach and data context as well as the methods of analysis that underpin this study. Specific contextual factors, such as the community of practice of PMQs, the public nature of the discourse and the institutional rules that constrain the interaction are dealt with in this chapter. These factors are needed to be considered when interpreting the effect of mitigation on the PMQs interaction. This chapter also outlines the process of managing the dataset and describes the way in which this data was collected. This chapter also describes the stages of transcription, sampling, and coding of the data. Building on a concept-driven coding, the next three chapters identify and illustrate mitigation strategies with extracts drawn from LO-PM interaction in the whole dataset.

The analytical part of the thesis starts with chapter 4, which provides an overview of a variety of mitigation features and strategies that are used by the three leaders during PMQs exchanges, with a focus on linguistic forms and patterns (Aijmer, 1996; Leech, 2014) that entail mitigation. This chapter also considers the categorisations in existing research on mitigation (e.g. Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014). In this chapter, the qualitative analysis is supported by a quantitative account to identify the most used mitigation patterns and strategies in question-response turns of the LO-PM exchanges in the data. This quantification helps to obtain overall impressions of the three leaders' behaviour. The way these strategies come together to illustrate further discursive functions of mitigation in PMQs contexts is then discussed in chapters 5 and 6.

Chapter 5 focuses on the interplay between mitigation and leadership identity. In this chapter, mitigation features are reviewed, with a particular emphasis on the leadership styles and qualities, aspects of relational work, positioning, power, face-management and self-presentation. Within these practices, mitigation serves to perform implicit FTAs, such as criticism, accusation and ridiculing the adversary. In doing so, mitigation seems not only employed to soften a potential threat to the face of the adversary, but also pursues other discursive functions, that is to protect the speaker's face from sanctions for direct criticisms and accusations, and to render the speech rhetorically more persuasive.

Chapter 6 is the last part of the analysis which shows a greater focus on types of question which are addressed by the leaders, and more specifically Jeremy Corbyn. The analysis discusses a variety of mitigated questions along with their effect on the PM's response. The discussion is generated with respect to aspects of Locher and Watts' (2005) relational work. It also discusses response strategies that deal with the FTAs entailed in the

LO's questions as well as the use of these strategies which vary according to the type of question.

The thesis ends with chapter 7 which provides the conclusions of the study. This chapter builds on the analysis to demonstrate the findings of the study from a pragmatic and qualitative perspective. It challenges Locher and Watts' existing assumptions about relational work regarding the discursive approach to politeness and suggests a need to combine insights from traditional approaches with post-modernist approach to politeness to provide empirical evidence for interpreting the meaning of mitigation in a sequence of talk-in-interaction. The chapter also discusses the research contribution, research limitations, recommendations and future work and implications.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter brings together research from different theoretical strands and fields that carried out within the key subject areas and disciplines of this thesis. It also offers evidence and support from the literature for the analytical approach that guides this study. The support has been gained through examining and presenting the most relevant studies on mitigation, the concept of face, and PMQs discourse. However, no comprehensive research has been conducted yet to identify what role mitigation plays in parliamentary discourse. This chapter begins by adopting a theoretical overview of the scholars' perspectives on the concepts of 'face' and 'identity' (Sections 2.2 and 2.2.1) which contribute to our understanding of the interactional relationship between mitigation and leadership identity in PMQs discourse. Then, it presents different approaches to politeness and mitigation (Section 2.3) and how scholars describe and assess mitigation in different contexts (e.g. clinical interaction, courtroom discourse, parliamentary interaction). This chapter also provides an overview of Locher and Watts' (2005) model of 'relational work' (Section 2.4) which has been examined in a variety of discourses. Next, Prime Minister's Questions discourse is outlined with respect to political self-presentation and identity construction. Finally, the chapter ends with a summary and concluding remarks regarding this literature (Section 2.6).

2.2 The Concept of Face (Face in Interaction)

In most research on mitigation and politeness, the concept of face is one of the key notions. For Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), mitigation is mainly linked with 'facework', the concept which is identified by Goffman (1955) as the process by which the speaker can protect and maintain their face to keep the social encounter smooth and avoid a possible disruption to the interaction (Kim and Nam, 1998: 523). The concept of 'face' derives from the work of Goffman (1955, 1967) who noted that face has to do with the 'positive social value' that interactants wish to maintain in social interaction. Goffman (1967: 5) states that face is a "positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact". From this perspective, Goffman's conceptualisation of face reflects the cognitive side of individuals. However, the social side of face becomes clearer when Goffman argues that face is socially attributed depending on interactants' contributions in every interaction and thus, it is only on loan to the interactants from society.

2.2.1 Goffman's Face

Much of the application of face is based on Goffman's concept of face. Scholars have returned to this concept as it provides a basis for the social/interpersonal aspects of face (e.g. Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005). Goffman's contribution to politeness has underlined the crucial role that 'face' plays in the ritual dynamics of a rule-governed interaction of polite behaviour (Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003: 1467). Goffman (1967: 25) highlights the aggressive use of facework through which "the winner not only succeeds in introducing information favourable to himself and unfavourable to the others, but also demonstrates that as interactant he can handle himself better than his adversaries". One of the best means to achieve this is through the speaker's performance. According to Goffman (1969: 32), performance refers to "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers". He furthers that this performance enables a speaker to convey information about the self through the confidence in which one speaks on a topic, the manner he/she does so and the mastery of speaking in public. In other words, the speaker projects him/herself to others in a way that guides and controls the impression the speaker constructs for him/herself (Goffman, 1969). This highlights the role of speaker's 'self-presentation' in interaction, which is defined by Goffman as a process through which everyone can create, modify, and maintain an image of self, and hence one portrays this image in a way that can be perceived positively by others during interaction. This suggests the important role that self-presentation plays in forming a positive image of the speaker. However, constructing a positive self-image may result in challenging and degrading others' image, the case which the current study finds necessary to look at in interaction to identify the ways that serve to achieve this purpose. However, Goffman's conceptualisation of face needs further consideration to outline the ways in which face can be saved, enhanced, or threatened in the context of PMQs and to highlight the role it exhibits in the act of political communication.

One way of maintaining face can be through self-respect and considerateness (Goffman, 1967), which can be achieved by conveying a consistent image to interactants. Similarly, Ho (1976) considers face as "the respectability and/or deference which a person can claim for himself from others, by virtue of the relative position he occupies in his social net-work and the degree to which he is judged to have functioned adequately in that position as well as acceptably in his general conduct" (p. 883). This means that face can be claimed with reference to others' evaluations (Lim, 1994: 210). However, Goffman (1967, as cited in

Brown & Levinson 1987: 61), who likens face with "the traffic rules of social interaction," considers it as something "emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction". According to Ho (1976: 883), individuals intend to gain face, avoid losing face, and to save face when it is threatened, which is a powerful social motive. Kim and Nam (1998: 523-524) state that when participants lose face, "they would attempt to restore discredited public self-images (face) by creating favourable self-images." For example, Brown and Garland (1971) and Garland and Brown (1972) note that people engage in face-saving behaviours more actively when they feel incompetent with respect to a task, and when they have close friends as an audience.

This means that the concept of face constitutes both the individual's cognition and social factors. It is displayed through behaviour (the way speakers communicate and interact), as it exists in the presence of others while interacting with them. Therefore, the image the speaker presents can be affected by the social and interpersonal requirements of the context, which is the view adopted in this study. However, some studies on face have acknowledged the important role face plays in politeness and impoliteness (aggressive facework), as will be presented in the next section.

2.2.2 Face and (Im)Politeness

Ting-Toomey (1988) argues that face is a fundamental communication phenomenon, stating that face is "a claimed sense of self-respect in an interactional situation. It has been viewed, alternatively, as a symbolic resource, as social status, as a projected identity issue" (cited in Ting-Toomey and Kurogi, 1998: 187). In their study on cross-cultural conflictual interaction, Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) note that "conflict is an ideal forum for face-threatening and face-saving behaviours" (p.187) and the strategies of face-saving can be either 'preventive' or 'restorative' facework. They define preventive facework strategies as actions that are designed to hide, soften, prevent, and control the occurrence of future events, as I assume is the case with mitigation. On the other hand, restorative facework strategies are actions that are designed to "repair damaged or lost face and are occurring in response to events that have already transpired" (p.191). This means that the management of face (i.e. negotiation, saving, and repair) is an essential ingredient of every social encounter.

In addition, Ting-Toomey and Kurogi (1998) emphasise the influence of face on conflict behaviour, stating that "in any conflict situation, conflict parties have to consider protecting self-interest conflict goals and honouring or attacking another person's conflict goals" (p.188). O'Driscoll (2007: 256), Stewart (2008: 37) and Arundale (2010) agree that the degree of face-threat depends on interactants' responses and evaluations in particular interactions relative to their interpersonal relations and sociocultural expectations as well as their interactional goals (cited in Chang and Haugh, 2011: 2949). In this sense, face is analysed in terms of not only the speaker's intentions, but also by the evaluations made by the participants in the interaction which emphasises the role of contextual factors in determining face interpretation (Locher, 2004). In verbal disagreement, as Locher (2004: 93) states, exercising power is involved in dealing with conflict or clashes of interests. From this perspective, people aim to negotiate their face during communication encounters. This negotiation is influenced by how they engage in facework, especially in conflict situations, and whether they are more concerned with self-face or other-face as well as what type of strategies they may use to manage conflict (Oetzel *et al.*, 2008).

Research has also been conducted to draw fine distinctions between face and politeness. For example, O'Driscoll (2011: 22) states that face pertains to interactants, as it is something they possess, whereas politeness pertains to interactions through which it can be produced. However, the relationship between face and politeness is not a causal one, but rather one of "mutual hyponymy" (*ibid*). Nevertheless, there appears to be an agreed view with understanding that face should be studied on its own terms. Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini (2010: 2073), in their framework, argue that in order to develop a coherent theory of face it should not (always) be construed with reference to politeness.

In politeness research the focus has been on the avoidance of FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987), while in impoliteness research, the focus has been on purposive aggressive FTAs (Culpeper, 2005). However, Chang and Haugh (2011) state that practices such as banter or mock impoliteness can be evaluated as face-threatening, yet "do not necessarily fall comfortably under the umbrella of either politeness or impoliteness theories" (p. 2949). Chang and Haugh (2011) suggest that the analysis of FTAs should be kept distinct from the analysis of impoliteness due to the complex relationship between face and impoliteness (*ibid*). However, I would argue that in conflictual interaction like the context of PMQs, where FTAs are sanctioned and rewarded, face-threatening can be

considered beyond what is perceived as impolite behaviour as would have been the case if the threat remains within the conventions of acceptable parliamentary language.

2.2.3 Positive and Negative Face

Twenty years after Goffman's framework of face, Brown and Levinson's (1978) first edition of politeness work appeared. Although their work has been influential, their particular concept of face has been found to be difficult to apply, especially from a cross-cultural perspective (Harris, 2001: 452). This is due to Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) claim of the universality of their definition of not only 'polite behaviour', but also of face and facework. They define face as "the want to be unimpeded and the want to be approved of in certain respect" (p. 63). As such, they conceptualised face as something we want or desire from others. Brown and Levinson (1987) expand and add to the face theory by arguing that face constitutes two related aspects: 'negative face' and 'positive face'. Negative face is the basic claim to autonomy and rights to non-distraction. In other words, it reflects the interactant's desire to have independency and freedom of action and freedom from imposition. Positive face is the basic claim to competence, as it reflects the wish to be approved of or liked by others. However, both aspects of face, according to Brown and Levinson, are basic wants or claims rather than norms. They also assume that face can be threatened by 'speech acts' (Austin, 1962; Searle, 1969) such as requesting, insulting, ridiculing, criticising, and so forth.

However, Brown and Levinson's (1978) conceptualisation of face has been criticised as being too narrow and individualistic, focusing on individual's psychological wants and desires. As a result, their model has been the subject of much debate (e.g. Bargiela-Chiappini, 2003; Usami, 2006; Locher, 2006; Arundale, 2010). Bargiela-Chiappini (2003: 1460) criticises Brown and Levinson's cognitive concept of face, as it proves no match for Goffman's study of interaction (social concept of face). Similarly, Usami (2006) who argues that their theory is only a theory of marked politeness as it focuses on linguistic politeness strategies that redress FTAs in situations where these threats are inevitable. Consequently, she states that the theory of politeness should systematically address both marked and unmarked politeness rather than merely focusing on marked politeness. Unmarked politeness or 'politic' behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008) means people are expected to behave appropriately with respect to the relative positions that they want to maintain, as well as contextual norms and cultural constraints (Matsumoto, 1988; Usami, 2006).

Unlike Brown and Levinson, however, Locher (2006: 251) defines face as "an image which is discursively negotiated". In other words, it is a relationship that is established between interactants, and negotiated between them during interaction (Arundale, 2010). The views of both Locher (2006) (constructing self-image) and Arundale (2010) (establishing relationship) reflect the psychological and sociological dimensions of face. In political interaction, for example, these dimensions are influenced by contextual factors, such as the tradition of rhetoric and persuasion along with party ideology (Locher, 2004). From this perspective, the concept of face needs further exploration within an interactional framework which I aim to do in this study.

The criticisms of Brown and Levinson's approach to face and face threat have led to proposals for alternative frameworks, and one of these frameworks is 'relational work' (Section 2.4). The framework of 'relational work' (Watts, 2003; Locher, 2006; Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008) has explored politeness discursively. It has been one well-theorised alternative based on Goffman's (1955) concept of face and facework (cited in Chang and Haugh, 2011: 2950). Even though previous work on politeness and face centres on Brown and Levinson's model, Locher and Watts (2005) argue that Brown and Levinson's theory is not a politeness theory, but rather a theory of facework with a focus on mitigating FTAs. However, in this case, politeness cannot be used in contexts that involve verbal disagreement and adversarial interaction. One possible way that shows politeness is through the interface between face and linguistic strategies to exercise power to deal with conflict and therefore also a clash of interests (Locher, 2004: 93).

2.2.4 Face and Identity

The connection between face and identity has been addressed in making a move towards conceptualising face as a concern for identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2005: 586) define identity as "the positioning of self and other" and argue that it is a social and cultural phenomenon that emerges in discourse and is intersubjectively rather than individually achieved in interaction. For example, Kendall's (2004) study on how authority can be framed through face and gender reveals that "the relationship between gendered identities and the linguistic expression of face is mediated by the dynamic negotiation of positions and frames" (p. 55). This can be reflected through the interactants' choices of certain linguistic expressions to achieve pragmatic and interactional functions of language as they frame a conversation (p.56). However, in the House of Commons, as Shaw (2000: 402) stresses, the norms of interaction can be interpreted as masculine norms because men have invented

them. The norms of men's discourse styles are seen to be "institutionalised, and […] they are not only seen as the better way to talk, but as the only way" (Lakoff, 1990: 288). This is potentially an important contextual aspect of PMQs discourse as a Community of Practice (see section 3.4.1). This study will also consider the effect of institutional style, although not gender.

Research has been conducted to combine gender as an aspect of identity with politeness issues. In her analysis of cross-gender differences, Holmes (1995) claims that women are 'more polite' than men, stating that women seem to be more tentative towards their interactants, which encourages a smooth flow of interaction. However, she states that not all women fit this generalisation. For example, there are occasions where women act differently from stereotypes and expected standards. This view is agreed by Mills (2005) who argues that women are not inherently more polite or considerate than men. Female leaders at Chinese organisations, for example, implement aggressiveness to attack their interactant's face, and thereby gain power and claim superiority (Ladegaard, 2012). Therefore, they employ strategies, such as irony and sarcasm, to indirectly attack others, and hence defend themselves (*ibid*). However, the current study is not interested in investigating identity construction from a gender perspective. This is because the three leaders', Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron, and Theresa May political identities work within the masculine stereotype of the MPs.

Based on Goffman's perspective of face, Spencer-Oatey (2007) argues that face is a social element that cannot be dissociated from social interaction. She explores the connection between face and identity, proposing that "in cognitive terms, face and identity are similar in that both relate to the notion of 'self-image […] and both constitute multiple self-aspects or attributes" (p. 644). She agrees with Goffman (1967), Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987) along with many other face theorists that face is a vulnerable phenomenon that is associated with affective sensitivity and emotional reactions (Spencer-Oatey, 2007: 644).

With respect to the relation between face and (im)politeness, Blitvich (2013: 8) highlights a controversy of studies that relate face to matters of (im)politeness rather than identity, whereas others relate face to (im)politeness as well as identity. From Holtgraves' (2002) perspective, face is a successful presentation of identity: "to fail to have one's identity ratified is to lose face in an encounter, to have one's identity ratified is to have face, to maintain an identity that has been challenged is to save face. Face, then, is

something that resides not within an individual but rather within the flow of events in an encounter" (p.39). The positive dispositional features of face, as Geyer (2010) puts it, are competence, autonomy and willingness, which are often related to interactants' identity traits conveyed during interaction. This suggests that despite the differences between face and identity, they are interrelated concepts and hence, this research will explore this relationship by examining the role of face in identity construction during ongoing interaction. Moreover, having introduced previous studies' perspectives towards face and identity, the following section will show what role face can play in parliamentary discourse.

2.2.5 Face and Parliamentary Discourse

The concept of face has attracted considerable attention in the research of political and parliamentary discourse. Face has been investigated by Bull (2012), along with two other concepts: 'communication skills' and 'social context'. Bull states that, together, these concepts play a significant role in understanding others, to be understood by others and to be skilled in facework. Therefore, for Bull, a good politician has the ability to master communication skills and perform effectively in various social contexts. The concept of face has also been examined by Bull and Fetzer (2010) in the context of three distinct genres of political communication: broadcast interviews, PMQs and monologues. Regarding PMQs (the interest of the current study), the authors consider face aggravation as a salient feature, although the PM does not only defend his/her positive but also negative face. Therefore, Goffman's (1967) term of face aggravation will be used to refer to the aggressive use of facework in PMQs interaction, where the speaker seeks to score points on his/her opponent's expense.

In the same context, Harris (2001) extends Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness beyond informal situations to adversarial political discourse. She analyses the forms of face aggravation and notes that FTAs are intentional and explicit in this context. According to Harris, FTAs (or, alternatively, face enhancing acts) can best be "interpreted and understood in relationship to Parliament as an institution and the wider political context" (p. 451). Thus, she analyses PMQs discourse in terms of both "propositional (e.g. hostile/ supportive propositions/ presuppositions which preface or are built into questions and responses to questions) and interactional (e.g. modes of address, turn-taking 'rule', nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviour) levels" (p.456).

Following Harris' perspective, Bull and Wells (2012: 30) propose that face aggravation in PMQs can be used to enhance their status through aggressive facework. Although MPs should conform to following a question-response pattern and avoid unacceptable unparliamentary language (e.g. insulting), criticism and accusation are still permitted in the House of Commons (Bull and Wells, 2012). Despite these constraints, the discourse of PMQs has been shown to be highly face threatening as it involves a great deal of confrontation and competition (Harris, 2001; de Ayala, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012). Face-threatening may result in causing face-damage to either the speaker or the addressee (Murphy, 2014: 4). Therefore, Murphy (2014) identifies categories of FTAs along with instances where they can be mitigated. This suggests the influential and delicate role that face plays in the PMQs setting where face aggravation plays a central role.

FTAs have been found to be common in political interviews and described by Bull *et al*. (1996) as communicative conflicts. The authors note that these conflicts may occur in question-response sequences of the interviews when a response to a question is formulated in a way that is potentially face-damaging. As previously noted by Goffman (1967), a speaker can not only defend their own face in social interaction, but also preserve the face of others. However, in the context of a political interview, a politician might seek to uphold the face of other party members, while they would not wish to support the face of their political opponents. Accordingly, Bull *et al*. (1996) argue that politicians must concern themselves with three aspects of face: their individual face, the face of others and the face of the party which they represent. Bull *et al.* (1996) highlight Pearson's (1988) view that "face maintenance can be seen more positively as a strategy which speakers skilfully manipulate in order to achieve their goals in social interaction" (cited in Bull *et al*. 1996: 271). As a result, Bavelas *et al.* (1988) note that politicians often protect their face by employing equivocal responses to avoid communicative conflicts and controversial issues in order not to be seen as offensive and unacceptable by the voters.

The face factor, as Chilton (1990) argues, can be both exploited and challenged. For Chilton, both positive face and negative face have political and ethical implications. Positive face (as defined in the previous section) is "the desire to be integrated into some community on the basis of mutually believed values and facts" (p. 204), and this may contribute to the identity construction and consensus. Negative face is "the desire for territorial integrity and self-determination." In other words, the speaker may consider the hearer's 'want' to be free of interference (*ibid*). Therefore, Chilton (1990: 221) regards

positive face as claiming common ground and negative face as avoidance of intrusion to other's ground as goal-oriented strategies of social and political action. According to Locher and Watts (2005), "any individual may be attributed a potentially infinite number of faces" (pp. 12-13) which are rather like masks formulated through different kinds of performance. Depending on the context of situation, a woman for example, might perform the role of a Prime Minister, a mother, a wife, or a cook. The addressee's assessment of the performance depends on the mask associated with that performance. Yet, due to the focus on mitigation in conflictual discourse, the current study will adopt Goffman's conceptualisation of face. This conceptualisation needs further consideration in the context of PMQs to outline the ways in which face can be saved, enhanced, or threatened and to highlight the role it exhibits in the act of political communication.

As presented by prior studies, face aggravation is common in PMQs interaction where participants appear to be competing to prompt facework. However, the concepts of face and facework are negotiated in political and, more specifically, parliamentary discourse with respect to politicians' communicative skills and contextual factors. One possible technique in the negotiation of facework in an interaction is mitigation. A more detailed account of mitigation is given in the following section.

2.3 Mitigation

Building on Fraser's work, Holmes (1984) describes mitigation as a means of attenuation, stating that mitigation allows a speaker to convey one's doubt or unwillingness towards the truthfulness of the information involved in the proposition. Holmes attributes the reasons for this attenuation to an affective purpose, as the speaker tends to convey his/her attitude to the content of the utterance, and the attitude to the addressee in the context of the utterance. By attenuating the force of the utterance, the speaker can also express unwillingness to take responsibility or "minimise the responsibilities" (Schneider, 2010: 255) for the validity of the utterance (Holmes, 1984). According to Schneider, mitigation inevitably involves reducing the speaker's or hearer's degree of commitment to the speech act in question in some way. In doing so, mitigation "facilitates the management of interpersonal relations during verbal interaction insofar as it makes an utterance as acceptable as possible to the interlocutor without having the speaker to give up his or her standpoint" (*ibid*). However, Holmes finds that mitigation needs to be seen in relation to broader strategies for modifying the force of the utterance. These strategies may flout Grice's maxims (1975) by providing information that could be described as over-

informative, irrelevant, vague, or imprecise. This information pragmatically "serves an affective function, expressing the speaker's attitude to the addressee" (p. 363). In this sense, the speaker uses mitigation to serve as a persuasive function to achieve their interactive goals.

As a means of attenuating the illocutionary force, mitigation has been explored by Holmes (1984). She has noted that devices such as prosodic devices (e.g. fall-rise intonation pattern), syntactic devices (e.g. tag questions, passive construction, the impersonal pronoun 'it', not un-constructions), lexical devices (e.g. it seems, I suppose, perhaps) are often used to attenuate the illocutionary force of the speech acts. For Holmes, an indirect request can be used as an "attenuating discourse strategy used by superiors to subordinates they know well, and with whom they therefore have a personal as well as a transactional relationship" (p. 362). Therefore, mitigation can serve to maintain and develop the relation between the speaker and the hearer, reduce their social distance and redress the force of an unwelcome speech act such as criticism. This can be achieved by conveying "positive feelings towards the hearer which should increase the solidarity of the relationship" (p. 350). Chilton (2004: 40) argues that "the effect of various mitigation strategies is a function of the relations of power and intimacy between speakers." From this perspective, mitigation strategies do not only maintain relationships between interactants, but are also associated with power, aggressiveness and facework.

Research on mitigation has also demonstrated the connection between mitigation motivations (imposition and certitude), linguistic patterns and mitigation effects (Martinovski, 2006; Caffi, 2007; Czerwionka, 2012). Martinovski (2006) defines mitigation as a reduction of vulnerability and describes its functions in terms of participants' actions and goals. Her study in the legal context found that mitigation does not function as a strategy for the avoidance of disagreement (Brown and Levinson, 1978), but as coping with disagreement and conflict by facing it, anticipating it, and/or accepting it. Martinovski makes a distinction between 'discourse mitigation' and 'legal mitigation', arguing that the former is directed to facework, while the latter is directed to defensive reaction to accusations. She describes the trial in the courtroom as a "verbal fight" (p.2068). Likewise, parliamentary discourse is described by de Ayala (2001) as a "political fight" (p.144). The purpose of this fight is not only to show that one is more brilliant than one's opponent, but also convince the audience that one is a better politician than the other (de Ayala, 2001: 164). As such, in this study, mitigation will be investigated in PMQs exchanges to

investigate to what extent it contributes to the institutional context of parliamentary discourse.

In a study on a clinical interaction (psychotherapeutic interview), mitigation has been defined by Caffi (2007: 47-48) as "the result of the weakening of interactional parameters such as cognitive commitment, emotive involvement, topical salience, etc." (p. 48). In her study on psychotherapeutic conversations in Italian, she proposes that the interface between pragmatic and psychological aspects of interaction is composed of "stylistic cognitive and emotive modulating and mitigation device." This means that mitigation has been described as a means of reducing the discomfort of giving and receiving bad news. In this sense, Caffi emphasises that mitigation should be studied with respect to emotive and emotional aspects of interaction. For her, mitigation is used in conversation to achieve interactional goals at interpersonal and instrumental levels.

Czerwionka (2012) employs specific parameters (i.e., interpersonal markers, discourse markers and epistemic markers) to measure mitigation in Spanish conversations (role-play situations). According to her, motivations to use mitigation can be provoked by two factors: imposition, which is related to "the degree to which a social interaction is a burden in a specific sociocultural setting," and certitude, which consists of "the speaker's degree of conviction related to a set of communicated information" (p. 1164). A significant interaction between imposition and certitude has shown that the combined effect of severe imposition and speaker uncertainty motivates the highest degree of mitigation.

Mitigation has also been addressed with respect to indirectness and tentativeness. According to Ng and Bradac (1993), "the speaker can convey meaning indirectly and the addressee to infer the indirect speaker's meaning" (p. 89). However, the use of indirectness can be constrained by contextual norms, such as power-relation and social factors (p.109). Ng and Bradac observe grammatical patterns, such as tags (e.g. do me a favour, will you?), disclaimers (e.g. If you wouldn't mind…), expressions of doubt (e.g. the sky is cloudy tonight. That's the Southern Cross over there, isn't it?) and hedging and epistemic modals (e.g. likely, I think, seem, appear) (pp. 111-112). They call these patterns as 'reservations' which contribute to convey tentativeness.

The relation between mitigation and indirectness has also been examined by Crespo-Fernández (2014). In his study on British regional press, he identifies a variety of euphemistic devices, such as hedges, downtoning, apologies, passive voice, metaphor, and

overstatements in relation to face concerns. For Crespo-Fernández, these devices are alternative expressions that are used by politicians in order to give a positive impression to their audience when approaching delicate and controversial topics. Hence, these devices serve to preserve politicians' image and that of the party they represent. In doing so, politicians employ euphemism as a face-saving strategy where they establish a safe area of talk through which their behaviour appears polite and appropriate. The current investigation will demonstrate to what extent euphemism devices display mitigation in the confrontational interaction of PMQs.

As one common means of entailing mitigation, hedging has been defined by Fraser (2010: 201) as a rhetorical strategy that can be employed through manipulating structural patterns or imposing certain prosodic features on utterances. However, in an earlier work, Fraser (1980: 344) observed a notable difference between hedging and mitigation, stating that hedging, in the sense of fuzziness, is different from the sense of softening which can be associated with mitigation. For example, the hedging words 'sort of' or 'kind of' can serve to motivate a mitigating effect, as these words cannot be features of mitigation in themselves and they are not necessarily used for mitigation. By contrast, Lakoff (1973) considers hedges as mitigating markers that function as a communicative strategy to maintain interpersonal relationships within interaction (cited in Ran, 2010: 178). This means that hedges can be used as one means of conveying mitigation, especially when they are associated with utterances that imply FTAs in conflictual interaction.

In her book *Conversational Routines in English*, Aijmer (1996) describes different patterns of formulaic forms that serve as mitigation. Drawing upon original research data from the London-Lund corpus of spoken English, she argues that what makes mitigating elements difficult to analyse is that they should be described within the patterns they occur and the situation they are used (p.164). This view reflects the pragmatic aspect of mitigation which means that in order to understand routinised mitigation features, we must go beyond the linguistic form of these features. In other words, we must consider situational and discourse features of interaction. Accordingly, she describes conversational routines grammatically, semantically, and pragmatically. She proposes different types of strategies that encode requests, such as (a) indirect requests in the form of declarative sentences, (b) indirect requests in the form of interrogative sentences, (c) requests in the form of permission questions, (d) defocalising (impersonalising devices), and (e) agentless passive. These patterns are performed in English in terms of their formal and situational

features. Combining consideration from the interaction with grammatical, semantic, and pragmatic analysis will be useful for the analyst to investigate formulaic language of mitigation in the context of PMQs. Therefore, I will return to Aijmer's categories in my own analysis.

In the same vein, Leech (2014) in his book *The Pragmatics of Politeness* offers a framework for the analysis of politeness and mitigation in interaction. However, he acknowledges the restrictive nature of his data because they are drawn from samples of English discourse: the British National Corpus, and Longman Corpus of Spoken American English. He notes that mitigation is one strategy of negative politeness, which is used as a means of diminishing potentially offensive speech events, such as criticism, complaint, and disagreement (p.214). Focusing on pragmalinguistic spectrum of politeness, Leech identifies lexicogrammatical devices that display mitigation and can work individually or in combination with one another. Examples of these devices are (a) avoidance of second person (and first-person) reference, (b) hedged performatives, (c) why-questions, (d) downtoners, (e) passive voice, (f) defocalisation, and (g) hypothetical 'would' through which speakers resort to paralinguistic politeness. I will return to Leech's categories in my own analysis.

Holmes and Stubbe (2003: 134) have identified humour as a means of "disarming criticism", which thereby can display mitigation. However, humorous discourse can be seen as problematic in situations where it is manipulated ironically to imply sarcasm. According to Grice (1975), sarcasm is an act of flouting the maxim of quality (or truthfulness) and thus generates implicature (cited in Musolff 2017: 96) which can be used to construct FTAs indirectly. According to Holmes and Stubbe (2003), "the higher the threat to the addressee's face, the more likely the message will be presented in at least superficially humorous packaging" (p.134). Sarcastic comments can be detected through vocal and visual cues as available to the audience (*ibid*). This feature seems to be particularly salient in parliamentary exchanges. For example, when a politician refuses to answer a direct question, he/she may face a clash between two or more Gricean maxims that cannot be avoided. This may occur when the need to be informative conflicts with the need to be truthful, or when politicians flout (blatantly fail to fulfil) one or more maxims. Therefore, we can see that clashes and flouting are closely associated with conversational implicature. With this in mind, this study finds it necessary to examine how irony and sarcasm can be generated in terms of implicatures in PMQs interaction, and what contribution they may

make to serve political goals. In addition, we need to account for the distinction between humour and sarcastic uses and their relation to mitigation and face consideration. From this perspective, a pragmatic account of this distinction will be necessary through a consideration of prosodic and paralinguistic cues in spoken discourse to interpret the function of humour in the parliamentary interaction of PMQs.

In addition to nonverbal cues that serve to interpret humour, de Ayala (2001) considers other contextual factors, such as linguistic self-presentation, audience interaction and 'parliamentary code'. These factors can influence the correct understanding of ironic utterances. Accordingly, one feasible way to convey humour (or sarcasm) or any other mitigation strategies is through the way politicians represent themselves (self-presentation), which means manipulating language to create, modify, and maintain an image of self, and hence, portray the self in a way that can be perceived positively by others during interaction (Goffman, 1969). Given that the communicative situation in PMQs is public, the three leaders (Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron, and Theresa May) are likely to present themselves well to gain popularity and comply with institutional norms of politeness. As such, this may motivate them to employ a variety of mitigation strategies that serve to achieve their political goals within PMQs interaction.

The role of nonverbal and paralinguistic communication has also been considered by Ng and Bradac (1993), Martinovski (2006) and Caffi (2007), among others. Being tentative requires using not only verbal devices, but also certain prosodic features (Ng and Bradac, 1993). For example, the most common forms that denote tentativeness are intonation (i.e. fall-rise intonation), as in *Put the TV \ / o*n, and stress (i.e., low stress) as in saying *shut up* with a gentle low voice (p.110). As such, Martinovski (2006) notes that low tone of voice, along with hesitation, gestures and pauses serve to function as mitigation strategies. In addition to these devices, facial displays, such as smiles can mitigate a speaker or hearer's feeling of discomfort (Caffi, 2007). This suggests the role of nonverbal and paralinguistic features and related linguistic features to convey and prompt mitigation.

To conclude this section, the literature identifies that mitigation can be employed to achieve certain purposes. For example, it may occur to (a) fulfil individual's self-esteem (Brown and Levinson, 1987) (b) as instrumental goals (Caffi, 2007), and (c) as a negotiating tool (Fraser, 1980). Therefore, within interaction, the use of mitigation can be conditioned by the contextual factors and communicative goal of interactants. Prior studies have agreed that mitigation can be used in a variety of contexts to display tentativeness and

attenuation to redress the effect of the threat to the addressee's face. It is apparent that very little research has been undertaken to address the strategic function of mitigation in a rule-governed confrontational interaction, such as PMQs. The word 'strategic' was defined by Brown and Levinson (1987) as a means of providing "principled reasons for deviation" from the Cooperative Principles of politeness (p.5). Most of what is available is mainly based on mitigation in the way described by Brown and Levinson (1987). My study seeks to provide a more comprehensive study that would include most features that entail mitigation in PMQs interaction. I propose to gather different functions of mitigation around two main dimensions: (1) the dimension of interactional skills, which meets essentially institutional needs and achieve interactional goals, and (2) the dimension of identity construction, which meets essentially relational needs and achieve persuasive goals (cf. Caffi, 1999).

Given the multi-dimensional way that mitigation works, I would agree that reducing the potential effect of FTAs (Brown and Levinson, 1987) can be just one function of mitigation. So, my first aim is to show how mitigation can affect the political messages that are delivered by the MPs, more specifically the LO and the PM. Secondly, I will demonstrate the contribution that mitigated utterances in the question-turn can make to the PM's responses and the institutional monitoring of PMQs. Having discussed the meaning of mitigation, the next section addresses the relation between mitigation and politeness.

2.3.1 Mitigation and politeness

Following Lakoff's (1973) introduction of the term 'hedge', mitigation has become an important topic of linguistic investigation. Mitigation is generally described as the linguistic communicative strategy of reducing the negative effect of an utterance. In Brown and Levinson's (1987) model of politeness, mitigation seems to overlap with politeness in its function to attenuate the potential impact of FTAs. Labov and Fanshel (1977: 84) define mitigation as "modifying one's expression to avoid creating offense", which means reducing the severity of unwelcomed effects of a speech act to the hearer (Fraser, 1980; Holmes, 1984; Brown and Levinson, 1987). Mitigation has generally come under the umbrella of politeness research. Many studies have viewed mitigation as one category of negative politeness which is concerned with distance and formality and used to avoid conflict in interaction (Lakoff, 1977; Leech, 1977; Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987). According to these studies, politeness is based on a default assumption that the interactants aim to establish cooperative communication and address mutual face concern

via mitigation. However, this view has been rejected by Caffi (2007) who argues that "the category of 'mitigation' is not a possible substitute for politeness" (p. 53). Nevertheless, for Caffi (2013: 262), mitigation devices contribute to constructing both smooth conversational exchanges and dialogical identities. This suggests the important role that mitigation plays in achieving interactional management.

Another different perspective has been adopted by Haverkate (1992) who argues that the best way to differentiate between mitigation and politeness is "to qualify their relation in terms of hyponymy in the sense that mitigation represents a special form of politeness" (p. 115). Haverkate's view concurs with Fraser's (1980) own conclusion, that is mitigation is not co-extensive with politeness (p.344). Fraser (1980), who defines mitigation as a means of easing "the anticipated unwelcome effect" (*ibid*), argues that "mitigation entails politeness, while the converse is not true. In short, mitigation occurs only if the speaker is also being polite" (p. 344). This suggests that Fraser's comparison assumes that mitigation and politeness are related in terms of entailment. Fraser finds it "difficult to construct a case where the speaker is viewed as impolite but having mitigated the force of his utterance" (*ibid*). However, this behaviour may occur in situations of conflictual interaction, like the context of PMQs where FTAs are sanctioned, and thereby mitigation can serve as a polite package of threatening and challenging the addressee.

One example of linguistic choices is hedges which Fraser finds as a means of "creating a mitigation effect, but they are not, in themselves, examples of mitigation, nor necessarily mitigating in use" (p, 344). In addition to hedges, Fraser (1980) identifies more devices that serve as mitigation, such as indirect performances of the speech act, non-specific references to the speaker or the hearer, disclaimers, parenthetical verbs, and tag questions. However, for Caffi (1999), Fraser's view of mitigation is seen as a narrow sense of the term, as it is linked to Brown and Levinson's notion of FTAs. Caffi (2013) suggests that politeness can be only one possible effect of mitigation, a case that can be better demonstrated within Locher and Watts' (2005) framework of 'relational work', as presented in the following section.

2.4 Relational Work

Relational work refers to the interpersonal level of communication that interactants employ in negotiating relationships between themselves (Locher & Watts, 2008). From this perspective, Locher and Watts (2008: 96) define the term 'relational work' as "all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and

transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice". In this sense, language is used not merely as a means of imparting information, but also of shaping relationship with others (Locher *et al.,* 2015).

Locher and Watts (2005) build on Goffman's original definition of face. Goffman's approach highlights the idea that face is conjointly constructed by interactants during the ongoing interaction (Locher *et al.* 2015). This means that "face is a central concept" for the model of relational work (p.4). For Locher and Watts (2005, 2008), politeness is a discursive concept which is perceived and assessed through interactants' verbal behaviour. In other words, politeness can be interpreted in relation to interpersonal interaction. Mitigation, on the other hand, is a facework concept (Brown and Levinson, 1987) which deals mainly with face-saving and face-threatening acts. However, I would argue that mitigation can also be employed discursively, and thus may constitute more than polite behaviour. Therefore, the aim of this study is to highlight the need to move from a narrow and restricted notion of mitigation limited to avoiding potential threat to the addressee's face to an extended notion that has to do with styles of actions and activities within social interaction.

Focusing on interpersonal relations, Locher and Watts (2005) examine their conception of 'relational work' through which politeness is defined in terms of discursive struggle (Culpeper, 2008). According to Locher and Watts (2005), relational work covers "the entire continuum from polite and appropriate to impolite and inappropriate behaviour" (p. 11). This means that polite behaviour is only one variant of the interpersonal aspect of communication (see Chapter 3: Table 1). From this perspective, mitigation represents a small part of relational work that works within the scope of polite and appropriate behaviour. Here, I would argue that the function of mitigation can be extended to be perceived as more than avoiding or reducing FTAs in interaction, where FTAs are intentionally constructed without explicitly performing impolite behaviour.

Locher *et al*. (2015) state that the interpretation of politeness in interaction requires the norms of appropriateness of that interaction to be studied. The authors propose that "what is considered polite and impolite can vary (pragmatic variation) from one type of communicative encounter to another, as evaluations are contingent upon expectations, which themselves are intricately tied to norms of appropriateness for the community and the activity in question" (p. 9). In other words, these norms and expectations of appropriateness influence the interaction as they contribute to evaluate the behaviour as polite or impolite. For Locher (2011), these norms are discursively negotiated in online

interaction, a context which differs from other forms of interaction at which norms of appropriateness are fixed, such as institutional contexts where interactants abide by constitutional conventions that already exist. One example of these contexts is PMQs interaction where MPs are obliged to follow institutional rules of parliamentary language.

The interplay between politeness and relational work has also been investigated in social media interaction. In her introduction to the special issue on politeness and impoliteness in computer-mediated contexts, Locher (2010a) examines interactants' negotiation of the relational aspects of language use. She focuses on the interpersonal issues of politeness and impoliteness in online interaction and how these issues "tie in with *identity* construction and the negotiation of *face*" (italics in original) (p. 3). Therefore, it will be of interest for the current study to examine how the framework of relational work can be applied to a different dataset and context, that is of the PMQs. More discussion of Locher and Watts' model follows in Section 3.3. Turning now to the next section, where I sketch out some studies that have focused on PMQs interaction and indicate the context of this interaction.

2.5 Prime Minister's Questions

PMQs constitutes a specific type of institutional discourse and one of the prototypical forms of confrontation in parliamentary debates in the UK Parliament of the House of Commons. British parliament is one of the oldest institutions in the world (the origins go back to the 13th century (UK Parliament Website). During these debates, the Prime Minister (PM) replies to questions from Members of Parliament (MPs) including the Leader of the Opposition (LO) as well as backbenchers from all parties. The question-response exchanges reflect a controversy between the government side and the opposition side regarding plans and policies of the government (Mohammed, 2008). The institution of PMQs is the most important platform for opposition scrutiny in the British Parliament (Bevan and John, 2016). Since it was first introduced in 1961, PMQs has become a weekly central event of British political Wednesdays.

British parliamentary discourse practices have become a subject of recent scholarly research from the perspective of rituality (Thomas, 2004; Lovenduski, 2012; Bull *et al*., 2020), face issues (de Ayala, 2001; Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014), quality of the responses (Bates *et al*., 2014) and identity (Ilie, 2010; Van Dijk, 2010). Parliamentary questions are features of almost all national legislators. Despite this, there is very little research regarding the linguistic strategies that are used in the LO's questions

and what impact they have on the LO and the PM themselves and the wider audience. These questions, as Martin (2011) argues, provide recorded data on individual members and the parliament as a collective institution. Thus, for Martin (2011), analysing these questions aims at gaining more insights into the role and function of 'modern-day' parliament.

There appears to be several viewpoints on parliamentary discourse which is a sub-genre of political discourse (Rasiah, 2010). For example, Harris (2001) argues that the House of Commons should be regarded as a "community of practice", while Van Dijk (2004) views parliamentary discourse with reference to its contextual properties. PMQs has been regarded as a ritual practice, which has a long history in the United Kingdom, and whose interaction is constructed in terms of the conflict between the government and opposition (Ilie, 2003; Bayley, 2004). This view is supported by Lovenduski (2012) who states that this discourse is rule-governed and encompasses repeated activities and a symbolic practice that supports a gender regime in the House of Commons, that is "the traditional masculine culture by continually repeating performances of adversarial confrontation" (p. 336). This confrontation is described by Thomas (2004) as virtually meaningless, which contributes "much more heat than light to the process of holding the prime minister and his government to account" (p. 13).

Thomas's (2004) description has been apparent through his investigation of the notion of prime ministerial accountability in the United Kingdom. Thus, according to him, accountability is "the requirement for the representative to answer to those represented how they carry out their duties and responsibilities, to act upon criticisms or requirements made upon them and to accept at least some degree of responsibility for failure, incompetence or deceit" (pp. 4-5). For Thomas, the relationship between the PM and the parliament is "highly paradoxical. On the one hand, premiers are totally dependent on the House of Commons for their continued existence, while on the other, they are usually in a position of dominance over the majority party in parliament" (p.8). Thomas regards this as the main reason of control by the executive of the legislature in which the government can persuade the public. Hence, parliamentary questions can be one procedure that enables political scientists to approach the actions of legislators through an analysis of their careers and how they represent their constituencies (Bertelli and Dolan, 2009).

Alderman (1992: 69) views PMQs as "an essentially theatrical occasion in which the morale of the participants plays an important part." Particularly, it provides the LO an

opportunity to confront or embarrass the government side represented by the PM to support their party's morale. In addition, the LO is obliged to play the defensive role when, for example, the PM attacks their party's policy or actions. Consequently, PMQs, as Bull *et al.* (2020: 64) state, represents "an aggressive ritual setting in which the ritual role and rules only offer a façade to package aggression, and indeed may operate as interactional resources whereby participants can even increase the efficiency of their verbal attacks". As such, conflict has become typical of interactional rituals of British Parliament. According to Bull *et al.* (2020), PMQs discourse is relevant to pragmatic research on ritual in that it provides insights into "the operation of communal and institutionalised ritual practices" (p.65). Despite the notorious nature of PMQs, it operates within strict rights and obligations of parliamentary interaction.

In British PMQs, face relations have been shown to occur between MPs in the Chamber to increase conflict and to attack and threaten each other (de Ayala, 2001). British politicians, as de Ayala (2001) argues, employ politeness strategies to comply with a sort of "institutionalised hypocrisy" (p.143). She argues that the adversarial genre of PMQs is attributed to the aim of the oral questions addressed by the LO, who not only seeks information, but also has the opportunity to achieve political points. The House of Commons constitutes members of various parties and ideologies and they publicly expose their face. Consequently, relations between MPs become highly aggressive. Nevertheless, their communication is possible. This is due to "the principle of 'parliamentary language' which governs all the speech delivered by the Chamber" (de Ayala, 2001: 165). This principle is an outstanding feature of the House of Commons through which the content and form of questions and answers are controlled by the May's Treatise obligations (*ibid*). de Ayala (2001) outlines a set of these obligations as follows: (a) the main purpose of the oral questions is to obtain information and press for actions, (b) initial questions of the MPs are not spontaneous, but carefully prepared in advance, while supplementaries are used to surprise the Minister, and oblige him/her to improvise, (c) the MPs' (private) face is fully protected, since it cannot even be referred to, (d) MPs' public face can be attacked and exposed to reference and threat, (e) directing the interventions to the Speaker of the House and not to a particular person or party, and (f) expressions of unparliamentary language (e.g. abusive and insulting language and accusations of tying) are forbidden. Thus, these sets of rules are considered to be decisive for face consideration and thus, provide the best support for the Members' public image (pp. 148-149).

As an institutional setting, the British House of Commons has been described as a fruitful and interesting context for investigating the phenomena of politeness. Considering the House of Commons as a "community of practice", Harris (2001) analysed twelve sessions of PMQs between March and November 2000. Within the data of this limited period, Harris (2001: 455) extended Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness to ritual procedures of parliamentary discourse, where FTAs are intentionally intensified. This case, as Harris states, is rather different from legal contexts, such as lawyer-witness settings where deliberate employment of FTAs may torment the address into uncontrolled upheaval. In contrast, in PMQs, the PM does not typically lose control when challenged by Opposition MPs, who perceive their main role as criticising, embarrassing, and ridiculing the policies of the government.

Harris's pragmatic framework (2001) extends investigation to impoliteness with respect to a set of member expectations in PMQs discourse. Harris finds that mitigation strategies (those described by Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987) are rarely used in PMQs context. From this perspective, this study will further substantiate Harris' proposal that face aggravation is a salient feature of PMQ discourse, and that it may be necessary not only to establish a relationship between syntactic and pragmatic levels and mitigation strategies, but also to demonstrate such a relationship between these levels and FTAs. It would also be of interest to account for occasions on which both the LO and the PM attempt to enhance one another's positive face.

Harris' view is supported by Bull and Wells (2012), who note that face aggravation in PMQs is not only an acceptable form of behaviour, but also sanctioned and rewarded, and used by MPs to enhance their own status. Although MPs should abide by a question-response pattern and are restricted to certain traditions and conventions (controlled by the Speaker of the House) concerning unacceptable unparliamentary language, criticism and accusation are still permitted in the House of Commons. Given that MPs should avoid being explicitly abusive, insulting or misrepresenting another MP (Bull and Wells, 2012: 32), certain linguistic techniques should be employed to remain within the conventions of parliamentary language. Bull and Wells' systematic investigation reveals that mitigation is one possible technique. As such, Bull and Wells have identified five mitigating devices in PMQs debates: 'third party language', 'humorous discourse', 'quotation', 'accusing or insulting the opponent' and 'opponent's mistake'. In addition, they state that these devices serve to keep the discourse within the constraints of acceptable parliamentary language.

According to Bull and Wells (2012), Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness cannot provide a fitting description of PMQs, a discourse where FTAs are intentionally constructed. This contrasts with Murphy (2014) who proposes that this theory should not be completely abandoned with respect to PMQs discourse.

Murphy (2014) highlights Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness to show how FTAs can be minimised by employing mitigation strategies and drawing special attention to those of Brown and Levinson's politeness output strategies that such mitigation is related. However, Murphy refines and clarifies some points that he believes necessary for their theory in order to provide an adequate description of PMQs. Murphy identifies strategies that are employed in PMQs discourse and served as mitigation. These strategies are 'praising another aspect of government policy', 'asserting the negative consequence of government action is unintended', 'minimising the criticism', 'criticising the opposition', 'making a supportive comment unrelated to the FTA', 'commenting on one's respect for the hearer' and 'acting as a mouthpiece'. For Murphy, mitigation strategies can be one feature of MPs' linguistic repertoire and are manipulated to minimise the threat involved in their utterances to the addressee. However, mitigation may have a further function in PMQs discourse than avoiding or reducing the effect of FTAs. Therefore, it is still necessary to consider mitigation with respect to contextual factors, such as institutional norms and expectations, to interpret mitigation discursively in the adversarial discourse of PMQs.

Despite the obligations of institutional conventions, Tsakona (2009) states that in Western democracies, the confrontational interaction of political debates is marked by mutual aggression of the parties, and the aim is to damage the public image of the opponents and the party they represent while simultaneously maintaining self-public image. Consequently, conflictual behaviour is expected and prominent in political argumentation. However, such behaviour can also be more persuasive than other types of argumentation, such as logical or legal argumentation. From this perspective, parliamentarians, and more specifically, party leaders are expected to show their political skills through their linguistic performance to enhance their leadership qualities (Chilton, 2004). For Ilie (2003), parliamentary interaction is a competition for not only fulfilling leadership roles, but also for gaining power and popularity. She furthers that political power here does not only mean an institutional status, but also an interactional skill. In the House of Commons, power relationships are reserved by the challenger who has less power than the challenged participant (Harris, 2001: 468). Thus, FTAs are addressed to the

most powerful participant who is the PM. This means that while conveying FTAs, the challenger exercises power over the challenged opponent (*ibid*).

One important aspect of leadership is humour which has been examined by a variety of studies. For example, Holmes and Marra (2006) argue that leaders employ humour strategically to establish solidarity and emphasise collegiality. Furthermore, it can be used as a means of attenuating FTAs involved in the hierarchical relationship in the workplace where people, for example, are needed to respond to critical comments or accept suggestions with which they may not fully agree (*ibid*). However, Stewart (2011) describes humour as "an effective tool for politicians to either make themselves more accessible to the public or their opponents less attractive, especially on television" (p.202). In her study on Greek parliament, Tsakona (2009) finds that humour can be used as a means of expressing criticism in a socially acceptable manner. In other words, it serves as "a means of attacking the opponent in a mitigated and rule-obedient way and of constructing different aspects of identity" (233). In addition, it helps to construct and damage "participant's public image and political identity as well as attacking the opponent without violating parliamentary rules of behaviour" (p. 219). Tsakona notes that the PM may employ humour for two different purposes. First, for constructing a positive image of self by projecting the identity of "a pleasant and humorous person who can contribute to relaxation even in serious circumstances" (p. 230). Second, for degrading the LO who is regarded to be the humorous target. This can be achieved by eliciting laughter from own party members at the LO's expense, but without appearing explicitly aggressive or impolite. However, Tsakona argues that the boundary between the humorous and the serious mode is negotiable. Thereby, "it cannot be taken for granted that humour will eventually be accepted" (p. 233). In other words, the LO, may refuse to accept the humorous discourse presented by the PM by opting for a serious mode. This strategy allows the LO to project the identity of a serious politician who respects parliamentary norms and does not make fun of his role and responsibilities. Simultaneously, the LO can present the PM as a politician who disrespects parliamentary norms and lacks the seriousness and sense of responsibility required (*ibid*). Furthermore, Tsakona finds that humour can also be used as a means of 'diversion' (or evasion), a way of distracting public attention from the important issues and "direct it towards his personal image as a humorous person and a powerful politician" (p. 231). In the PMQs interaction of British parliament, I investigate humour (or sarcasm) as a mitigation strategy and the role it plays in attenuating potential threat to the addressee, and simultaneously maintaining identity and leadership qualities (Chapter 5).

Given that PMQs interaction is about question-response patterns, the quality of these patterns has been examined by Bates *et al.* (2014). The authors have conducted a comparative study of PMQs from Thatcher to Cameron and analysed the changes in the character of PMQs from 1979 to 2011. Over the period sampled, Bates *et al.* (2014) note that this parliamentary practice has become both "rowdier and increasingly dominated by the main party leaders" (p. 253), whereas there has been a gradual exclusion of all backbenchers. They furthered that PMQs has become a matter of scoring points rather than serious prime ministerial scrutiny (*ibid*). The authors analyse questions ('straight', 'helpful' and 'unanswerable') and the answers ('full reply', 'non-reply', and 'intermediate reply') provided by the last five British prime ministers. The authors rank the PMs (i.e. best to worst) as follows: Thatcher, Brown, Major, Cameron and Blair based on the quality in terms of the fullness of the reply. Bates *et al.*'s (2014) investigation of the changes in the character and nature of PMQs throughout time was preceded by investigations by Harris (2001) and Bull and Wells (2012) who conducted a linguistic analysis of questions and responses in PMQs over a limited time period.

According to Bull (2008b), the pattern of question-response sequences may require the PM to provide highly specific information. Sometimes, such information can be unavailable, or the PM may not wish to provide it. Subsequently, opposition MPs may then provide this information to embarrass or attack the PM. In other words, unanswerable questions can be exploited as a means of implying FTAs, allowing oppositions to criticise the PM for evasiveness. Evasion is regarded as a "routine strategy for responding to a question without answering it" (Dillon, 1990: 154). This exploitation can be one procedure that is used to express face-saving during PMQs interaction. In her study on Australian parliamentary questions time, Rasiah (2010) analysed ministers' responses to questions on the Iraq conflict. Rasiah identified levels of evasion and different techniques in answering questions. She noted that the way the question was addressed influenced the types and nature of response given. She found that "hostile Opposition questions are more likely to be evaded since they are usually closed yes/no questions containing negative presuppositions" (p.666). Although the most prominent questions in the data were yes/no questions and WH-questions, which were explicitly presented as polite requests, those ministers evaded answering properly and even counter-attacked the negative tone of the Opposition's question.

A more extensive explanation has been provided by Fetzer (2015) regarding forms and functions of quotations in British PMQs. She classifies quotations into 'other' and 'self-quotations'. These quotations are used strategically to achieve the following goals: (1) intensify the force of an argument; (2) demonstrate ideological coherence or non-coherence; (3) construct, reconstruct and deconstruct the credibility of self and others; and (4) express alignment and disalignment with the quoted comment. These goals indicate that quotation can be another strategy that conveys mitigation through indirectly constructing FTAs to the opponent while, at the same time, keeping within the conventions of the acceptable parliamentary language.

The notions of FTAs and mitigation, as Chilton (2004: 40) argues, can play a crucial role in providing more insight into the practices of political talk. These notions are useful in particular forms such as euphemism, evasion, solidarity and exclusion, and persuasion. Thus, when a politician tries to negotiate certain issues (e.g. requesting sacrifices, issuing bad news, giving warnings), FTAs are expressed through linguistic techniques to 'lessen the affront'. It is necessary for a politician to create a balance between addressing positive face strategies exemplified by presenting characteristics of the in-group (e.g. patriotism and brotherhood) and addressing strategies of negative face, exemplified in redressing threats to the freedom and security of not only the group but also the members who belong to that group.

For Lovenduski (2012), the way a politician projects him/herself in PMQs has important effects on the public. Lovenduski (2012) argues that "PMQs have a crucial political representation dimension because they underpin a widely accepted socially exclusive definition of what politics is, and of who and what it takes to become a politician" (p. 315). These effects should be concluded with reference to the context and the performance of a politician. For example, MPs' performances would determine whether they gain or lose the respect of the public and media. Thus, this heavy responsibility would affect the way they present themselves as parliamentarians.

Based on the analysis of interactions between LOs and PMs (Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Tony Blair, Gordon Brown, and David Cameron), Waddle *et al.* (2019) have recently examined personal attacks in PMQs. They consider disagreement in LO-PM exchanges as personally disrespectful and thereby a personal attack. However, expressions of disagreement "may be couched in language which mollifies the effect, making it more polite and showing an element of respect, thereby indicating the disagreement is not

personal" (p. 67). However, Waddle *et al.* found that David Cameron used fewer personal attacks when responding to Jeremy Corbyn as contrasted with his attacks to Jeremy Corbyn's predecessor, Miliband. In return, Jeremy Corbyn (who calls for a politer approach to politics) used fewer personal attacks on David Cameron at the end of his premiership in 2016. The authors attribute this to reciprocated politeness, or David Cameron's consideration to avoid damaging his own face. They also note that the aggressive style of the PM is owing to his/her want of not appearing weak.

As presented above, PMQs is a fruitful area for examining mitigation and facework. Prior studies have identified various linguistic strategies that contribute to convey mitigation in PMQs. Therefore, this study will examine the extent of these kinds of strategies in these data to substantiate their roles in the adversarial interaction between the Opposition party leader and the PM. Consequently, the relation between self-presentation and identity construction in parliamentary discourse will be considered in the next section.

2.5.1 Self-Presentation and Identity Construction in Parliamentary Context

Since PMQs are broadcast on TV, they are very much a showcase for each politician (Fetzer and Bull, 2012). As a result, politicians tend to display positive self-presentation through a strategic move of impression formation, and such self-presentation boosts positive qualities as political leaders (Van Dijk, 2006). Self-presentation can be synonymous with the construction of political identity (Johansson, 2008). Identity is a product that emerges in interaction (Locher, 2011). It is defined by Bucholtz and Hall (2005) as "the social positioning of self and other" (p. 586) and is conveyed through linguistic behaviour and situated in specific interactions and contexts. The construction of identity through linguistic means has been the subject of study in parliamentary discourse. It is worth mentioning that parliamentary interaction is not only a matter of problem-solving, but also, as Ilie (2010b) argues, a way of constructing, challenging and co-constructing identities through the linguistic strategies used within that interaction. Thus, Ilie (2010b: 58) refers to the term 'identity' as:

> The ongoing process of parliamentarians' defining their positions and roles: the way a parliamentary speaker is placed and self-placed in the societal system and its political parties/groups, the way a parliamentary speaker conceives of and addresses his/her interlocutors, and the way in which a parliamentary speaker is perceived, addressed and referred to by his/her fellow parliamentarians, and by a multiple audience.

In her chapter on identity co-construction in parliamentary discourse, Ilie (2010b: 7) notes that parliamentary identity can be "constructed by MPs complying with institutionally established communicative constraints, while they resort to particular linguistic choices, discourse strategies and emotional/rational appeals to circumvent the institutional constraints" (*ibid*). Ilie also provides a pragma-rhetorical analysis of examples of parliamentary confrontation selected from the Hansard transcripts of Parliamentary proceedings in the UK Parliament. She explores "the impact of parliamentary discursive and behavioural interaction on processes of local and global identity construction" (p. 58), displaying the interplay between political adversaries, shifting institutional roles, and the multiple identities the parliamentarians perform within ongoing parliamentary interaction.

For politicians, it is important to lead others to believe that they (i.e., politicians) possess various characteristics, and hence, they engage in self-presentation to enhance their self-status and influence others. Impression management, or self-presentation is defined by Goffman (1969) as maintaining positive impressions in the eyes of others. In his book *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Goffman highlights the importance of self-presentation in defining an individual's position and role, facilitating the performance, and regulating the tone and direction of an interaction. In addition, he implies that people engage in self-presentation to monitor their impact on others; even when they are challenged or embarrassed, they are forced to engage in impression strategies, such as face-saving strategies, designed to counter or repair the damaged image. In political discourse, Johansson (2008) calls self-presentation "the presentation of political self" which means using words or actions to create a persuasive relationship with the public to gain popularity and support. According to Johansson, self-presentation is functionally synonymous with the representation of political identity.

The aspects of political identities in parliamentary discourse have also been the focus of Van Dijk (2010). He examined parliamentary debates in British and Spanish Parliaments in the speeches of Tony Blair and José María Aznar with reference to the war in Iraq. The study reveals that power serves as a key role in constructing political identities. It contributes to present how Blair and Aznar claim their identities as politicians, MPs, and leaders, and illustrate how these multiple identities can be instantiated in the discourse.

In contexts where participants encounter potential conflict of interest, mitigation, negotiation, and indirectness are effective means of saving face and maintaining good relations and doing leadership (Holmes, 2006). In a study on 'doing' leadership in the

context of British party-political speeches, Fetzer and Bull (2012) state that politicians employ facework to "deconstruct the leadership qualities of their opponent, while at the same time intending to construct the leadership qualities of self" (p. 130). They identify certain qualities of good leaders, such as decisive, principled, sensible, and caring which are conceptualised in terms of politeness. Furthermore, these qualities are employed strategically to generate implicatures to guide the audience to construe the intended meaning. However, Fetzer and Bull's (2012) study focuses on the pragmatic realisation of doing leadership in primarily monologue-oriented modes of discourse. Thus, more considerations should be taken to identify how leadership qualities are negotiated in political exchanges (dialogue-oriented mode), more specifically, between adversaries (a situation which can be found in parliamentary interaction) in order to examine the role that these qualities play in maintaining or degrading leadership identity.

According to previous research, self-presentation and identity construction are interrelated in parliamentary discourse. This interrelation is foregrounded through certain linguistic strategies, and thus I will take into consideration the role of mitigation in fulfilling this purpose in PMQs interaction. Therefore, based on a critical evaluation of the foregoing literature concerning both research into mitigation and into parliamentary interaction of PMQs debates, this study will conduct a qualitative analysis to examine the role and function of mitigation strategies in such debates. The purpose is to examine how these strategies contribute to politicians' self-presentation and identity construction. In this respect, I would argue that politicians can manipulate mitigation strategies as a means of expressing criticism indirectly and presenting their political self to construct or degrade political identity. Thus, the study will end with a discussion of this new research aim which could be operationalised in practice, especially in the context of adversarial interaction. Thus, a major aim of the study is to demonstrate the role of mitigation in conflictual interaction. Another goal is to show how institutional norms and constraints of parliamentary language influence the use of mitigation.

2.6 Summary

This chapter has discussed a body of literature dealing with facework in general and politeness, mitigation, relational work, and PMQs discourse in particular. However, this body of literature does not claim to be all-inclusive, but rather aims to provide an idea of the lines of research that have been conducted in the area. Therefore, this study will combine some of this literature with that of examining the linguistic strategies, more

specifically, mitigation strategies, employed by MPs in PMQs interaction. A closer look to the literature on mitigation, however, reveals several gaps and shortcomings. Although it provides criteria for the identification of FTAs in parliamentary discourse, it does not offer procedures for how mitigation is employed and perceived by adversarial leaders during parliamentary interaction. Accordingly, the study aims to broaden and deepen the research on the use of mitigation in PMQs and to fill these gaps, as there is little investigation to date that explores mitigation issues in this context. Thus, mitigation will be investigated from a sociopragmatic perspective, in addition to a pragmalinguistic perspective to communication.

Together the studies presented in this chapter provide insights into the relation between mitigation, politeness, face and identity construction in different forms of discourse, such as ordinary conversation as well as workplace and online contexts. However, previous studies have almost exclusively focused on mitigation as a means of attenuating FTAs rather than addressing its discursive functions with respect to relational work in a rule-governed and conflictual context of interaction, like the British parliament. The existing accounts (to my knowledge) do not cover specific strategies used in parliamentary interaction, where FTAs are intentional and rewarded (Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012).

Therefore, the aim of my study is to describe the use and function of mitigation in adversarial interaction. Research on mitigation (or politeness) (e.g. Aijmer, 1996; Harris, 2001, Locher and Watts, 2005, 2008; Bull and Wells, 2012; Fetzer and Bull, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Leech, 2014) will be considered to find to what extent it can inform this study. The analysis will be achieved by examining extracts to demonstrate how mitigation emerges during LO-PM interaction. The reason is to have a view towards expanding our understanding of facework within the scope of interactional norms of appropriateness, why it is employed, and how it functions along with self-presentation and identity construction. Given that mitigation is part of politeness phenomenon, the view taken in this study is that mitigation can in certain contexts be more about displaying politic than displaying polite behaviour.

Given that the form and content of oral questions are governed by institutional rules of conduct, mitigation functions should be investigated in types of questions addressed by the LO and along with their effects on the PM's responses. The question then becomes how best to define mitigation in parliamentary interaction. One feasible method of analysing

mitigation is in terms of relational work. This would help to find out in what ways mitigation strategies reflect institution-specific constraints along with politicians' aims and purposes. Since the data is rather a dialogue-oriented mode (question-response interaction), this will allow comparisons to be made between different aspects of self-presentation and leadership identity for the PMs David Cameron and his successor Theresa May during their interaction with the LO, Jeremy Corbyn.

The next chapter describes the procedures and methods used in this investigation, outlining the methodological approach, discussing the framework of analysis and the process of data collection to provide answers to the research questions of this thesis.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological process of investigating how and why mitigation is used in PMQs discourse and introduces the theoretical framework underpinning the analysis. I will discuss the rationale for the approach chosen to data analysis and present the steps in the analysis. Given that the focus of the study is an adversarial type of discourse, the linguistic interactions are always face-threatening. The approach is qualitative, located at the interface between pragmatics and discourse analysis in order to examine mitigation in question-response dynamic of PMQs debates. The qualitative approach allows for situated understanding of mitigation and facework in the confrontational interaction of PMQs and provides a way to demonstrate discursive functions and patterns of mitigation in this discourse. Through this qualitative research, I analyse the data with respect to the institutional rules which guide the conduct of interaction as well as other contextual factors. My aim is to argue that mitigation is one important aspect of facework within PMQs debates as it is a pragmatic technique and an index of leadership identity, but I wish to problematise the relationship between mitigation and politeness.

As mentioned above, this study aims to explore and understand the discursive function of mitigation and its relationship with face and politeness in PMQs debates. As such, extracts from LO-PM interaction will be analysed to examine the ways in which political leaders use mitigation strategies within that practice. Accordingly, the research goals are:

1. To further the latest discussion on mitigation, face, and politeness with respect to the question of norms of appropriateness,

2. To further the current theoretical discussion on the linkage of mitigation, face, self-presentation, and leadership identity, and

3. To analyse and examine empirical data on conflictual communication and discuss the role of mitigation with respect to the institutional characteristic of parliamentary context.

In addressing these goals, this study is guided by the basic research question: *how do political leaders employ mitigation in the ongoing interaction of PMQs?* This is complemented by the following research questions:

1. What are the linguistic features that entail mitigation in parliamentary communication? (Chapter 4)

2. How is leadership style and identity enacted by using mitigation strategies and relational work? (Chapter 5)

3. How do mitigated questions contribute to relational work in the ongoing PMQs interaction? (Chapter 6)

To link these research questions with the theoretical aim of the study, the study will adopt a qualitative research design, as it offers an effective way of identifying and characterising the types of FTAs that are performed, and mitigation strategies that are employed during parliamentary interaction. I will demonstrate to what extent political leaders employ mitigation to achieve their political goals within the conflictual interaction of parliamentary discourse. Therefore, the study aims to bring a new understanding on the topic of mitigation and its discursive function in the adversarial and competitive interaction of PMQs.

This chapter begins by outlining the priorities of qualitative research and a pragmatic perspective (3.2). I give an overview of the theoretical framework for analysis, namely Locher and Watts' Relational Work (3.3), followed by an overview of the data context (3.4) which informs the subsequent analysis. I then explain the data corpus for the study (3.5), the transcription process (3.5.1), sampling (3.5.2) and coding (3.5.3). The coding section is followed by a summary of prior studies' categorisation of FTAs and mitigation in this context as a precursor to my own analysis (3.6, 3.6.1 and 3.6.2). Finally, a discussion of a pilot study is offered in section 3.6.3 and the steps of analysis that were carried out (3.7), before finishing with an overall summary (3.8).

3.2 Analytical Approach

The data was examined mainly by conducting qualitative research to ensure in-depth understanding of participants' behaviour within interaction and the reasons that govern producing such behaviour. The qualitative approach facilitated an examination of how and why politicians used mitigated utterances in sequences of talk instead of using direct speech acts. The qualitative approach was, however, supplemented by some quantification (using Excel and Nvivo Pro 12) to obtain overall impressions and tendencies of the interactants' behaviour. The quantification is represented by frequencies of different mitigation strategies, which as Edelsky and Adams (1990) state, are "tallied for the purpose

of obtaining some concrete picture of impressions rather than for testing hypotheses" (p. 174), and enable patterns in the data to emerge with greater clarity (Dey, 1993).

Previous studies on politeness and facework in political discourse and parliamentary discourse, more specifically, PMQs (e.g. Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Crespo-Fernández, 2014) have also adopted a qualitative approach due to the opportunity it provides to enable linguistic patterns and processes to be explored and explained thoroughly (Rapley, 2011). For Alasuutari (2010), qualitative research provides a thorough examination of the data that enables "the researcher to point out recurrent categorisations, articulations, and discourses in their contexts and to expose interpretation made about the data for critical inspection" (p. 148). This perspective stresses the crucial role of a pragmatic framework in analysing PMQs data.

Pragmatics is defined as the study of speaker and contextual meaning, and hence, the focus is upon the interpretation of what people mean by their utterances with respect to the context in which these utterances occur, rather than what the phrases in the utterances mean by themselves (Leech, 1983; Yule, 1996; Mey, 2001). Therefore, pragmatics aims to investigate the invisible meaning during interaction and how an utterance communicates more than is said. Making meaning, as Thomas (1995) states, is a "dynamic process, involving negotiation of meaning between speaker and hearer, the context of utterance (physical, social and linguistic) and the meaning potential of an utterance" (p.22). Accordingly, pragmatics is concerned with language use in context with respect to speaker's communicative intentions and the strategies the addressees employ to determine what these intentions are (Davis, 1991).

Central to pragmatics is Speech Act Theory (Austin 1962, Searle 1969), which is a tool for interpreting the meaning and functions of words and utterances. The term 'speech acts' refers to utterances that do not only present information, but also perform actions such as 'requesting', 'commanding', 'questioning' and 'informing' (Yule, 1996: 132). Austin (1962) classifies speech acts into three levels: Locutionary (the physical act of speaking that produce the grammatical structure of the utterance), Illocutionary force (the speaker's intention behind this utterance which is internal to the locutionary act: the same locution can have different possible meanings depending on the context) and Perlocutionary (the effect of that utterance on the addressee which is external to the locutionary act). However, mitigation is distinguished from speech acts, because, as Fraser (1980) states, it

involves the effect that arises because of the speech acts. For example, mitigation is used to soften the effect of an order or make a criticism more palatable.

Within an interaction, a speaker has the choice to make the intended meaning explicit (direct speech acts) or state it indirectly (indirect speech acts). An utterance is considered as a 'direct speech act' when there is a direct relationship between the structure and the communicative function of the utterance to state explicitly the intended meaning of that utterance. For example, a speaker uses a declarative to make a statement, and an interrogative to ask a question (Yule, 1996: 133). On the other hand, an utterance is seen as 'indirect speech act' when there is indirect relationship between the structure and the communicative function of the utterance. For example, a speaker may use a declarative or interrogative to make a request. In this case, the intended meaning of the utterance may not be stated explicitly, and it is the addressee's task to recognise the intended meaning of that utterance (*ibid*). For Yule (1996), indirect speech acts can be more polite than direct speech acts and, thus, have a close connection to politeness (p.133).

Both direct and indirect speech acts can be used to threaten the addressee's face (public image), and thus called 'face threatening acts' (FTAs) (Brown and Levinson, 1987). FTAs are performed, for example when a speaker makes a request, gives an order, or expresses a disagreement. Depending on how serious an FTA is, as Meyerhoff (2006) argues, more or less action will be required to mitigate the potential damage to the addressee's face. An FTA can be so trivial that it does not require very much mitigating action which is called by Brown and Levinson (1987) 'going on record' or doing the FTA 'baldly'. However, an FTA might be so serious that "the speaker cannot bear to undertake it- in this case, silence, or self-censorship, is the ultimate mitigation" (Meyerhoff, 2006: 94). In between these two extremes, mitigation can be employed to redress the damage to the speaker or the addressee by hinting at or indirectly committing the FTA (*ibid*). Therefore, speech acts can be a useful tool for examining mitigation in interaction.

Brown and Yule (1983) emphasise that the discourse analyst necessarily takes a pragmatic approach to the study of language in use by considering the context in which a piece of discourse occurs. Within interaction, "adjacency pairs […] do not happen in a vacuum" (Duranti 1997: 267), and thus "context of situation" which refers to not only the relationship between the speaker and the hearer, but also the environment, time and place (the setting) of producing an utterance is required for interpreting that utterance (Song, 2010: 876). Therefore, this study demonstrates a combination of insights from pragmatics

and from discourse analysis to obtain an understanding of how meaning can be constructed and negotiated in discourse.

Discourse analysis not only considers the relationship between language and the contexts in which it is used but is also concerned with the description and analysis of both spoken and written interactions (Paltridge and Wang, 2010). Discourse analysis, as Leech (2014) points out, has "both strengths and weaknesses of a detailed qualitative approach to data analysis" (p.256). However, he highlights that "the increasingly extensive use of video recording will ensure that in the future the preservation of discourse data in sound and vision, as well as in transcribed form, will add both breadth and depth to the analysis of speech in context" (*ibid*). Therefore, this study uses video recorded data as a primary source for qualitative analysis (see Section 3.5) because these videos, as Elderkin-Thompson and Waitzkin (1999) maintain, "have the potential of providing a rich source of data" (p. 251).

Drawing on video data of PMQs interaction, some contextual factors, such as nonverbal and paralinguistic communication are considered part of the communicative meaning of mitigation in relation to the context of a debate. For example, body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice contribute to capturing how utterances are said and thus, they can be crucial in interpreting the data (Baily, 2008). As such, qualitative research has been described as "an interpretative, naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005: 3). Therefore, it is concerned with understanding the meanings that people attach to actions, beliefs, and values.

Context, then, is crucial to the assignment of meaning and thus plays a central role in discourse analysis (Song, 2010). It helps to "eliminate ambiguity", "indicating referents" and "detecting conversational implicature" (Song, 2010: 878-879). Drawing on contextually available information, as Roberts (2004) states, enables a satisfactory theoretical account of how context influences the interpretation of meaning. Roberts (2004: 197-198) identifies three ways of characterising discourse context. First, the actual discourse event which is associated with a very concrete situation including the speaker and addressee(s), the actual sound wave, physical environment, and the topic of the exchange. Second, the linguistic content of the verbal exchange which is associated with syntactic and prosodic structure.

Third, the structure of the information that is presupposed or conveyed by the participants in an exchange.

In investigating how a speaker uses language in context, the analyst, as Brown and Yule (1983) state, is more concerned with the relationship between the speaker and the utterance than with the relationship between one sentence to another, regardless of their use. Using pragmatic concepts like 'presupposition' and 'implicature', as Brown and Yule emphasise, are required in discourse analysis as they enable the analyst to describe what the speaker and the hearer are doing. In addition to the role of the main interactants of the speech event (the speaker who produces the utterance and the addressee who is the recipient of the utterance), the audience has a role as overhearers and may contribute to the specification of the speech event (Hymes, 1964 cited in Brown and Yule, 1983: 38).

Since direct criticism, accusation and ridiculing are prohibited in PMQs interaction, utterances that build on presuppositions or construct implicatures can be FTAs to the addressee (Harris, 2001). Presupposition refers to "what a speaker assumes is true or is known by the hearer" (Yule, 1996: 132). For Stalnaker (1972), a presupposition is linguistically manifested in virtue of the statement a speaker makes, the question he/she asks or the comment he/she issues that is taken to be common ground for the participants in the context.

Implicature is used by Grice (1975) to account for what a speaker can imply as distinct from what the speaker literally says. In other words, the speaker conveys an additional meaning to the literal meaning of his/her utterance, and that is concluded depending on the meaning of the utterance in terms of the context shared by the speaker and the hearer. As such, context contributes a great deal in detecting "conversational implicature" (Grice, 1975). Implicature can be generated by flouting Grice's (1975) maxims of Cooperative Principles. These maxims are Quality (what the speaker believes to be true), Quantity (to give the most helpful amount of information), Relation (to be relevant) and Manner (to be clear, brief and orderly). Since violating norms of polite behaviour is acceptable in the House of Commons if it is within the bounds of institutional rules of parliamentary language (as will be discussed in Section 3.4), I argue that mitigation can be used as a way of delivering FTAs indirectly and these messages may breach Grice's rules of clarity to achieve their strategic functions.

Relating politeness to the degree of institutionalisation, which is relevant to the current study, Aijmer (1996) focuses on conversational routines in English. She discusses and defines the illocutionary force of routines and distinguishes between the form and illocutionary function of these routines. She proposes a variety of types that encode strategies of requests (Section 3.6.2), such as mitigated indirect requests in the form of declaratives and interrogatives, agentless passive, prosodic modification, lexical mitigating devices, e.g. 'please' and 'just', defocalisation, and hedged performatives. Aijmer proposes a variety of strategies that encode requests, such as 'ability' (e.g. can you), 'permission' (e.g. may I) and 'willingness' (e.g. will you). Most of these strategies represent routinised requests whose effect is made depending on whether the speaker uses the pronoun 'I' (speaker-oriented) or 'you' (hearer-oriented). Aijmer finds that a speaker-oriented strategy is a characteristic of offers, which belong to Searle's (1969) commissive category of speech acts, through which the speaker proposes to do or provide something for the benefit of the addressee (Leech, 2014: 180) while most of the hearer-oriented strategies are requests, which belong to Searle's directive category of speech acts, and typically serve as mitigated imperatives. So, in order to understand the routinised speech acts, we must go beyond their linguistic and formal features by studying their pragmatics. According to Aijmer, due to the constraints imposed by the situation on language, pragmatics should be considered alongside the syntax and semantics when analysing indirect speech acts (p.196).

Politeness, as Leech (2014) argues, is about the interface between pragmalinguistics and sociopragmatics. Leech makes a distinction between pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic dimensions of politeness. He states that pragmalinguistic dimension involves the linguistic resources for politeness, whereas sociopragmatic dimension involves "convergence on, or divergence from, a norm of what is regarded as appropriately polite for a given situational parameters" (p.44). He furthers that the degree to which the utterance is sociopragmatically polite can be worked out by "registering the number and kinds of strategies of mitigation employed (that is, the degree of pragmalinguistic politeness) and comparing this with what would be judged the norm of politeness in the context" (p. 52). However, Leech (2014) pays more attention on the pragmalinguistic side of politeness, the area that he describes as "somewhat neglected of late" (p. ix). Drawing on the work of Austin, Searle, Grice and Aijmer, Leech provides a survey of politeness in present-day English covering all speech acts that are associated with politeness. He notes that there are many of lexicogrammatical devices such as hedged performatives, modal verbs, 'defocalisation'; avoidance of second-person (and first person) reference, negation

(intensification) of commendatory words such as adjectives, agentless passive, and why-questions involving persons other than the speaker that can be used to mitigate the face-threatening impact of potential offensive speech events, such as criticisms, complaints and disagreements. Although this list of devices, as he argues, is incomplete, it is "enough to show something of the range of pragmalinguistic resources available" (p. 194). For Leech (2014: 191-192), these resources are often used to "indicate the speaker's annoyance or dissatisfaction with a "target" who is considered to be guilty of some offence affecting the speaker, but who is not the hearer but rather some third party". However, such resources when associated with a complaint or a criticism can show an effect of mitigation through their tentativeness in raising matters of offensive speech events in PMQs interaction. However, mitigation resources when associated with acts such as, offering, thanking, complimenting or extending sympathy can reflect positively on self-presentation by performing a "face-enhancing act" to the speaker' face rather than enhancing the addressee's face (p. 99). Accordingly, the pragmalinguistic side of politeness will be considered when analysing mitigation by drawing on Leech's lexicogrammatical categories to demonstrate its role in PMQs interaction (Section 3.6.2).

Considering the traditional accounts of pragmatics discussed above, this study will draw on insights from Austin's (1962) and Searle's (1969) notions of speech acts and Grice's (1975) implicatures to provide a toolkit to investigate how the participants construct and negotiate meanings of mitigation during question-response interaction of PMQs. Therefore, this study will combine these non-discursive insights with discursive insights of 'relational work' (Watts, 2003; Locher and Watts, 2005). These insights will contribute to our understanding of the connection between linguistic form of mitigation and meaning (Grainger, 2013), whereas the post-modern insights will demonstrate the discursive functions of mitigation during the interaction as a pragmatic phenomenon.

3.3 Theoretical Framework for Analysis: Locher and Watts' Model of Relational Work

The study also draws on Locher and Watts' (2005; 2008) framework of 'relational work' to investigate how mitigation can be used to display aspects of appropriate behaviour in continuously negotiated and interpersonal relations constituting political argumentation. Locher (2004, 2010a, 2010b), Watts (2008) and Locher and Watts (2005; 2008) propose a discursive approach to (im)politeness they term 'relational work' which refer to "all aspects of the work invested by individuals in the construction, maintenance, reproduction and

transformation of interpersonal relationships among those engaged in social practice" (Locher and Watts, 2008: 96).

The linguists have broadened the scope of relational work to include not only polite, but also impolite and aggressive behaviour. In this respect, this framework comprises the relational and interpersonal sides of communication and the impact of linguistic choices on relationships (Locher, 2012). For Locher *et al.* (2015), understanding politeness in a particular context requires knowing norms of appropriate behaviour in that particular context. Focusing on the adversarial interaction of PMQs, more specifically the heated exchanges between LO and the PM, the framework of relational work enables mitigation to be investigated in the context of the British Parliament where the institutional interaction is governed by communicative norms of conduct.

For Locher and Watts (2005), communicative norms can be exploited in forms of aggressive and conflictual behaviour. Accordingly, they argue that relational work is not always oriented to "the maintenance of harmony, cooperation and social equilibrium" (p. 11). Therefore, Locher (2004) states that relational work involves all categories of verbal behaviour that encompass both appropriate and inappropriate behaviour.

Locher and Watts (2005) criticise Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) theory of politeness in that it is a theory of 'facework' which describes only polite and appropriate behaviour focusing on face-threat mitigation. As a result, they adopt the model of relational work to move beyond polite behaviour by including impolite and inappropriate behaviour as well.

The current research on mitigation does not systematically distinguish between politeness addressed to positive and negative face. The claim is that although FTAs in PMQs interaction are sanctioned and rewarded (Bull and Wells, 2012), these threats are constructed to both faces; the hearer's positive self-image and his/her freedom of action. This may occur due to the potential effect of FTAs which are likely to be used to challenge the politician's positive self-image. These FTAs which can be constructed by requests, criticisms, or accusations to improve performance, can impede the politician's (as a hearer) autonomy. As the discussion of mitigation in PMQs interaction will reveal, politicians may engage in multiple types of facework (i.e. face-threatening, face-saving, face-enhancing) (Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Ilie, 2018) to achieve their communicative goals during the interaction.

Relational work pays tribute to the fact that "people are social beings who use language not only to communicate facts, but also to shape their identities" (Locher, 2006: 251). Therefore, it acknowledges "the dynamic and emergent nature of identity construction" (Locher, 2012: 45). Locher (2012) furthers that this framework relies on the concept of face and norms of interaction and it is related to (im)politeness through the notion of norms. These norms are related to an understanding of not only participants' roles and identity construction, but also "judgements of behaviour according to these norms" (p.48). In other words, knowing the norms of interaction is crucial in understanding the interpersonal effect of linguistic choice. Knowledge of these norms contributes in judging what behaviour is or is not within an acceptable range, if a speaker wishes to threaten the addressee's face (*ibid*).

The reason for choosing the framework of relational work was partly the lack of previous interest in mitigation on parliamentary discourse, but also to test the framework in a new context. The basis of this framework has been formed by studies of politeness in family discourse, online interaction, and political interviews to demonstrate the discursive struggle over politeness in these contexts. As such, the focus of previous work has been on using this framework to approach politeness discursively with respect to evaluations of norm-oriented behaviour (Locher, 2006). However, the current study aims to demonstrate to what extent this framework contributes to determining what is appropriate behaviour in the adversarial debates of PMQs by virtue of institutional rules of conduct.

Relational work covers "the entire continuum from polite and appropriate to impolite and inappropriate behaviour" (Locher, 2004: 51). As a result, it is broader in scope than facework as it comprises all interpersonal aspects of face-saving, face enhancing as well as face-threatening and face-damaging (Locher, 2012). It constitutes 'polite', 'nonpolite', 'impolite' and 'overpolite' behaviour as presented in table 1 which is adopted from Locher and Watts (2005:12).

Table 1 Locher and Watts' Relational Work and its Polite (Shaded) Version (2005:12)

Relational work			
negatively marked	Unmarked	positively marked	negatively marked
impolite	nonpolite	polite	over-polite
non-politic/inappropriate	politic/appropriate	politic/appropriate	non-politic/inappropriate

This means that relational work is not restricted to "studying merely the polite variant of the interpersonal aspect of a communication as Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987) have predominantly done, but can equally focus on impolite or rude aspects of social behaviour" (Locher and Watts, 2008: 78). However, Locher and Watts (2005) stress individuals' cognitive conceptualisations in interpreting behaviour, arguing that the interactants' messages are interpreted as polite, impolite or merely appropriate in a given social context depending on evaluations they make at the level of relational work while the interaction unfolds. These evaluations, according to Locher and Watts (2008), are made "on the basis of norms and expectations that individuals have constructed and acquired through categorising the experiences of similar past situations, or conclusions that one draws from other people's experiences" (p 78).

However, Grainger (2013) argues that participants' intention and evaluation is not enough in analysing meaning in interaction. She has criticised Locher and Watts' (2005) analysis (of a dinner party conversation) of being "limited to paraphrasing and evaluating the participants' utterances" (p. 34). In other words, claiming whether the example is unmarked politic or marked polite is in itself "quite subjective and not motivated by any independent criteria. There seems to be an assumption that this is how the participants themselves evaluate the event, but this is not evidenced in the interaction itself" (*ibid*). Consequently, Grainger advocates the application of aspects of "non-discursive pragmatics" (p. 27), such as speech act theory, Grice's theory of implicature and Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness to provide objective empirical tools for the analysis of language in interaction. This means that using some of the concepts from these theories enables the analyst to identify how speech acts are constructed and received by the participants (*ibid*).

Given that PMQs interaction is constrained by institutional norms of politeness (see Section 3.4), there seems to be both a link and an important distinction between the model of relational work and the current research in that both are concerned with norm-oriented behaviour. While Locher and Watts focus on how the behaviour is perceived by the hearer as either polite or politic, the focus of the current research is on how this behaviour is constructed by the speaker and received by the hearer, as evidenced by discursive interaction in PMQs.

To summarise, drawing on the theoretical concept of relational work, I will approach the data from the interpersonal activities of facework (face-saving, face-enhancing and face-

threatening). My aim is to show how the function of mitigation can be extended to what is politic behaviour within the norm-oriented interaction of PMQs. Therefore, there should be a need to differentiate between polite behaviour and politic behaviour and this distinction will be presented in the next section.

3.3.1 Marked VS Unmarked Behaviour

The discursive approach to politeness, as Locher (2006) maintains, "recognises the evaluative and norm-oriented character of politeness by claiming that politeness belongs to the interpersonal level of linguistic interaction" and thus, it is part of relational work (p. 253). Relational work constitutes four categories which are defined in terms of the interactants' perception of appropriateness and markedness. Locher (2004) defines 'markedness' in terms of normative expectations, which means that if behaviour goes 'against' these norms, then it stands out as marked (i.e., salient) (p. 85). Watts (1989, 1992) introduced the concept of marked linguistic behaviour to the discussion of politeness and it is related to appropriateness. Watts (2003) considers marked behaviour as "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be beyond what is expectable" (p.19). It can be noticed as either appropriate and perceived positively as polite, or inappropriate and perceived negatively as either impolite or over polite (Locher and Watts, 2005).

On the other hand, unmarked behaviour refers to what Watts (2003) calls "politic behaviour" and defines it as "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction" and goes largely unnoticed (p.19). Therefore, Locher and Watts (2005: 11-12) identify four categories that entail interactants' behaviour; impolite, nonpolite, polite and overpolite (Table 1). However, Locher and Watts (2005) acknowledge that "there can be no objectively identifiable boundaries between these categories" as they argue that these categories are discursively negotiated (p.12). As a result, it looks like the participants themselves evaluate the events, a case which is not evidenced in the interaction itself (Grainger, 2013: 34). To analyse the data in a less impressionistic way, some insights from traditional approaches to politeness, such as Speech Act Theory, Gricean implicature and Brown and Levinson's theory of politeness are considered in this thesis to help to determine what behaviour can be categorised as marked or unmarked.

From a sociopragmatic sense, 'nonpolite behaviour' has been discussed by Leech (2014: 216) who calls it "lack of politeness or impoliteness" stating that "the zero zone between

underpolite and overpolite is where Watts politic behaviour resides" (Leech, 2014: 218). The assumed zero zone (Figure 5, Section 7.2.1) represents an appropriate or normal degree of politeness with respect to the expected standard of the context. The zero zone seems to "correspond with what Watts (1989) calls 'politic behaviour', routine politeness that does not strike one as out of ordinary" (p.217). Leech (2014) clarifies this point by the example, 'could you hold on please?', which seems an entirely normal way to ask a stranger to hold on a telephone line, and thus can be interpreted as nonpolite, politic utterance.

Within interaction, hearers might not show noticeable reactions towards unmarked politic behaviour since this behaviour is the norm, while positively marked will trigger the judgement of behaviour as polite (Locher and Watts, 2005). Accordingly, the forthcoming will demonstrate how the three leaders orient to employing marked and unmarked mitigated behaviour and show how this allows polite and nonpolite behaviour to be distinguished. In addition, I display instances of mitigation through which the distinction between polite and politic is made with respect to the contextual features of interaction. Therefore, this study demonstrates how the framework of relational work informs the analysis of mitigation in parliamentary discourse.

The current research argues that, in accordance with the kind of institutional rules of parliamentary language, and not merely rules of politeness, politicians adapt their behaviour in the PMQs interaction to what is appropriate to adhere to these rules. Therefore, the study focuses on politicians' behaviour that displays what is politic/appropriate within the adversarial interaction of PMQs. Although aspects of (im)politeness still play a key role in parliamentary interaction, nonpolite behaviour may also serve as politic behaviour in this norm-governed interaction and thus, it will be worth examining within a discursive approach (Locher, 2012).

According to Locher and Watts (2005, 2008), the discursive approach to politeness focuses on the speaker and the hearer, since "both are involved in making judgements and assessing effects with respect to (shared) norms. The aim is to understand how human beings use language for interpersonal effects" (Locher, 2012: 52). As such, in demonstrating the functions of mitigation, particular contextual features such as the speaker and audience's nonverbal and paralinguistic cues are integrated into the analysis of the data to determine the types of these functions.

Based on the adversarial discourse of PMQs, we might not expect to find many instances of mitigation that serve as polite behaviour (as defined by Brown and Levinson, 1987), but rather mitigation functioning as a covert strategy for politic/appropriate behaviour. The following section illustrates the context of the data to further understand the institutional interaction of PMQs.

3.4 Context of the Data

PMQs follows a parliamentary convention in the House of Commons where the PM answers questions from the MPs. It is constrained by specific communication patterns. PMQs is described as "the most public opposition platform, given its prominence in the media and that it follows a regular weekly cycle" (Bevan and John, 2016: 61). Compared to other varieties of political discourse such as political interviews or political speeches, parliamentary interaction is regarded as more formal or "norm-regulated" (Ilie 2013: 501). According to Ilie (2018), "the discursive interaction of parliamentarians is constantly marked by their institutional role-based commitments, by the norm-regulated and dialogically shaped institutional confrontation, by the adversarial exchanges of institutional speech acts", as well as the awareness of acting in front of the public (p. 103). Given the communicative (normative) patterns and formal settings of PMQs discourse, I argue that certain linguistic elements like mitigation allows MPs to cope with PMQs interaction and remain with the bounds of parliamentary rules of conduct.

In order to better identify and present mitigation strategies, it is necessary to introduce the context of PMQs from a pragmatic perspective. Although PMQs discourse is "ritualised and rule-bound" (Bayley, 2004: 14), my point is to show that addressing mitigation behaviour with respect to institutional norms of appropriateness helps to draw out to what extent mitigation is a necessary part of parliamentary discursive conduct. Parliamentary questions are considered to be a "game of party politics, of conflict played between the government and opposition" (Lovenduski (2012: 318), whose interaction has become increasingly central to PMQs (Bates *et al.,* 2014). From this perspective, the focus of my analysis is on the leaders of the main parties. The game in PMQs of the British Parliament, as Bloor and Bloor (2007) state, is highly ritualised and involves competitive facework and the presence of an audience is obviously important in evaluating FTAs. For Ilie (2015: 10), the interplay between parliamentary speakers and audience expectations and reactions "influence speakers' reactions, and thus contribute to continuous identity construction".

The LO-PM interaction constitutes part of PMQs sessions which are broadcast on live national TV, radio and available online via YouTube videos. These sessions typically last for thirty minutes (12:00-12:30 pm). PMQs takes place weekly on Wednesdays in the British House of Commons and gives backbench MPs the opportunity to question the PM on the PM's general responsibilities and the Government's policies, plans and actions. Following a question-response pattern, each session starts with backbench MPs who wish to ask a question to the PM. They are required to table their questions in the Order Paper in advance of the session. The questions are chosen by a random selection process called 'the shuffle' (Bevan and John, 2016: 64). At the session, their names are then called by the Speaker to put their questions to the PM (Fetzer and Weizman, 2018). Generally, the MPs are each permitted only one question to the PM, giving them no opportunity to follow-up on the PM's response (Harris, 2001).

However, the LO can ask the PM up to six questions by standing at the dispatch box on his side of the table. These questions can be presented within one group or two groups of three questions (Bull and Wells, 2012). The main objective of these questions is not only to seek information or to press action, but also to threaten or challenge the PM's face (Harris, 2001; de Ayala, 2001). The LO usually begins his/her turn by thanking the Speaker and making some ritual remarks before asking his/her first question. Examples of these remarks are joining the PM in paying tribute, expressing condolences, or congratulating others. The other five questions can be follow-ups to the first question or addressing different topics.

Norms of interaction refer to the conventional rules relating to the conduct of a speech event. These rules include turn-taking, delivery, topic, etc. Rules and customs of parliamentary procedure were written by Erskine May who was the clerk of the House of Commons from 1871 to 1886. In 1844, Erskine May wrote *Treatise on the Law, Privileges and Proceedings and Usage of Parliament* which is considered the authoritarian source on parliamentary procedure. This source provides details of observed rules within the House of Commons (parliament.uk) to regulate various forms of parliamentary interaction in the UK Parliament (de Ayala, 2001; Jack *et al.,* 2011). These rules are enforced by the Speaker of the House of Commons to ensure that PMQs exchanges do not become confrontational (Shaw, 2011: 303).

Parliamentary order is primarily associated with the turn-taking structure of the question-response format, which shows that linguistic constraints are paralleled by institutional constraints (Ilie, 2015: 8). In PMQs interaction, the MPs should comply with

parliamentary addressing rules. The addressee is to be addressed or referred to by using indirect forms of address. To achieve this indirect mode of interaction, Ilie (2010a) states that "MPs are not supposed to speak directly with each other, but through the intermediary of the Speaker" (p. 896). This means that all interaction is moderated by the Speaker of the House who "has only an institutionally attributed mediating role and not a genuine interlocutor role" (*ibid*). Due to the Speaker's interaction-regulating role, MPs indirectly address one another through the Speaker. Therefore, the procedure of mediated address serves to mitigate FTAs, and thus keeps the interaction within the limits of acceptable parliamentary language (Harris, 2001).

However, the Speaker (John Bercow, at the time of collecting the data) is the only one who addresses the MPs by using their personal names (first + last names) to allocate the turns, moderates and interrupts the argument to point out if politeness rules have been violated in order to secure a fair debate. Accordingly, the MPs do not address each other directly by using their proper names, but rather using indirect forms of address, such as 'the Right Honourable Member', 'my Right Honourable Friend', 'the Honourable Gentleman' and 'the Honourable Lady' (Ilie, 2010a). This routinised behaviour is dictated as an institutional rule in the House of Commons (Murphy, 2014).

Ilie (2010a: 891, italics in original) points out that "the third person pronoun is the officially acknowledged pronominal form of address in the House of Commons. It counts as the *default form of address*". The use of the third person pronoun, for example 'he', 'she', 'they' to refer to the MPs instead of directly addressing them by 'you', a case that would make the comment or a potential attack much more personal, and thereby would be regarded as breach of the bounds of acceptable parliamentary language and discourse expectations (Bull and Wells, 2012: 43; Bull *et al.,* 2020: 70). Therefore, the 'third party language' (*ibid*) is the most obvious ritualised forms of politeness that plays a crucial role in mitigating and enhancing the MPs' utterances in the dynamics of parliamentary interaction (Ilie, 2010a; 2015).

The linguistic constraints mentioned above along with restrictions on directly accusing another MP of being a liar form the set of rules that constitutes what is known as 'parliamentary language' (Shaw, 2011: 303). The conventions of parliamentary language have been regarded as mitigating techniques (Harris, 2001). However, Harris (2001: 469) found that "mitigating linguistic strategies which Brown and Levinson associate with threats to positive face are largely absent". Harris (2001: 269) has attributed the reason to

the deliberate construction of FTAs which "co-occur with negative face strategies that are associated with deference". I would argue that the use of mitigation features in PMQs interaction has been affected by the institutional rules of conduct, and hence become conventionalised and routinised forms of polite linguistic patterns.

The style of debate in the House of Commons also involves listening to MPs' speeches and intervening in them in spontaneous reaction to opponents' views., a case which results in making the House of Commons a rather noisy place where expressions of approval, disapproval and banter are delivered by the audience (parliament.uk). However, the Speaker's role here is to allow members to speak without deliberate or accidental background noise, and to maintain order during debate. Certain linguistic and paralinguistic features, such as hissing, chanting, clapping, booing and exclamations, are considered types of disturbance during the debate (Jack *et al*., 2011). On that basis, an MP may be suspended from the House by the Speaker if he/she refuses to follow the rules of the House. However, there are no examples of suspension in my data.

Since the key role of the opposition is to oppose the government and that of the PM is to enhance the credibility of the government, a confrontational style is a particularly salient feature of their exchanges. The MPs do not only voice their opinion, but also that of the political party they represent in order to persuade the public of their competence and efficiency. Accordingly, parliamentary interaction displays a continuous competition for power and leadership roles, along with fame and popularity, to maintain speakers' public image (Ilie, 2015). Since all the PMQs sessions are broadcast in full on UK television, "they are very much a showcase for each politician, given that social comparisons are inevitably made between them in terms of their respective leadership qualities" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 128). This means that politicians may "gain or lose peer or media respect on the basis of their performances" (Lovenduski, 2012: 316). These performances are closely watched and judged by the audience including the Speaker, clerks, whips, party leaders, MPs, the press and general public. However, only the MPs can interrupt, emit 'hear hears' during and after each exchange (*ibid*). Although unparliamentary language is not acceptable in the House of Commons, MPs are still allowed to attack and criticise their opponent MPs implicitly and this can be achieved by using mitigation.

3.4.1 Parliament as a Community of Practice

Harris (2001) suggests that the institutional setting in the British House of Commons can be regarded as a 'community of practice' rather than merely a discourse type. This concept is defined as "a group of people that develops its own set of norms and practices through joint engagement in an activity or task" (Kadar and Haugh 2013: 263). In the House of Commons, as Shaw (2011) states, the ability of an MP to acquire the institutional rules of parliamentary language is "part of what constructs them as a powerful or 'core' member of community of practice" (p. 303).

Kadar and Haugh (2013) state that the concept of community of practice, which was developed by Wenger (1998), has been incorporated in discursive politeness research (e.g. Locher 2012) as it allows the researcher to "analyse politeness in a relatively contextualised way" (p. 47). It is also incorporated in other discourse analysis research (e.g. Holmes and Stubbe 2003, Holmes and Schnurr 2005, Clarke 2009).

In their study of using humour at workplace, Schnurr and Holmes (2009) refer to Wenger's (1998) three key criteria that distinguish different communities of practice, namely "mutual engagement (including regular interaction), a joint, negotiated enterprise (e.g. the shared organisational objectives of the team or group), and a shared repertoire developed over a period of time (which may include specialised jargon, routines, running jokes etc)" (pp. 103-104). Accordingly, the community of practice in the House of Commons conforms to all these criteria that this study aims to demonstrate in PMQs interaction. Schnurr and Holmes (2009: 103) highlight the crucial role of community of practice in maintaining the importance of membership in a particular group with respect to distinct ways of behaving appropriately in the workplace. For Schnurr and Holmes, when interactants conform to the norms of appropriate behaviour, they reinforce these norms and accept prevailing expectations and stereotypes (p.104).

Harris (2001: 454) considers PMQs as a systematic engagement of MPs within a community of practice that has distinct advantages. First, it accounts for the historical continuity of PMQs represented by discourse practices that have evolved over a long period of time and are still evolving. Second, it foregrounds the MPs' expectations within the community of practice as a significant aspect of linguistic politeness that govern both MPs' linguistic behavioural patterns and their interpretation of that behaviour. Third, it enables the analysis of not only longer stretches of discourse, but also systematic verbal encounters involving the same participants (primarily the PM and the LO) over a sustained

period. These rule-governed encounters provide insights into how (im)politeness is defined and interpreted by MPs whose linguistic behaviour is constrained and defined not only by their respective political roles, but also by the discourse practices of the community. Fourth, it sets PMQs as a type of discourse not only within the community of practice of the House of Commons, but also in the context of the wider political process, for much of the debate is addressed to the wider audience.

3.5 Data of the Study

The data on which the discussion will be based comprises videos and their transcriptions of forty parliamentary sessions of PMQs over the period of January 2016- April 2017 (Table 2). The video recordings were taken from the official record of the British Houses of Parliament: http://www.parliament.uk/business/news (Appendix 2). The transcripts of PMQs are available on Hansard, the official record of parliamentary proceedings in the House of Commons (Slembrouck 1992). The written record of parliamentary debates were downloaded from the official website of the UK Parliament: https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons.

PMQs was chosen as the focus rather than other parliamentary interactions. This interest can be accounted for its being "the oldest institution of its kind that has also managed to maintain a great deal of its institutional and discursive rituals" (Ilie, 2006: 188). This democratic representation is a proper platform in which speakers, as public figures, can be expected to work on saving, whilst necessarily threatening the opponent's face, and hence allows the public to evaluate the performance of the political leaders within PMQs debates.

The study aims to explore the research area of mitigation and facework on a wider scale of political leaders than would have been possible with focusing on one sole leader. This also helps to mark their leadership qualities as speakers. Since the focus of the study is on sequential interaction, I only consider exchanges between the LO and the PM. Over the period of 6 January 2016- 26 April 2017 (Table 2), there are 240 question-answer pairs included in the dataset.

Table 2 Data of PMQs Sessions

Date	PMQs interaction
6 Jan 2016 – 13 July 2016	Jeremy Corbyn- David Cameron
19 Oct 2016 – 26 Apr 2017	Jeremy Corbyn- Theresa May

In the whole dataset, the PMs respond to questions from the LO, Jeremy Corbyn. Each exchange lasts for approximately ten-fifteen minutes. The LO-PM exchanges include 6 questions addressed to the PM regarding the PM's general responsibilities or some aspect of government policy (Bull and Wells 2012: 31). In addition, these videos and transcripts were supplemented with observations that I made through attending a session in the House of Commons on 11 January 2017. I attended this session as a visitor in the Strangers' Gallery. The observations were also to familiarise myself first-hand with PMQs interaction. The next section discusses the process of revising the Hansard transcripts of the dataset.

3.5.1 Transcripts

Video recorded speech is used as the basis for data analysis. The primary advantage of videotapes is the availability of nonverbal behaviour (Elderkin-Thompson and Waitzkin, 1999). Integrating both verbal and nonverbal behaviour of politicians may contribute to identify the meaning of mitigation as the interaction unfolds. I have chosen Hansard records for producing transcripts of video proceedings because of ease of access, and to form a basis for my own transcriptions. The videos and their transcription were organised in a way to manage the material easily.

Hansard transcripts of all sessions between January 2016 to April 2017 were converted into plain word documents where minor errors were noticed, and thereby corrected (Sealy and Bates, 2016). All forty transcripts are presented in edited form in Appendix 3. Drawing on Jefferson's conventions (Jefferson, 2004), I provided broad transcription, which is not as detailed as in conversation analysis (see the transcription key for the transcription conventions). I suggest that it is not necessarily important to include all conventions of transcription because the content is what is of primary interest in this study. For the purpose of cross-referencing, I set up line numbers for each transcript.

Hansard reports are not fully verbatim, and they lack elements of spontaneous speech, such as hedges, repetitive words, or phrases (Bull and Wells, 2012: 36). In other words, these reports do not include features that add to the meaning of the speech or illustrate the argument (May, 2004: 260). Since visual aspects of the data are often lost when moving from the spoken context to the typed transcripts (Gibbs, 2018), video recordings were watched and carefully listened to repeatedly, which is "an important first step in data

analysis" (Baily, 2008) in order to improve the Hansard transcription by adding relevant spoken or visual features.

These transcripts were revised in two stages. First, they were revised in terms of what the politicians had said. Second, the revision was extended to address how these words were said. The process of revising the transcripts was carried out by moving back and forth several times between the video recordings and the transcripts. The purpose was to illustrate features which were not mentioned in the Hansard report. The official Hansard transcription of PMQs debates does not systematically represent non-verbal and paralinguistic features. These features of talk and interaction can be important in conveying speakers' perspectives and understanding mitigation functions. Therefore, through careful revisiting the video recordings, I improved Hansard transcripts by adding some features, such as body gesture, facial expressions (e.g. smile), intonation, stress, pauses, length of pause by seconds, repetition, hesitation (e.g. 'ah' and 'um') as well as audience reactions (cheering, jeering and laughter).

The addition of these features invites a more accurate interpretation of the data. My aim of the detailed transcripts was to reflect the overall picture of the spoken interaction (Moser and Korstjens, 2018), which helped me to become familiar with the context of PMQs. During this process, I added some contextual and reflexive notes to the transcripts as referring to the videos to watch body language or listen to voices often suggested different interpretations (Gibbs, 2018). From this perspective, Hansard transcription has been expanded where necessary to align with the naturally occurring interaction of PMQs as closely as possible, and hence, fits with the current research purposes. Moreover, contributions of the Speaker of the House were added to these documents.

As mentioned above, the transcriptions were also extended to include audience reactions (e.g. interruption, jeering, cheering and laughter), which were taken into consideration in light of their importance in interpreting the function of mitigation in the interaction. Although the MPs in the House of Commons are not allowed to speak during PMQs interaction, their only way to interact is through either supporting their party leader which is usually by agreeing (cheering) or disagreeing (jeering) with the opposition. Furthermore, speaker-audience interaction can be shown through interrupting the speaker and the purpose can be to disrupt the flow of the opposition's turn. Therefore, the word 'interruption' is represented in the original Hansard at times, although not always.

Since the parliamentary debates are in the public domain (the participants are public figures speaking in a public context) and freely available and easily accessible online in electronic video form and official transcripts, no ethical clearance process or anonymisation was required for this study.

After having introduced PMQs videos and their transcripts as the basis for data analysis, the next section addresses the details of sampling this data.

3.5.2 Sampling

The data comprises two sets of LO-PM exchanges and each set has 20 sessions (Table 1, Appendix 1). The first dataset comprises debates between the Labour LO, Jeremy Corbyn and the Conservative PM, David Cameron over the period from January 2016 to July 2016 (the last 20 PMQs sessions of David Cameron's premiership). However, the session of 25 May 2016 is not considered in the dataset because Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron were absent at the time. Instead, Shadow First Secretary of State and Shadow Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Angela Eagle was the questioner, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne, was the respondent.

The second dataset constitutes debates between the Labour LO, Jeremy Corbyn and the Conservative PM, Theresa May over the period from July 2016 to April 2017 (the first 20 PMQs sessions of Theresa May's premiership). This time span was chosen to examine what linguistic resources emerge over this period. I consider such sample size (40 exchanges) ideal to address adequately the research questions and yield fruitful and applicable results (Marshall, 1996). These sets complement one another and, together, provide a representative sample of the use of mitigation and its functions that could be interpreted in relation to aspects of relational work.

The linguistic analysis is based upon transcription taken from a six-hour (05:53:16) corpus of video data from PMQs sessions. The video data is represented by approximately 73,760 words, as illustrated in Tables 2 and 3 (Appendix 1). For each session, extracts that include linguistic resources of mitigation were taken from question-response exchanges and positioned in tabular form. Then, the data was analysed qualitatively to test the viability of categories suggested by previous research (Section 3.6). The conclusions will be based upon analysing extracts selected from the transcripts of the PMQs interaction.

At earlier stages of the analysis process, tables and charts were made to represent different types of mitigation strategies that were employed by each political leader (Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron, and Theresa May), along with their discursive purposes. These tables and charts represent an essential source for revising the coding that can be revisited and considered for the overall analysis. The process of coding will be discussed in the following section.

3.5.3 Coding

Before the analysis of the data, the transcripts were coded to identify major categories relevant to the objectives of this study. Moreover, the qualitative research allows the researchers to code the transcripts to gain a nuanced understanding of the dataset (Creswell, 2014). Therefore, a further stage of mainly "concept-driven coding" (Gibbs, 2018) was undertaken, which was informed by categories suggested by prior researchers (e.g. Aijmer, 1996; Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Leech, 2014). This process facilitated the analysis of mitigation in the whole dataset. I coded the data building on categories or concepts that were taken from the literature and previous research and generated a list of codes by reading through the transcripts. In other words, I went through each transcript to spot the linguistic resources that serve as mitigation strategies and highlighted them. This procedure was carried out by moving through line by line repeatedly. Although the "line-by-line coding" (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Gibbs, 2018) was time consuming, it resulted in opening up the data, providing an idea of how to analyse it and allowing my assumptions to be tested. This process was the first step to start coding that was followed by further steps to develop and refine this coding.

After the initial line-by-line coding, I refined the coded categories of mitigation by grouping them in terms of the leader's turn and organised them into tables chronologically. The chronological order affords a way of showing what linguistic patterns may emerge over time. Tables were constructed to facilitate the coding and categorisation processes. These tables represented the extent to which the three leaders employed mitigation across PMQs sessions. Furthermore, they formed the basis for my detailed discussions and extensive analysis which were used to establish the research findings. Thus, they help to describe the behaviour according to the contextual factors of the situation and hence, generate a good understanding and interpretation of the data. I drew on mitigation resources, that I will discuss in detail later in this chapter, as analytical categories for extracts taken from

questions and answers. Under each category, I will account for occasions on which both the LO and the PM attempt to threaten or enhance one another's face.

In addition to these tables, further tables and charts of frequencies were also made to account for which types of mitigation strategies were preferred or not preferred by the leaders: Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron, and Theresa May. The purpose was to identify any similarities and differences between their linguistic strategies.

Although mitigation strategies occur in both questions and responses, it may be relevant to find out whether these strategies are employed reciprocally or not. If they are reciprocated, then I will look at some instances that might illuminate in what ways they are used to redress the FTAs. Since the MPs' performances are subject to institutional constraints on linguistic behaviour, the main point of analysing the debate data is to help to find out to what extent and in what ways mitigation reflects institution-specific constraints along with politicians' aims and purposes. These conventional constraints may determine the form of the questions and answers in the House of Commons to protect Members' public face.

As presented above, coding the linguistic resources that serve as mitigation assisted me in retrieving the data for further analysis, and thus it was the first stage of analysing the data. Therefore, the coding process was fundamental in identifying the linguistic patterns of mitigation strategies and reorganising the data with real purpose. The categories identified during the process of coding were relevant in reaching the overall goal of understanding the discursive function of mitigation in adversarial interaction. In light of the analytical and theoretical approaches presented above, I selected analytical categories that focus on FTAs and mitigation strategies that are employed in PMQs interaction. Before introducing the mitigation strategies, I will use the next section to list the FTA categories with a brief definition of each category.

3.6 Categories of FTAs and Mitigation

The study will consider the following categories of FTAs and mitigation as identified by prior research in parliamentary discourse and political discourse.

3.6.1 Categories of FTAs

Although it was necessary to introduce types of FTAs that have been identified by previous studies on parliamentary interaction and the functions they serve in relation to mitigation,

not all types of FTAs were investigated due to the study's scope and limitation. As a background to my analysis, I will summarise these categories below.

Harris (2001), who focuses on negative face attacks in British Parliamentary debates, proposes several syntactic patterns and deliberately damaging propositions in PMQs discourse. Thus, questions addressed to the PM take the form of a series of propositions followed by an interrogative form:

a. Syntactic realisation: yes/no interrogative frames followed by a proposition. According to Harris (2001: 457), these questions are oriented in a wide sense to request information or actions and to elicit the PM's confirmation, agreement, and awareness. For example:

- Doesn't he have a duty to + proposition (action)?
- Does my Right Honourable Friend agree that + proposition (information)?
- Is he aware that + proposition (information)?
- Will he now tell the House + proposition (information)?
- Will the Prime Minister acknowledge that + proposition (information)?
- Could the Prime Minister confirm that + proposition (information)?
- Will he send a message + proposition (action)?

b. Pragmatic realisation: FTAs or face enhancing acts can be analysed in terms of:

- Propositional level: e.g. hostile, supportive propositions, presuppositions, and implicatures which preface or are built into questions and responses
- Interactional level: e.g. modes of address, turn-taking rules, nonverbal and paralinguistic behaviour

Harris (2001: 464) also provides examples of FTAs that are performed by the LO against the PM:

- That the Prime Minister refuses to answer the question (accusation)
- That his failure to answer questions is ever more evident (contempt)
- That he has signed away the country's legal rights (criticism)
- That he is not a good lawyer (ridicule)
- That his assurances are not valid ones (challenge)
- That the policy was a 'brilliant idea' (said in an ironic tone of voice)

We can see that the speaker refers to the addressee in the third person, which is a sign of a formal situation (Leech, 2014: 165), a conventionalised way for MPs to address each other.

Drawing on Harris (2001), Bull and Wells (2012: 36-40) identify FTAs in terms of question turns and response turns:

1. Questioning turns

These categories may be used to perform FTAs:

- Preface: questions that constitute a series of propositions followed by an interrogative.
- Detailed question: when the PM fails to answer the question, the LO provides the information to embarrass the PM.
- Contentious presupposition: the assumption that the speaker takes for granted which he/she shares with the addressee.
- Conflictual question: creating pressure towards equivocation.
- Invitation to perform face damaging response: inviting the respondent to perform face-damaging act (e.g. inviting to apologise, or to criticise a member of his/her own party.
- Aside: shifting from the question to make asides to attack the opponent.

2. Response turns

Bull and Wells (2012: 40-42) identify some techniques which are used by the PM to counter FTAs performed by the LO:

- Talking up positive face: talking up positively about own party or government.
- Rebutting: explicitly refuting the FTA performed by the LO.
- Attacking: responding to the FTA by attacking the opponent.
- Ignoring: disregarding the attack on his/her credibility by the opponent and responding with an attack of his/her own.
- Self-justifying: offering reasons, excuses, explanation for the actions that have been taken.

According to Murphy (2014), FTAs are categorised with reference to the MPs and the PM as follows:

A. FTAs performed by MPs:

Murphy (2014: 6-10) identifies FTAs that are performed by the MPs in general. However, the current study will focus particularly on those acts which are performed by the LO against the PM:

- (Attempt to) have the PM make an undertaking: forcing the PM to enact reforms he/she had never previously planned to introduce.
- Ask the PM his/her opinion/seek agreement from the PM: asking for the PM's opinion which may not be shared by the general public (i.e., the electorate).
- Accuse the PM of not answering a question: revealing dissatisfaction of the PM's answer.
- Accuse the PM of inaction/slow pace of action: threatening the PM's competence to draw the public and political attention to the issue under debate.
- Draw attention to an undesirable (consequence of) government policy: showing the government incompetency due to the undesirable consequences of one of its policies.
- Raising of politically sensitive subjects: these subjects implicitly challenge the opponent's leadership and authority, and risk party unity.
- Question the PM's leadership: making statements that cast doubt to the opponent's leadership

B. FTAs performed by the PM

Murphy (2014: 10-12) identifies FTAs that are performed against the MPs in general. However, the focus of the current study will be on those acts which are performed by the PM against the LO:

- Accusing the LO of lacking knowledge/not understanding: the PM disapproves of the faulty question believing that the LO is wrong or misguided in his/her opinion on the issue.
- Drawing attention to LO's (party's) unpopular policies: portraying the LO as being at odds with the public since he/she does not support now well-liked reforms.
- Criticising the LO's (party's) actions: drawing attention to the previous government's actions which are now unpopular.

The FTAs outlined above are found by Murphy to form part of PMQs interaction. He also shows how these FTAs can be mitigated.

3.6.2 Mitigation Strategies

Bull and Wells (2012: 43-44) identify four categories of mitigation in PMQs as follows:

- Third party language: using distancing strategies such as addressing remarks to the Speaker of the House rather than the PM and the third person (rather than the pronoun 'you').

- Humorous discourse: mocking the opposing politician by delivering jokes that serves to mitigate the effect of FTAs.

- Quotation: using another person's words rather than speaking directly (e.g. using the recipient's words against him/her to imply FTAs).

- Opponent's mistake: pouncing on a speaker's mistake as an opportunity to perform an FTA, i.e., if the speaker makes a mistake, this may give the opponent the chance to mitigate FTAs.

With respect to Brown and Levinson's (1987) perspective, Murphy (2014: 12-16) categorises mitigation strategies in questions and responses of PMQs and how they are employed to lower the risk of offence for the interactant.

- The opponent praises another aspect of Government policy: showing a semblance of agreement with the PM (seeking agreement or avoiding disagreement, Brown and Levinson, 1987: 112).

- The opponent asserts that negative consequence of Government action is unintended: framing the consequence as intended offers the PM a chance to change the policy for the better (minimise the imposition, Brown and Levinson 1987: 176).

- The opponent Minimises the criticism: asserting that an issue does not affect most people, but rather a small number of people.

- Criticising the opposition: deflecting attention from FTAs performed against the opponent.

- Making a supportive comment unrelated to the FTA: showing a form of personal approval of the opponent, which arguably minimise the threat inherent in his/her next act (Notice, attend to the hearer, Brown and Levinson 1987: 103).

- Commenting on one's respect for the hearer: expressing admiration or respect for the hearer and his/her personality (compliment) (Notice, attend to the hearer, Brown and Levinson 1987: 103).

- Acting as a mouthpiece: having the PM make an undertaking towards an issue by framing the issue as a legitimate concern of others, not necessarily his/her own desire.

Some of the categories presented above may appear to overlap, for example, 'commenting on one's respect for the hearer' can be part of 'making a supportive comment unrelated to the FTA'. Although the range of mitigation categories may be open to the attribution of politeness, I argue that they more likely serve as politic/appropriate utterances than for politeness purposes to keep the interaction within the scope of parliamentary language.

Aijmer (1996) and Leech (2014) have identified a number of lexical and grammatical devices that mitigate FTAs of requests, directives, criticisms, disagreements, advice, undertakings and offers. These devices are:

1. Passive voice: to avoid referencing to other person or people other than the speaker (Aijmer, 1996: 155; Leech, 2014: 195).

2. Defocalisation (impersonalising devices): to avoid referencing to other person or people other than the speaker, e.g. 'it isn't very nice' (Aijmer, 1996: 175-176; Leech, 2014:192).

3. Downtoners: modifiers (often adverbs) that mitigate or soften the directive force of the speech event. Modal adverbs such as 'perhaps', 'maybe', 'possibly' emphasise the element of uncertainty or tentativeness in requests with ability/possibility (can/could) modals. Diminishers or "belittlers" such as 'a bit', 'a little' to understate criticism and indicate that the cost will be small to the other person (Aijmer, 1996: 168-169; Leech, 2014:160)

4. 'Why' questions, especially ones that refer to matters concerning the addressee. They are particularly apt for expressing muted criticisms. The "fault" is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation: a bald statement is more accusatory (Leech, 2014: 194).

5. Indirect requests in the form of declarative sentences e.g. you can, you could, perhaps you could (Aijmer, 1996: 149-150)

6. Indirect requests in the form of interrogative sentences i.e. yes/no questions containing one of the modal auxiliaries can/could, will/would (Aijmer, 1996: 158-160)

7. Requests in the form of permission questions can have a mitigating or downtoning effect, e.g. 'let me', 'may I', 'can I', 'could I'. (Aijmer, 1996: 156-163)

8. Hedged performatives: soften in varying degrees the force of performatives by introducing modality and (sometimes) interrogation, e.g. 'may I ask', 'may I beg',

'could I ask'; which show the mitigated effect of the request for permission preceding the actual performative verb. 'I have to' makes the utterance seem that the speaker is compelled (presumably against his/her will) to do something (Leech, 2014: 32).

The above categorisation schemes, however, are expanded to meet the requirement of analysing the data collected for this study. Having introduced the linguistic devices that serve as mitigation in PMQs interaction, in the following section, I present a pilot study of an LO-PM's debate to describe a sample of data collection process for the study and to what extent it can inform the procedure of analysing mitigation in PMQs interaction.

3.7 Steps of Analysis

The methodological and analytical processes discussed above allow me to suggest that analysing PMQs data will constitute a useful contribution to studies on mitigation and facework in parliamentary discourse and institutional interaction. In line with the pragmatic qualitative approach, the analysis followed these steps:

1. Analysing mitigation in exchanges between the participants (the LO, Jeremy Corbyn and the PMs, David Cameron, and Theresa May). This stage is achieved by identifying strategies in the data and providing a pragmatic interpretation to demonstrate how mitigation operates. The pragmatic interpretation includes:
a) Identify and classify the range and type of mitigation resources that emerge from qualitative study of PMQs discourse.
b) The act of classifying mitigation categories is based on decisions about form, function and context in which they occur.
2. Considering aspects of mitigated behaviour with respect to relational work (politic/appropriate behaviour).
3. Considering how mitigation and self-presentation contribute in constructing political identity and leadership during the ongoing interaction of PMQs.

It is worth mentioning that audience's nonverbal reactions or prosodic features (showing their approval or disapproval) during observing PMQs debates are also essential in constructing meaning of mitigation.

3.8 Pilot study: Jeremy Corbyn-David Cameron's Debate

Prior to conducting a full-scale analysis, a small pilot study was carried out to test the analytical procedure. The pilot study is important to identify how methods and ideas would

work in practice when undertaking a qualitative approach. Therefore, this small-scale study suggests a coding process for an exchange between the LO, Jeremy Corbyn and the PM, David Cameron at PMQs session of 6 January 2016. The topics are related to the issue of 'flood defences.' The aim of the pilot study is twofold: firstly, to explore what resources can serve as mitigation; and secondly, to identify their functions within the adversarial interaction of PMQs. Therefore, considering the categorisation outlined above (Section 3.6) of facework and mitigation strategies, the coding was undertaken manually in terms of question and response turns, as shown in Table (3).

Table 3 Transcript of JC-DC Exchange 6 January 2016

Speaker	Turn	Mitigation strategies and other observations
JC	Thank you Mr. Speaker ((Conservative members: laughter)) I would like to thank (.) the firefighters (.) mountain rescue services (.) police (.) armed services (.) engineers (.) workers at the Environment Agency (.) and local government workers (.) for all the volunteers for all the work they did in keeping safe thousands of people from the floods that have affected this country (.) in January 2014 (.) following devastating floods of that time (.) now two years ago (.) **the Prime Minister said and I quote (.) "there are always lessons to be learned and I will make sure they are learned"** (.) were they?	Thanking the Speaker of the House: convention

Invitation to perform a face damaging act/response

Non-public quotation/other quotation (Bull and Wells, 2012 & Fetzer, 2015) |
| DC | First (.) **let me join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking** the emergency services (.) the police (.) and the fire service also (.) the search and rescue teams who went from around the country to areas that were flooded (.) can I thank the military for all the work that they did? **as he says (.) what we saw was communities coming together and volunteers carrying out extraordinary work** (.) let me deal directly with the issue of lessons learned (.) because I have seen my own constituency very badly flooded in 2007 (.) and having had floods while being Prime Minister (.) **I think a number of lessons have been learned** (.) this time (.) the military came in far faster than ever before (.) the Bellwin scheme was funded at 100% (.) not 85% (.) **more money was got to communities more quickly (.) so a lot of lessons have been learned** (.) are there more to learn? I am sure there are (.) there always are (.) and that is why I will | Unmarked Supportive comment (Murphy, 2014)

Supportive comment (Murphy, 2014)

passive voice to soften the effect of potential threat by avoiding reference to agent. It is obvious in the context that the supressed agent is DC and his government who learned these lessons. (Leech, 2014: 195) |

	review everything that has been done (.) but let's be clear (.) as we do that (.) that we will make money available (.) because **we have a strong economy** to build flood resilience in our country	Talking about the strong economy Presupposition (that something has been done previously)
JC	**Thank you Mr. Speaker** (.) in 2011 (.) a £190 million flood defence project on the River Aire in Leeds was cancelled (.) on cost grounds by the Government (.) a thousand homes and businesses in Leeds were flooded in recent weeks (.) **the Government is still only committed only to a scaled-down version of the project** (.) worth a fraction of its total cost (.) **while the Prime Minister claimed (.) that "money was no object"** when it came to flood relief (.) when he meets the Leeds MPs and Judith Blake (.) the leader of Leeds City Council (.) in the near future or his Secretary of State (.) will he guarantee (.) that the full scheme **will go ahead to protect Leeds from future flooding?**	Rituality (conventionalised thanking) Providing evidence (detailed info to embarrass PM) Accusing the government of slow action. Non-public quotation/other quotation: using recipient's words (Bull and Wells 2012, Fetzer 2015)
DC	First of all (.) let me make one point before answering his points in detail (.) it is worth putting on record before we get on to flood defence investment (.) and I will cover it in full (.) this was the wettest December (.) for over 100 years (.) and actually in Leeds and in Yorkshire (.) **it was the wettest December ever** on record and that is why rivers in Yorkshire (.) including the Aire in Leeds (.) was a metre higher than it has ever been in its history (.) now in terms of flood defenses **no flood defends schemes (.) have been cancelled since 2010 (.)** the investment in flood defences was £1.5 billion in the last Labour Government (.) £1.7 billion in the Government I led (.) as a coalition Government (.) and will be over £2 billion in this Parliament (.) it has gone up and up and up (.) it has gone up because we run an economy where we are able to invest in the things that our country needs ((cheering)) (3.0) and one more point (.) let's not forget this (.) we inherited the Darling plan for our economy (.) that was a plan for a 50% cut in capital spending (.) and DEFRA was not a protected Department (.) we protected that flood spending (.) and we increased it (.) **something Labour would not have done** ((Chamber: cheering))	Self-justifying: offering reasons, excuses, explanation for the actions that have been taken. passive voice as a means of distancing or avoiding referencing himself or his government (Leech, 2014) Attacking Labour
JC	**Mr. Speaker (.) of course the rainfall was**	Agreement (illocution)

	excessive (.) of course the river levels were high (.) but (.) the Prime Minister has still not answered the question on the Leeds flood protection scheme I give him an opportunity to do in a moment (.) **in 2014 (.) Cumbria County Council applied for funding for new schemes in Keswick and Kendal (.) both were turned** down (.) both areas flooded again in the last few weeks (.) **does the Prime Minister believe that turning down those schemes was also a mistake?**	passive voice 'both were turned down' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 195) FTA: yes/no question presupposition
DC	**We are spending more on flood defence schemes (.) and stacking up a whole series of schemes (.) that we will spend more on** (.) but let me make this point to him (.) if he is going to spend (.) £10 billion on renationalising our railways (.) where is he gonna find the money for flood defences? ((Conservative members: cheering)) the idea (.) **the idea (.) that this individual (pointing at Corbyn) would be faster in responding to floods when it takes him three days (.) to carry out a reshuffle is frankly laughable ((Chamber: laughter))** Mr. Speaker (.) since I walked into the Chamber this morning (.) his shadow Foreign Minister resigned (.) his shadow Defence Minister resigned (.) **he couldn't run anything** ((Chamber: Cheering))	Presupposition: the government has been working towards this aim (Murphy 2014: 13) Using 'this individual' instead of using formal address form or 3rd person pronoun as a means of pointing or indexing Humorous discourse: sarcasm used to evade answering the question (change focus) (Bull and Wells, 2012) Attacking JC 'he couldn't run anything'
JC	**Mr. Speaker(.) it's very strange (.) that when I have asked a question about Leeds flood defence (.) then on Cumbria flood defence (.) the Prime Minister still seems unable to answer** ((Labour members: laughter)) can he now (.) tell us if there is going to be funding for those schemes? in October (.) Professor Colin Mellors (.) **the head of the Yorkshire regional flood and coastal committee (.) warned the Government (.) about funding cuts to flood defences in Yorkshire being (.) "formally discontinued" in the future. (.) would that also be a mistake?** can the Prime Minister now tell us (.) **is he going to (.) reverse the cuts in the defences that have taken place to make sure that those cities and areas are protected** (.) in the next round of floods which will no doubt come?	Third party: addressing the Speaker Sarcasm: indirect degrading the adversary's image by making fun of his role and responsibilities hedges 'seems' Non-public quotation/other quotation (Bull and Wells 2012, Fetzer 2015) modal verb/hedging 'would' in 'would that be a mistake?' presupposing that the PM committed a mistake previously, and 'also' has that effect, too. passive voice 'those cities and

		area are protected' instead of 'make sure you protect these areas' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the PM (Leech, 2014: 195)
DC	**As I have told him (.) we have increased (.) and continued to increase the spending on flood defences (.) we are spending more in this Parliament** (.) and for the first time (.) it is a six-year spending perspective (.) which is £2.3 billion extra on flood defences (.) money **that would not be available if we trashed the economy in the way that he proposes** (.) of course (.) after every incident of flooding (.) **you** go back (.) and you look at what you have spent (.) what you have built (.) you look at what you are planning to spend (.) and what you are planning to build (.) and you see **what more can be done** (.) but the head of the Environment Agency was absolutely clear that he had the money necessary to take the action that was necessary (.) **but we** can only do that with a strong economy (.) **an economy that is growing** (.) where more people are in work and more people are paying taxes (.) we've got the strength to solve this problem of floods (.) and we will do it in a proper way ((Chamber: Cheering))	Generic 'you' to represent anyone in general Passive voice 'what more can be done?' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 195) Presupposition: something has been done previously Shifting pronoun
JC	Mr. Speaker (.) **the Prime Minister has not answered** on Leeds (.) he has not answered on Cumbria (.) and he has not answered on the warning from Professor Mellors like him (.) last week I met people in York (.) who had been affected by flooding (.) I met a young couple (.) **Chris and Victoria** (.) whose home had been flooded over Christmas (.) **it was not very funny for them [interruption] (8.0) this young couple (.) lost many of their possessions (.) photos (.) children's toys (.) school work (.) and they've got the foul stench of floodwater in their home (.) as have many families have all over this country** (.) they are asking all of us wholly legitimate questions (.) **why was it that the insufficient pump capacity at the Foss barrier** (.) again (.) alerted to in 2013 by a Government report (.) **was not dealt with and those pumps were not upgraded? those people were flooded in York and their possessions and homes severely damaged (.) those people want answers from all of us (.) and in particular (.) from the Prime Minister**	Contempt: accusing the PM of equivocation Acting as a mouthpiece JC uses 'it wasn't funny for them' in response to the Chamber's laughter: Mitigation is revealed through the negation of the adjective 'funny' in 'it is not funny' which flouts Grice's maxim of quantity in this rather uninformative statement, it is likely to carry as an implicature (Leech, 2014: 193) Acting as a mouthpiece: Calling more emotional impact Asking by 'why question' to

		convey indirect accusation to the PM. passive voice 'was not dealt with and those pumps were not upgraded' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 195)
DC	I have the greatest sympathy with anyone who has been flooded (.) **we have to do what it takes to get people (.) and get to communities back on their feet** (.) and that is why we have put record sums in more quickly to help communities in Cumbria (.) in Lancashire (.) and now in Yorkshire we will continue to do that (.) specifically on the question of the Foss pumps (.) **that was about to be tendered for extra investment** (.) and that investment will now go ahead (.) because the money is there (.) so what I would say to him (.) we are putting in the money (.) we are putting in more quickly (.) and the military got involved more quickly and the couple who got flooded (.) **we are also doing something that previous Governments have talked about but never achieved** (.) which is to have an insurance scheme so that every single household in our country can get insured Flood Re (.) **that has not been done before (.) so have lessons been learned?** yes (.) they have (.) are there more lessons to learn? there always are (.) but frankly we do not need a lecture from Malta from the hon. Gentleman ((Chamber: Cheering))	Caring leader: extending sympathy 'face-enhancing act' (Leech, 2014: 99) Face-saving Implicature: flouting Grice's maxim of quantity (making the contribution more informative than is required passive voice 'that has not been done before' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (previous Labour government) (Leech, 2014: 195) passive voice: 'have lessons been learned' avoid referencing to himself and his government
JC	Mr. Speaker (.) **the reality is that flood defence scheme after flood defence scheme has been cancelled (.) postponed or cut (.) many more homes (.) have been flooded and too many lessons have been ignored** (.) **why cannot the Prime Minister support our calls for a coordinated (.) cross-party approach to flooding that looks at everything** (.) including upland management (.) to making people's	passive voice to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 195) Negative 'why' question assumes a "sin of omission" which has been extensively pragmaticalised for the function of suggestion, advice

	homes more flood resilient (.) and more protection schemes properly funded? does the Prime Minister agree at least with this (.) that **the fire and rescue service (.) has done such a great job (.) over the past few weeks in all parts of this country (.) should now be given a statutory duty to deal with floods** (.) to help us through any crisis that might occur in the future?	or request (Leech, 2014: 194). Invitation to work together as 'a coordinated cross-party approach' passive voice 'should now be given' to soften the effect of criticism by avoiding reference to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 195)
DC	**I think Mr. Speaker the best I can say is that when he has worked out how to co-ordinate his own party** (.) **then perhaps he could come and have a word with me On the issue of a statutory duty** (.) everybody knows what they have to do when floods take place (.) that is why there was such a magnificent response from the emergency services (.) from the fire services (.) from the emergency rescue services (.) they have our backing to do the vital work (.) and we will go on investing in flood defences (.) we will increase the money we are spending on flood defences (.) **because we have got a strong economy and a strong country that can back the action it's needed**	Hedging 'I think' criticise the opposition hedging 'perhaps' softens the directive force of the speech event and emphasises the element of uncertainty or tentativeness in requests with ability/possibility modals (Leech, 2014: 160) Face enhancing

Table (3) illustrates a variety of patterns as well as other observations that occurred in the sequential interaction between Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron. These patterns seem to be used to attenuate the face-threatening impact of FTAs (e.g. criticisms, complaints, and disagreement) and hence orient to face concerns.

Looking at the exchange, the first question-turn starts with 'Thank you Mr. Speaker', which seems a convention used to start the turn. Before starting to talk about the issue of flood defence, Jeremy Corbyn pays tributes to people who helped in dealing with this issue. His question at the end of the turn "there are always lessons to be learned and I will make sure they are learned", were they?', contains an example of non-public quotation. Quoting the PM's words, seems to be not only a means of softening the effect of a potential threat that can be embedded in the question, but also supporting Jeremy Corbyn's claim towards this issue.

The first response-turn shows instances of supportive comments, such as 'First, let me join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the emergency…'. Although joining Jeremy Corbyn in thanking these people seems to be a convention in the House of Commons, it can

be considered as a supportive comment. Following this, David Cameron says 'as he says, what we saw was communities coming together and volunteers carrying out extraordinary work', which indicates a sign of showing an approval to what Jeremy Corbyn has said in his turn. These supportive comments show an orientation to face concerns. In addition, both LO and PM address one another indirectly through the Speaker of the House and use the third person pronoun instead of the first-person pronoun 'you'. The only exception to this can be seen in the fourth response-turn, whereby 'you' seems to be used as generic.

The exchange also shows occurrences of grammatical/lexical features, such as passive constructions, as in 'a lot of lessons have been learned' in the first response-turn, 'in 2014, Cumbria County Council applied for funding for new schemes in Keswick and Kendal, both were turned down' in the third question-turn, and 'those people were flooded in York and their possessions and homes severely damaged' in the fifth question-turn. It is obvious in the context that the supressed agent is David Cameron and his government. Therefore, passive constructions serve to attenuate the potential of threat of accusation or criticism to the PM.

As the interaction shows, Jeremy Corbyn does not only address questions regarding important issues, but also seems to defend people's needs and concerns. For example, in the fifth question-turn, Jeremy Corbyn talks on behalf of a couple from members of the public 'Chris and Victoria', sharing their story and aligning with it. Thus, the feature of acting as a mouthpiece seems to be used as not only a means of softening the effect of the potential threat to the PM, but also as a means of persuading others of his standpoints.

The third response-turn demonstrates an example of humour. The utterance 'the idea, that this individual would be faster in responding to floods when it takes him three days, to carry out a reshuffle is frankly laughable', which is accompanied by laughter from the Chamber. This utterance is likely to imply a criticism of Jeremy Corbyn and ridicule him. Furthermore, this feature can be used to evade answering the question and change the focus of the issue.

The exchange also reflects that FTAs can be performed indirectly, especially when the utterance is built on presuppositions or implicatures. For example, in the question of the fourth question-turn, the word 'also' in 'would that also be a mistake?' presupposes that the PM committed a mistake previously, and thereby indicates an implicit accusation. The fifth response-turn shows an example of an implicature in 'we are also doing something

that previous Governments have talked about but never achieved', which is likely to flout Grice's maxim of quantity. In this utterance, David Cameron gives unclear information about 'previous governments,' and hence a milder criticism than to say overtly that the previous Labour government did not keep their promises regarding the 'insurance scheme'.

These features and patterns seem to be accounts for the contextual constraints and requirements of PMQs interaction. However, I am not seeking here to compare or contrast the LO and the PM, but rather to identify common features of leaders' performance in PMQs. The pilot study found that it is necessary to explain further what went on in this interaction. To achieve this goal, other contextual factors will be considered in the analytical chapters, such as nonverbal and paralinguistic communication and audience interaction.

This pilot study informed the feasibility and identified necessary modifications in the categorisation of mitigation features in PMQs exchanges between the LO and the PM. It has also provided an overview of the linguistic patterns used by those leaders while the interaction unfolds. Given the above initial testing of the analytical framework, a decision needed to be made to base the current research on the types of mitigation strategies that were used by the leaders and emerged during subsequent analysis of the data.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined the analytical approach on which my study is based. It combines the discursive approach to politeness, relational work with insights from traditional approaches to politeness, such as Austin's (1962) Speech Act Theory, Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework of politeness, Grice's (1975) implicature, Aijmer's (1996) conversational routines, and Leech's (2014) framework of politeness. This combination allows me, as the analyst, to investigate the meaning of mitigation in sequences of PMQs exchanges, without references to the speaker's intention and evaluation (cf. Grainger, 2013). Adopting a qualitative approach allows me to investigate the relationship between the way the MPs leaders use mitigation and parliamentary rituals and practices. The qualitative approach is supported with some quantification to obtain overall impressions and tendencies of the leaders' behaviour. This chapter has also described the data collection procedure for the exchanges used for this study. The chapter has also explained the context of the data, the processes of revising transcripts, sampling and coding the data as well as the categories of FTAs and mitigation features. An example from the dataset has been provided to

demonstrate how the analytical approach can reveal important information about the linguistic form and function of mitigation in PMQs interaction.

Following this description of the methodology, the following three chapters offer a detailed analysis of mitigation in the LO-PM exchanges in PMQs. The next chapter (chapter 4) will provide data on the types of mitigation features that most frequently occurred in the general dataset. It will consider the ritual nature of PMQs discourse and the leaders' linguistic style. It will also use Aijmer (1996), Leech (2014), Harris (2001), Bull and Wells, (2012), and Murphy's (2014) categories for developing a taxonomy of mitigation that encompasses the communicative action of PMQs interaction.

Chapter 4: Mitigation Strategies in PMQs Exchanges

4.1 Introduction

This chapter gives an overview of the range of mitigation strategies in the data. Interactants in PMQs discourse (like in any other conflictual interactions), perform FTAs through speech acts, e.g. requesting, accusing, ridiculing, and criticising. However, attempts to protect face are made through face-redress strategies, namely, mitigation strategies. In line with Chilton's (2004: 40) perspective, mitigation and FTAs are "useful in understanding the practices of political talks." Therefore, this chapter seeks to answer the following research question: *What are the linguistic features that entail mitigation in parliamentary communication?*

To address this question, the focus will be on forms and patterns encoding mitigation in PMQs exchanges and their pragmatic functions. Based on prior studies on the categorisation of mitigation, this chapter outlines a taxonomy of the linguistic features that entail mitigation. This taxonomy is useful for establishing the types and frequency of these features in the data. Using the categories established within this taxonomy, mitigation features in the current dataset are described and illustrated with examples.

Therefore, to gain more insight into the nature of language used in the context of PMQs interaction, this chapter attempts to introduce the most prominent mitigation strategies that have been identified in the data along with their subtypes and functions. These strategies are classified into grammatical/lexical features used in routines and formulaic language and discursive/stylistic features.

4.2 Strategies of Mitigation in PMQs

My starting point is the observation of a variety of mitigation strategies in the data, drawing on the categorisation outlined in Chapter 3 (Section 3.6.2). The LO-PM exchanges show two types of linguistic patterns: lexicogrammatical and discursive/stylistic strategies (Figure 1). These patterns will be discussed in detail in the following sections.
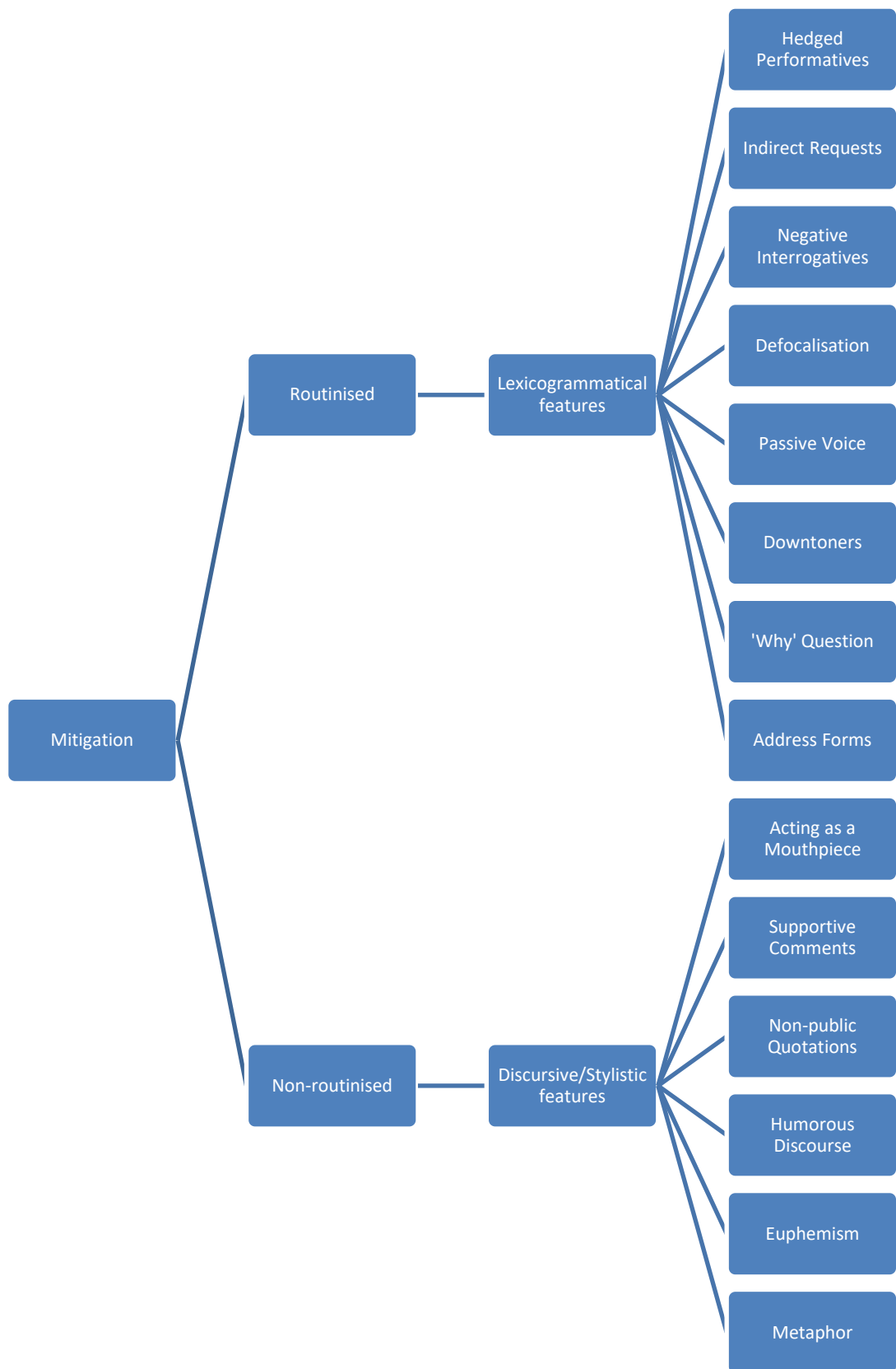
Figure 1 Taxonomy of Mitigation Features in British Parliament

4.2.1 Lexicogrammatical Features

The exchanges of LO-PM show a range of pragmalinguistic resources, which contain lexical expressions and grammatical constructions. These resources can also be referred to "conversational routines" which are defined as "phrases, which, as a result of recurrence, have become specialised or 'entrenched' for a discourse function which predominates over or replaces the literal referential meaning" (Aijmer, 1996: 11). Therefore, these resources appear to be used repetitively by the leaders as a convention to comply with parliamentary language during PMQs interaction when making requests, for example or starting their talk. This section distinguishes a list of pragmalinguistic resources, which can easily occur in combination with one another. These resources appear to be used by the leaders not only to conform to parliamentary rules of politeness, but also to achieve their communicative goals during the ongoing interaction. Therefore, individual examples from the data will be presented to illustrate these resources.

1. **Hedged Performatives:**

The LO-PM exchanges show a variety of patterns (see Table 4), which serves to soften in varying degrees the force of performatives by introducing modality and (sometimes) interrogation, e.g. 'may I ask', 'may I beg', 'could I ask' (Leech, 2014: 32). In other words, these patterns show a mitigated effect of the request for permission preceding the actual performative verb. Hedged performatives usually occur at the beginning of an utterance or a larger discourse unit. They can be used for indirect requests of a routinised type:

'I have to say' as a Request for Permission
The PMs, more specifically Theresa May, appear to use this the pattern as a formulaic opening. The modality of obligation 'I have to' makes the utterance seem that the speaker is compelled (presumably against his/her will) to say something (Leech, 2014: 32):

1. **Theresa May:** I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman I think the fact that he seems to confuse a customs union with a border when they are actually two different issues shows [interruption] shows (.) shows why (.) shows why (.) shows why (.) it is important that it is this party that is in government and dealing with these issues and not his (lines 67-70: 26 October 2016)

In this utterance, Theresa May uses the pattern 'I have to say' as an opening, which can serve to soften the effect of a potential threat of what follows 'I think the fact that he

seems to confuse a customs union with a border when they are actually two different issues'.

'Let me' and 'let's' within Patterns Expressing Offers (or Request of Permission)

The data shows that these request markers are more frequently used by the PMs, David Cameron and Theresa May (Table 4). Moreover, they are often combined with 'just', as a speaker-based routine that expresses requests of permission or offer (Aijmer, 1996). The marker 'let's' can also be used to display suggestion, whereby the proposed action is to be performed by both the speaker and the addressee, to the assumed benefit of both (Leech, 2014: 137). Therefore, this marker suggests more politeness than 'let me' (Aijmer, 1996: 190). The following examples present the use of both markers:

2. **David Cameron**: but let me pay tribute to the fact that so many in the NHS work so hard (lines 15-16: 24 Feb 2016)

3. **Theresa May**: but let's just talk about schools (lines 73-74: 19 April 2017)

The lexical device 'just' in utterance (3) seems to be used as a downtoning intensifier "which seeks to imply that the force of the item concerned is limited" (Quirk *et al.*, 1985: 598). It is also used to modify imperatives (Aijmer, 1996: 169).

The Modal Auxiliaries 'May/Can/Could' in the Form of Request of Permission

These patterns can have a mitigating or downtoning effect of a request of permission preceding the actual performative verb (Leech, 2014: 165). These markers can also be used to introduce a new argument (Extract 4) or to ask for permission to return to a previous topic (Extract 5) (Aijmer, 1996: 162). These types of indirect requests are more frequently used by Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May (Table 4):

4. **Jeremy Corbyn**: Mr. Speaker could I recommend the Prime Minister supports British cinema (lines 66-67: 2 Nov 2016)

5. **Theresa May**: well first of all may I join the right hon. Gentleman in sending our condolences (line 17: 11 Jan 2017)

Table 4 Frequency of Hedged Performatives in LO-PM Exchanges

Hedged performatives	JC	DC	JC	TM
I have to (say)	0	7	0	19
Let me (let's)	0	75	5	23
Can/could/may I	6	3	21	13
Total	6	85	26	55

On the basis of these figures, we can deduce that the markers of hedged performatives 'let me (let's)' and 'I have to say' are more frequently used by Theresa May and are mainly used in response-turns. The pattern of 'can/could/may I', on the other hand, seems to be employed in both question and response-turns.

2. Mitigated Indirect Requests in the Form of Declarative Sentences

The data also shows a number of requests markers based on assertives (Aijmer, 1996: 149-150) as in Table 5 below. Since the MPs must address each other using the third pronoun, instead I use he/she/they for this pattern and other patterns that contain the first pronoun 'you.'

Table 5 Mitigated Indirect Requests in the Form of Declarative Sentences

Requests based on Assertives	JC	DC	JC	TM
(perhaps/maybe) he/she could	2	3	7	1
(perhaps) he/she can	1	5	0	0
he/she might	5	0	1	0
he may	1	0	0	0
Total	9	8	8	1

As Table 5 illustrates, these markers can be preceded by 'perhaps' or 'maybe' to convey more tentative meaning. The most frequent pattern is 'perhaps (maybe) he/she could' (Extract 7), but other patterns also occur, such as 'he can' (Extract 6), 'if he could' (Extract 8) and 'he/she might' (Extract 9):

6. **David Cameron**: what we are now seeing from Labour (.) I sense (.) is that it is now moving in favour of academy schools (.) perhaps when he gets to his feet (.) he can say (.) does he favour academies (.) or not? (lines 73-75: 27 April 2016)

7. **Jeremy Corbyn**: perhaps he could answer another question (line 14: 16 March 2016)

8. **Theresa May:** if he could just be a little patient and wait half an hour for the Budget (line 36-37: 8 March 2017)

9. **Jeremy Corbyn**: I suggest he might think about doing the same thing (lines 87-88: 4 May 2016)

These markers may have the force of a tentative suggestion for the addressee's benefit (Aijmer, 1996: 149-150), or they can be used to make the directive relatively muted (Leech, 2014: 151).

3. Mitigated Indirect Requests in the Form of Interrogative Sentences

Markers of mitigated indirect requests are also found in the form of interrogative sentences i.e. Yes/No questions. This form of interrogative consists of one of the modal auxiliaries can/could, will/would (Aijmer, 1996:158).

10. Jeremy Corbyn: could she put the Government's plan and common strategy for Brexit before Parliament? (lines 31-32: 16 Nov 2016)

The pattern 'could the Prime Minister (or he)' is more frequently used by the LO than 'can the Prime Minister (he)' (Table 6), and thus is regarded as the preferred an unmarked way of making a request. On the other hand, 'will he/she (the Prime Minister)' can be fairly direct and assertive (Aijmer, 1996: 160) so it is likely be considered as non-mitigated, for example:

11. David Cameron: will he withdraw it (.) now he knows the figures? (line 45: 24 Feb 2016)

Or, it can express willingness and hence, can be used as a device of mitigation (Leech, 2014: 169) as in:

12. Jeremy Corbyn: will he work with us to reinstate it as a matter of urgency to give support to those communities that are facing problems on school places and doctors' surgeries? (lines 71-73: 15 June 2016)

Table 6 Mitigated indirect Request in the Form of Interrogative Sentences

Requests based on interrogatives	JC	DC	JC	TM
Can he	3	0	0	0
Can't he	2	0	0	0
Could he/she	12	0	9	0
Would he	1	0	0	3
Will he/she	14	2	15	0

As Table 6 shows, 'will questions' occur more frequently in the context of PMQs than 'would' which seems to be more tentative and suggests social distance and formality (*ibid*):

13. **Jeremy Corbyn**: would the Prime Minister join me (.) in wishing today Sir David Attenborough a very happy 90th birthday (lines 3-4: 11 May 2016)

14. **Theresa May:** would he have got a 100% commitment to NATO? ((May and her party: no)) (lines 98-99: 1 Feb 2017)

The modal 'would' in Extract 13 seems to be more ritualised than in Extract 14, which implies sort of tentativeness.

4. **Negative Interrogatives**

The modal verbs described above can be negated, such as 'can't he', to indicate indirect requests in PMQs interaction. This form of interrogative can display indirect directives, which may suggest impatience and is often accompanied by a tone of annoyance implying that the addressee is not doing what he/she ought to be doing (Aijmer, 1996: 159).

15. **Jeremy Corbyn:** can't he do something about that? (lines 72-73: 8 June 2016)

Across the data, negative interrogatives seem to be mainly used by Jeremy Corbyn. They are likely to be used to embed critical propositional content that can be used for argumentative and challenging purposes (Heritage, 2002).

5. **Defocalisation**

Defocalisation is defined as avoiding reference to the agent (i.e. the addressee or other people) as a means as softening the effect of a criticism (Leech, 2014: 195). Defocalising expressions can be used when the roles of the speaker and the hearer have to be toned down (Haverkate, 1984: 79), and thereby "the criticism is presented as a general truth which could apply to anybody" (Leech, 2014: 192). Therefore, defocalisation is exemplified by impersonalizing devices which do not mention the addressee, and make the advice or recommendation more general, such as:

16. **Jeremy Corbyn**: it is simply not good enough (.) millions are struggling (.) to get the home that they deserve (lines 137-138: 10 Feb 2016)

The utterance 'it is simply not good enough' is one way of softening the effect of criticism by avoiding identification of the target because there is no second person reference. This utterance thus avoids responsibility for an act which may be experienced as threatening to the hearer's face (Aijmer, 1996: 175-176). The negation of the adjective 'good' represents a

tendency towards the opposite pole 'bad'. Hence, Grice's maxim of quantity is flouted in the rather uninformative statement which is likely to create an implicature 'it is bad' (Leech, 2014: 192-193). As such, the effect of this mitigation marker is a milder criticism.

6. Passive Voice

Passive voice is another strategy that is used to display polite distancing since the agent is not mentioned explicitly (Aijmer, 1996: 155). However, it is obvious from the context that the suppressed agent is present and who by implication is being accused or criticised of the issue under debate (Leech, 2014: 195):

17. **Jeremy Corbyn**: adult education has been cut by 35% (.) during his time as Prime Minister (.) the construction output in Britain has shrunk for two consecutive quarters now (.) surely that is a matter for concern (.) is this not really a bit of a sign that this economic recovery is being constructed on sand? (lines 91-94: 9 March 2016)

The agentless passive in 'this economy is being constructed on sand' (this utterance is also a metaphor which will be discussed later, Section 2.4.4) is obvious from the context that the government who is present, and who is by implication being accused of the problem of the 'adult education cut'. However, it is preceded by mitigation markers; negation 'is this not', the intensifier 'really' and the downtoner 'a bit' to "understate the criticism" (Leech, 2014: 105, 193) directed at the PM. The same case occurs in the example below:

18. **Theresa May**: in relation to the action in the Yemen we have been clear that we want *the* incidents that have been referred to be properly investigated (.) and we want the Saudi Arabians if there are lessons to be learned from those to learn lessons from those (.) but I reiterate a point that I have made in this House before (.) our relationship with Saudi Arabia is an important one (lines 114-118: 26 October 2016)

This extract constitutes more than one construction of passive voice at which the suppressed agents are present, however not mentioned. In the first construction, the agent seems to be the government who is responsible for investigating the incidents, whereas in the second, the agent is Jeremy Corbyn, who is by implication being accused of giving lessons to Theresa May.

7. Downtoners

Downtoners are defined as modifiers that are used to soften the force of directives to understate criticism and indicate that the cost will be small to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 160). The data demonstrates a number of downtoning devices (Table 7), such as 'I think', and modal adverbs, such as 'perhaps' and 'maybe', 'just', 'seem' and 'a bit (a little)'.

Table 6 Frequency of Using Downtoners in LO-PM Exchanges

Downtoners (Lexical devices)	JC	DC		JC	TM
I think	7	25		6	7
perhaps	4	5		2	3
maybe	2	3		3	0
just	5	8		6	19
seem	10	2		13	1
a bit (a little)	5	7		4	3
total	33	50		34	33

As table 7 shows, 'I think' is most frequently favoured by David Cameron. It is used to express an opinion in an indirect or mitigated fashion (Leech, 2014: 202). In example 19, 'I think' prefaces the expression of an opinion to suggest advice in a tentative way:

19. **David Cameron**: I think he has to look at the facts (.) rather than talking down the people who are working so hard to teach children in our schools (lines 106-107: 2 March 2016)

Both 'perhaps' and 'maybe' seem to be used to emphasise the element of uncertainty or tentativeness in requests, especially with ability/possibility modals (can/could):

20. **Jeremy Corbyn**: perhaps the Prime Minister can help us (lines 46-47: 8 June 2016)

21. **Jeremy Corbyn:** maybe she could listen to headteachers in West Sussex (lines 41-42: 22 March 2017)

As presented in table 7, 'seem' is more frequently used by Jeremy Corbyn. It is another lexical device that is likely to be used to display uncertainty or tentativeness:

22. **Jeremy Corbyn**: can I offer an analysis from the Care Quality Commission which *seems* to have quite a good grasp of what is going on? (lines 81-82: 19 Oct 2016)

Diminishers or "belittlers" such as 'a bit', 'a little' can be one type of downtoners that serve to understate criticism and indicate that the cost will be small to the addressee (Leech, 2014: 160). However, these lexical devices are best described with respect to the patterns in which "they occur and the situations in which they are used" (Aijmer, 1996: 164).

23. **David Cameron**: he is just a bit late (.) because the Budget passed through this House with large majorities on every single vote (lines 160-161: 23 March 2016)

24. **Theresa May**: if he could just be a little patient and wait half an hour for the Budget (lines 36-37: 8 March 2017)

25. **Jeremy Corbyn***: I think she is being a little bit selective (line 19: 30 Nov 2016)

The downtoner 'a little bit' in example 25 together with 'I think' signals that the propositional content is uncertain, and thus contributes to attenuate the force of the utterance.

8. **Requesting by 'Why' Questions**

'Why' questions, especially the ones that refer to matters concerning the addressee are particularly apt for expressing muted criticisms because the "fault" is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation (a bald statement is more accusatory) (Leech, 2014: 194). This form of question can be addressed in two forms; positive which assumes a "sin of commission" and negative which assumes a "sin of omission" (*ibid*) (See Table 8).

Table 7 Types and Frequency of 'Why' Questions

Why questions	JC	DC		JC	TM
Sin of commission	29	2		17	2
Sin of omission	4	0		6	0
Total	33	2		23	2

As presented in table 8, Jeremy Corbyn would rather use positive 'Why' questions in addressing his question to the PMs than negative 'why' questions. The two types are shown in examples 26 and 27:

26. **Jeremy Corbyn:** if the proposals were put forward by the British Government (.) why did Conservative MEPs vote against them? (lines 23-24: 13 April 2016)

27. Jeremy Corbyn: why can't the Prime Minister listen to those in local government the King's Fund the NHS Confederation and her own council leaders and recognise this social care crisis (lines 122-123: 14 Dec 2016)

The construction 'why did Conservative MEPs vote' in example 26 appears to be "more confrontational" (*ibid*) because it refers to a matter related to the PM. As a result, it is likely to be used as a criticism against the PM. Preceding the 'Why' question by an 'if' clause can serve as reason for performing this criticism. On the other hand, 'why can't the Prime Minister listen' in example 27 seems to be used as a device for recommending future action. It could also be a sign of a suggestion or advice.

9. Forms of Address

Forms of address include the third person pronoun (he/she/they) and deferential and distance marking formulae, which MPs must use during PMQs interaction (Ilie, 2015: 9). The ritualised use of forms of address serves to mitigate, to varying extent, "the negative effect of aggressive parliamentary confrontation and adversarial behaviour" (*ibid*). Examples of third person and address form formulae are 'he' and 'the honourable Lady' (Extract 28), 'Mr. Speaker' and 'the Prime Minister' (Extract 29) and 'my right honourable Friend' (Extract 30).

28. David Cameron: but he is absolutely right that waiting times (.) a minute ago the honourable Lady for Wallasey (Ms Eagle) was shouting about waiting times (lines 30-31: 3 Feb 2016)

29. Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker (.) I am pleased the Prime Minister finally got on to the question of supported housing (lines 84-85: 10 Feb 2016)

30. Theresa May: and my right honourable Friend the Secretary of State is doing an excellent job there (line 73: 16 Nov 2016)

The third person and address forms formulae allow MPs to make straightforward and forceful statements during the interaction, while also uphold a safe institutional distance (*ibid*).

The pragmalinguistic resources and formulaic markers that are described above provide an insight into patterns of lexicogrammatical features, which are employed by the leaders during the interaction. Because of their repetitive use, most of these patterns, more specifically of request types, have become a matter of routine and therefore, lost much of

their force as indirect requests (Leech, 2014: 140). This could be due to the MPs' tendency to meet the linguistic requirements of the institutional setting. The data also demonstrates other type of mitigation strategies, that is the discursive/stylistic features, which will be presented in the next section.

4.2.2 Discursive/Stylistic Features

In addition to the pattern of lexicogrammatical features outlined above, the data has showed a variety of discursive/stylistic features too, which are employed by the three leaders and have a mitigating impact on FTAs.

1. Acting as a Mouthpiece

The term 'mouthpiece' was first introduced by Goffman (1981) in his participation framework model. Goffman defines it as a discourse role that refers to the relationship between the participants and the message which is transmitted on behalf of others. As a strategy, 'acting as a mouthpiece' has been identified by Murphy (2014) in PMQs discourse. Murphy argues that it can be used by speakers to distance themselves from the FTA, as they share the 'wish' of others. According to Murphy (2014), with whom I partly agree, this wish may not necessarily be the speakers' own desire, or perhaps it is contrary to the speakers' desire. However, Murphy makes no explicit connections between the speakers and those on whose behalf they speak. Therefore, this idea will be identified differently in this study, as the speaker appears to share others' desires and frames their issues as his/her own concern.

When the speaker frames the issues as legitimate concerns of the public, he aligns himself with these concerns. This is the case with Jeremy Corbyn who said, "when I became Leader of the Opposition, I said that I wanted people's voices to be heard in Parliament" (lines 11-12: 26 April 2017). Therefore, in most of his questions, this strategy is used as a means of reducing the effect of FTAs. It allows Jeremy Corbyn to talk on behalf of others and share their problems, and hence have the PM make an undertaking to introduce or change legislations towards certain issues. Corbyn mentions by name people who experience certain issues, considering their problems as ones that he cares about. As a narrator, Corbyn addresses public problems primarily based on their emails and sometimes on discussions that have occurred during his face-to-face meetings with them. However, Corbyn's approach of integrating the issue under debate from the context of micro-level individuals to the macro-level of the majority of the people who are experiencing the same

issue when resorting to this type of mitigation appears to be one technique that makes his way of asking questions distinctive. However, this strategy is highly dependent on members of the public (or supporters) and requires the receipt of their emails or face-to-face conversations; otherwise it would not exist.

Emails from the Public

As mentioned above, most of the problems and concerns that Corbyn shares come from emails from voters. For example, Extract 31, which is from the session of 20 January 2016, reveals Jeremy Corbyn's concern towards the government's axing of student grants (BBC News, 20 January 2016):

> 31. **Jeremy Corbyn:** I have a question from a student by the name of Liam (.) who says (.) "I'm training to be a mathematics teacher (.) and will now come out at the end of my course to debts in excess of £50,000 (.) which is roughly twice as much as what my annual income would be" (.) why is Liam being put into such debt? (lines 24-28)
>
> **David Cameron**: What I would say to Liam is that (.) he is now in a country with a university system with more people going to university than ever before (.) and more people from low income backgrounds going to university than ever before (.) in addition (.) what I would say to Liam (.) and I wish him well (.) is that he will not pay back a penny of his loan until he is earning £21,000 (.) he will not start paying back in full until he is earning £35,000 and our policy is going to put more money in the hands of students like Liam (.) which is why we are doing it (lines 30-36)

In his turn, Jeremy Corbyn talks on behalf of Liam, a student, and refers to his problem by using a direct quotation 'I have a question from a student by the name of Liam, who says, "I'm training to be a mathematics teacher…'. This quotation seems to be regarding the study expenses that Liam has reported as not being able to afford. Here, Liam is presented as a victim of one of the government's policies. Jeremy Corbyn is likely to exploit this quotation to press an action from the PM. This strategy could also be used as a means of implying a criticism at such a policy that increased university frees to £9000 a year. Therefore, Jeremy Corbyn attempts to have the PM make an undertaking to not increase University fees and help students from poorer backgrounds with their study costs. Towards the end of the turn, he uses a WH question 'why is Liam put into such debt?'. The question

shows no direct referencing to the agent who by implication is the government. Therefore, it serves to display polite distancing and thereby mitigate the (illocutionary) force of the criticism which is "embedded in the question" (Aijmer, 1996: 155).

In response to Jeremy Corbyn's question, the response-turn starts with 'what I would say to Liam is that, he is now in a country with a university system with more people going to university than ever before'. This utterance seems to be used as direct answer to the question. However, it is used as a means of praising the government, the university system, and students' opportunities. Simultaneously, he creates an implicature by the words 'now' and 'than ever before' to indirectly criticise the previous Labour government for not achieving these advances. This utterance also indicates the effect of the strategy used by Jeremy Corbyn on the way David Cameron formulates his response to Jeremy Corbyn's mitigated question. Then, the utterance 'what I would say to Liam' which is followed by 'and I wish him well' suggests that the answer is directed to Liam and all students who have been through the same situation. He justifies his government's policy by stating that those who go to University will potentially be earning more in the future (so will have more money eventually) and then have to start paying back the loan until they earn a good wage.

However, the effect of the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece may result in a different reaction, as in the following exchange, which is extracted from the session of 23 November 2016. This exchange is about the issue of 'understaffed' care homes (Albert, 23 November 2016: *Care Home*) from the session of 23 November 2016:

32. **Jeremy Corbyn**: Margaret wrote to me this week saying [Chamber: laughter] it is not funny (3.0) she described how her 89-year-old mother suffered two falls leading to hospital admissions due to the lack of nursing care (.) and went on to say (.) "my mother is worth more than this" what action will the Prime Minister take to stop the neglect of older people (.) which ends up forcing them into A & E admissions (.) when they should be cared for at home or in a care home? (lines 22-27)

    Theresa May: well (.) of course social care (.) is an area of concern (.) and social care is a key issue for many people (.) that's why the Government has introduced the better care fund (.) that's why the government has introduced the social care precept for local authorities ….. but I'll just say this to the right hon. Gentleman (.) we've introduced the better care fund and

the social care precept (.) let's just look at what the Labour Government did in their 13 years [interruption] they (2.0) they said they'd deal with social care in their 1997 manifesto (.) introduced a royal commission in 1999 (.) a Green Paper in 2005 (.) the Wanless review in 2006 (.) said they'd sort it in the comprehensive spending review of 2007 (.) and another Green Paper in 2009 (.) thirteen years (.) and they did nothing ((Chamber: cheering)) (lines 29-40)

The question-turn shows that the moment a name of a member of the public, Margaret is mentioned, Jeremy Corbyn is interrupted by the Chamber's laughter. This laughter makes Jeremy Corbyn respond by saying 'it is not funny', thus defining the Chamber's laughter as inappropriate, (Grainger, 2018: 29), which can be a threat to their positive face. However, his response is presented as a general truth that could apply to anybody (defocalisation), thus it can be a sign of mitigation to soften the effect of criticism. In addition, the negation of the adjective 'funny' flouts Grice's maxim of quantity in this rather uninformative statement and is therefore likely to "carry an implicature" (Leech, 2014: 193). After a pause for three seconds, Jeremy Corbyn pursues his strategy by quoting what Margaret wrote to him regarding the issue of hospital admissions for older patients. This quotation which is a "verbatim representation of what has been said" (Fetzer, 2015: 246) to him, is likely to have an influence on the situation. By reading Margaret's own words, her mother's critical situation is revealed, presenting her as a victim of one of the government's policies. By the end of his turn, he expresses his alignment with her and addresses a question by using the passive voice 'they should be cared for at home or in a care home'. It is obvious from the context that the agent is the government who is responsible for neglecting old people. Although the passive voice refers to the elderly's relatives, carers, or nursing homes, it implies an accusation of the government, and hence can be characterised as "polite distancing" (Aijmer, 1996: 155).

The response-turn starts with the utterance 'well, of course social care, is an area of concern, and social care is a key issue for many people' which seems to be used to acknowledge the social care is a 'key issue'. Following that, she says 'that's why the Government has introduced the better care fund' which is likely to justify her government plan to improve the social care. Then, she uses the utterance 'let's just look at what the Labour Government did in their 13 years', which indicates a mitigated way of "shifting focus on to the questioner" (Sealey and Bates, 2016: 20). Following this, the turns shows an

attack to Jeremy Corbyn's face and it ends with the utterance 'thirteen years, and they did nothing'. This utterance implies a negative evaluation to the previous Labour government, and thereby construct a direct face-threat to Jeremy Corbyn. This could be a reaction to the face-threat involved in the perceived criticism in the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece.

The examples presented above show that Jeremy Corbyn employs the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece by assigning the status of an object of talk, elaborates on it (usually quoting a source from the public), and ending with a WH question or yes/no question (Fetzer, 2015). In doing so, he employs mitigation to distance his responsibility from directly addressing an FTA to the PM in order to remain within the scope of the institutional rules of parliamentary language. The strategy of talking on behalf of members of the public, sharing their voices and aligning with their concerns makes an emotional appeal addressed to the audience including parliamentarians (e.g. when they react by 'hear hear'), voters and the media. The association between the voices of the public and Corbyn's argumentation serves to make his ideology more persuasive and convincing. In addition, Corbyn resorts to quoting the public's verbatim speech instead of using his own formulations, and thus makes the structural positioning of quotations as preceding the question serve to mitigate the full force of the FTA, although the threat is implicitly performed to the PM. However, this strategy results in different interactions as revealed by the PMs in the response-turns. The analysis also identifies the strategy of supportive comments as a means of mitigating FTAs as it presents reciprocal face concern for both the speaker and the addressee, as will be discussed in the following section.

2. Supportive Comments

The strategy of supportive comments entails showing a form of approval, admiration, praise, thanks, congratulation, or compliment to the addressee. They also show consideration for the addressee's opinion or judgement (Leech, 2014: 201). This strategy is often employed at the beginning of an utterance, as it serves to deliver topics safely and positively, soften criticism and show a form of agreement with the opponent. However, the analysis of the data shows that this strategy can be either ritualised or non-ritualised. The following two subsections will discuss the distinction between these two types.

Ritualised Supportive Comments

Most of the comments identified are ritualistic ones that have become routine and lost much of their politeness force (Leech, 2014). In each session, this case is made repeatedly

by the LO and the PM who often join each other in congratulating, paying tribute or offering condolences. This type of supportive comment can be seen in the following extract, which is from the session of 6 January 2016, regarding the issue of 'flood defence'.

33. **Jeremy Corbyn**: Thank you Mr. Speaker ((Conservative members: laughter)) I would like to thank (.) the firefighters (.) mountain rescue services (.) police (.) armed services (.) engineers (.) workers at the Environment Agency (.) and local government workers (.) for all the volunteers for all the work they did in keeping safe thousands of people from the floods that have affected this country (lines 2-6)

    David Cameron: First (.) let me join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the emergency services (.) the police (.) and the fire service also (.) the search and rescue teams who went from around the country to areas that were flooded (.) can I thank the military for all the work that they did? as he says (.) what we saw was communities coming together and volunteers carrying out extraordinary work (lines 11-15)

The first question-turn of each LO-PM exchange starts with the pattern 'thank you Mr. Speaker', which seems to be a convention in the House of Commons. Although he was interrupted by laughter from the Chamber, he pursues in expressing his gratitude to people who contribute to 'keeping safe thousands of people from the floods'.

Another convention in the House of Commons is that the PM echoes the LO's sentiments expressed in his opening question. As such, David Cameron joins Jeremy Corbyn in thanking the emergency services by the utterance 'First, let me join the Leader of the Opposition in thanking the emergency services, the police…'. The pattern 'let me join' expresses not only a routine marker for permission, but also shows the PM's alignment with the LO by agreeing with LO's initial content and illocutionary force of thanking those workers (cf. Fetzer, 2018: 413). Hence, this supportive comment marks a display of support for what Corbyn has said regarding these services. He also uses the formula 'can I' to begin another ritualised "request for permission" (Leech, 2014: 184) to continue in thanking the military for their help in dealing with the issue of 'flood defence'. In addition, the phrase 'as he says' corresponds to further his agreement to Jeremy Corbyn's remark regarding those who volunteered to keep people safe from the floods that occurred in January 2016.

Therefore, the general function of supportive comments is to maintain self and other's face.

Non-Ritualised Supportive Comments

This strategy includes a wide range of agreement types that can be offered by both adversaries (i.e., the PM and the LO), as we can see in the next extract from the exchange of 3 February 2016, regarding the cancer care:

34. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Thank you Mr. Speaker [interruption] ((Chamber: laughter)) tomorrow Mr. Speaker (.) is world cancer day (.) cancer is a disease that almost every family in the country has been affected by in some way or another (.) 2.5 million people in the country have cancer (.) and Members on both sides of this House have received treatment or are receiving it at the present time (.) a thousand people a day are diagnosed with cancer (.) and they go through a trauma as soon as they are diagnosed (.) but in the last year (.) however (.) there has been a 36% increase in the number of people waiting more than six weeks for vital diagnostic tests (.) could the Prime Minister do something to bring that down? ((Chamber: hear)) (lines 2-10)

    David Cameron: Well first of all, I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the fight against cancer (.) is one of the great fights of our time (.) and it is one that we are determined to win now when we look at how to treat cancer in our country (.) we are putting an extra £19 billion into our NHS (.) and specifically while he is absolutely right everyone in the House and every family in this country will know someone affected by cancer we are treating more patients (.) and let me give him the figures Compared with 2010 (.) over 645,000 more patients with suspected cancers have been seen (.) that is an increase of 71% (.) and almost 40,000 more patients have been treated for cancer (.) that is an increase of 17% (.) we got more doctors (.) more nurses (.) more cancer specialists (.) but the fight against cancer is something we need to continue with (lines 12-21)

The question-turn reflects Jeremy Corbyn's concern over waiting times for cancer diagnostic tests. This turn ends with a question 'could the Prime Minister do something to bring that down?', which seems to be an indirect request in the form of interrogative sentence (containing the modal auxiliary 'could') to ask the PM about this issue. This

question could be perceived as a challenge to David Cameron over his government's record on cancer treatment spending (Sparrow, 3 February 2016: *The Guardian*), and thereby can be face threating. However, it seems from the way David Cameron replies that this is not the case. David Cameron uses the constructs 'I completely agree'' and 'he is absolutely right' in I completely agree with the right hon. Gentleman that the fight against cancer is one of the great fights of our time' and 'he is absolutely right everyone in the House and every family in this country…', which signals an approval of Jeremy Corbyn's comments regarding the fight against cancer. As such, this strategy serves to save both David Cameron's own and the other's face, that is Jeremy Corbyn's face. In between these supportive comments, he uses the first plural pronoun 'we' in 'we are putting an extra £19 billion into our NHS', which could be a way of representing himself as a member of this government to justify his government's action. David Cameron thus claims credit for his government, thereby maintaining the positive public image of himself and the government. In the context of PMQs, non-ritualised supportive comments thus could be perceived as positively polite and it is apparently appropriate for the speakers to enhance both their own and the opponent's face as the interaction progresses.

3. Non-Public Quotations

Quotations can be another means of mitigating the effect of FTAs to the opponent during the conflictual discourse of PMQs (Bull and Wells, 2012). They are defined as "verbatim representation of what has said before and are generally signalled by the use of quotation marks in written language" (Fetzer and Weizman, 2018: 498). I call this strategy 'non-public' to distinguish it from 'public' quotations that are mainly used by Jeremy Corbyn in the strategy of 'acting as a mouthpiece'. Referring to others' words and views can be an indirect way of constructing FTAs, such as accusations, criticisms, and insults, to the opponent without explicitly saying them. Therefore, this strategy can serve to downplay the effect of the face-threat by distancing a speaker from responsibility of being impolite. The role of non-public quotations can be reflected through the way a speaker represents himself/herself during the interaction. Although this strategy can be used to support a speaker's claim, it can simultaneously be exploited to undermine the credibility and ideological coherence of the adversaries and their parties (Fetzer, 2015). This strategy is classified into two types: other-quotations and self-quotations (Fetzer, 2015). However, I will demonstrate the first type of quotations as it appears to be more frequently used in the LO-PM exchanges.

Other-Quotations

References to authority figures or institutions' reports (how and where did they get the information), make the argumentation more evidential and that is important for conveying objectivity, reliability, and credibility (Van Dijk, 2006: 736). The LO-PM exchanges show that other quotations are likely to be the most frequent types of quotation. They are usually preceded by the performative quotatives 'I quote' or 'I say', which are followed by a source. For example, in PMQs session of 24 February 2016, Corbyn refers to the researchers' report regarding the clash over 'the social care statistics of deaths' as an authoritative source to provide evidence for his claim:

35. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) this dispute with the junior doctors has been on the basis of misrepresented research about weekend mortality (.) I will read the Prime Minister what the researchers <u>themselves</u> say (.) and I quote (.) "it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which these excess deaths may be preventable (.) to assume that they are avoidable would be rash and misleading" (.) so (.) is the Prime Minister and his Health Secretary being "rash and misleading" with these figures? (lines 26-31)

    David Cameron: Let me (.) let me (.) let me agree with the right hon. Gentleman about something which is that this dispute has been plagued by scaremongering and inaccurate statistics the British Medical Association (.) in their first intervention said that this was a 30% pay cut (.) that was completely untrue [......] the true figures for excess deaths at the weekend are 11,000, not 6,000 (.) so perhaps (.) the right hon. Gentleman will now withdraw (.) his totally unjustified attack on the Health Secretary (.) will he withdraw it (.) now he knows the figures? (lines 33-45)

Here, the quotation used in the question-turn "it is not possible to ascertain the extent to which these excess deaths may be preventable, to assume that they are avoidable would be rash and misleading" seems to be used as a means of creating a link between the words mentioned in the report - 'rash and misleading'- to employ them in the question 'is the Prime Minister and his Health Secretary being "rash and misleading" with these figures?' at the end of the turn. This exploitation can serve to perform an indirect criticism against the PM and his Health Secretary, considering them as being rash and misleading regarding the

estimation of deaths at weekends and to say that deaths are avoidable (Watt, 24 February 2016: *The Guardian*).

The effect of using the strategy of non-public quotation in the question-turn can be reflected on the way David Cameron responds to Jeremy Corbyn. David Cameron's turn starts with the utterance 'Let me, let me, let me agree with the right hon. Gentleman', which indicates an approval to (some of) what Jeremy Corbyn has said. In this utterance, the request marker for permission 'let me' is repeated three times. This could be an attempt of winning the floor to initiate talk. Here, the supportive comment does not seem to be conventionalised as in Extract 33, but rather it could be perceived as positively polite and face enhancing strategy. However, David Cameron seems to take the quotation used in the question-turn up as a face-threat when his turn shows a shift of focus, saying 'so perhaps, the right hon. Gentleman will now withdraw, his totally unjustified attack on the Health Secretary, will he withdraw it, now he knows the figures?'. Although this utterance contains mitigation markers, such as 'perhaps' and 'the right hon. Gentleman', it indicates an attack to Jeremy Corbyn's face, asking him to withdraw his claim, describing it as an 'unjustified attack'.

The strategy of other quotation can also be used reciprocally to construct mitigated accusations, as in the following extract from the session of 4 May 2016 'ahead of Thursday's local election' (Sparrow, 4 May 2016: *The Guardian*):

36. **David Cameron:** he raised the case of Suleiman Ghani (.) whom the right hon. Member for Tooting shared a platform with nine times (.) this is a man who says that it is wrong to stop people going to fight in [interruption] no (.) as long as it takes (.) do you want to know the views of a person that your leader has just quoted? he has described women as [interruption] right (.) the hon. Member for Islington South and Finsbury (Emily Thornberry) might be interested in this (.) he described women as "subservient" to men (.) he said that homosexuality was an "unnatural" act (.) he stood on a platform with people who wanted an Islamic state (.) that is why his attempts to deal with anti-Semitism are utterly condemned to failure ((Chamber: cheering)) because he won't even condemn people who sit on platforms with people like that (lines 101-111)

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker I did point out to the Prime Minister I was trying to help him (.) but the gentleman concerned is actually Conservative (.) so maybe he would care to think about that um (.) he might also consider that (.) Shazia Awan (.) a former Conservative parliamentary candidate (.) said this of the Tory mayoral campaign (.) "I'll be voting Labour (.) a lifelong Tory voter and ex-candidate (.) I'm ashamed at the repulsive campaign of hate" ((Chamber: cheering)) (lines 113-118)

In this response-turn, David Cameron seems to have a heated debate, accusing Jeremy Corbyn and another member of Labour party, Suleiman Ghani of 'anti-Semitism'. He quotes Suleiman Ghani words "subservient" and "unnatural", which seem to be used against Suleiman Ghani, a case which is taken up by Jeremy Corbyn as face-threat. Consequently, Jeremy Corbyn, in his turn, quotes the words of a former Conservative parliamentary candidate (Shazia Awan) "I'll be voting Labour, a lifelong Tory voter and ex-candidate, I'm ashamed at the repulsive campaign of hate". Although this quotation is preceded by the utterance 'so maybe he would care to think about that um, he might also consider that', which contains a sequence of mitigation markers, it appears to be a counterattack to David Cameron. Here, there seems to be a reciprocated use of aggressive facework.

By shifting "responsibility for the quoted material to the source" (Fetzer, 2015: 263) (Suleiman Ghani in the response-turn and Shazia Awan in the question-turn), the accusations can be mitigated. Jeremy Corbyn, for example, is likely to use this strategy to challenge David Cameron by supporting his argument with what has been said by a member of David Cameron's party to oppose his proposal indirectly.

As illustrated above, non-public quotations (or other quotations) are used strategically during the LO-PM interaction. They serve to display a form of mitigation through providing authorised sources' words as evidence, and thus distancing the speaker from the responsibility of directly constructing an FTA. Hence, the critical remarks or accusations are made more acceptable to the institutional rules of the House. In addition, this evidence appears to be employed to support the leaders' argumentation, to reconstruct their credibility or to challenge the adversary's actions or previous statements depending on the source of the quotation. Therefore, they are employed to "construct, deconstruct and reconstruct political selves and their ideologies" (Fetzer, 2015: 266).

4. Humorous Discourse

Brown and Levinson (1987: 124) describe humour as a positive politeness strategy that depends on shared understandings. They note that humour is used to mitigate FTAs by making participants comfortable. For Cameron (2015), humour is a discursive strategy that seeks to promote public engagement and attract their attention to serious political issues. Nonverbal and paralinguistic features, such as posture, gesture, voice, intonation, hesitations, status, and even the physical context play a crucial role in understanding humour (Norrick and Chiaro, 2009). Therefore, these features are essential for conveying personal perspective and identifying humorous frames (Tsakona, 2009: 225). Humour can be used to lighten speakers' concerns, or to downplay potential embarrassment, as shown in Extract 37 from the session of 13 April 2016, regarding the issue of 'Panama papers tax revelations' (BBC News, 13 April 2016):

37. **Jeremy Corbyn**: […] the Panama papers Mr. Speaker (.) exposed the scandalous situation (.) where wealthy individuals seemed to believe that corporation tax and other taxes are something optional (.) indeed (.) as the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) informed (.) this is only for "low achievers" apparently (.) so when Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs says that the tax gap is £34 billion (.) why then is he cutting HMRC staff by 20% and cutting down tax offices (.) which loses the expertise of people to close that tax gap? (lines 25-31)

    David Cameron: well I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman wants to get on to our responsibilities to pay our taxes (.) which I think that is very important (.) I thought his tax return was a metaphor for Labour policy (.) it was late (.) it was chaotic (.) it was inaccurate and it was uncosted ((DC and JC: smile accompanied by Chamber: laughter)) […] (lines 33-36)

    Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker (.) I am grateful to the Prime Minister for drawing attention to my own tax return (.) there to see (.) warts and all (.) the warts being my handwriting (.) and the all being my generous donation to HMRC I actually paid more tax than some companies owned by people he might know quite well ((Labour members: cheers and laughter)) […] (lines 47-51)

In his question-turn, Jeremy Corbyn addresses the issue of recent revelation. However, David Cameron's turn does not seem to be answering Jeremy Corbyn's question. However, he appears to shift focus on Jeremy Corbyn's tax returns. The response-turn starts with 'the utterance 'I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman wants to get on to our responsibilities to pay our taxes, which I think that is very important', which suggests a compliment to Jeremy Corbyn and an orientation to face concerns. However, this compliment is followed by the utterance 'I thought his tax return was a metaphor for Labour policy, it was late, it was chaotic, it was inaccurate and it was uncosted' which is met by smile from both Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron and laughter from the Chamber. This utterance indicates a description of Jeremy Corbyn's tax return and a means of drawing a parallel with Labour policy (Sparrow, 13 April 2016: *The Guardian*). Although this description is likely to be used to ridicule Jeremy Corbyn and his party, Jeremy Corbyn does not seem to take this up as face-threat.

Jeremy Corbyn-turn starts with 'Mr. Speaker, I am grateful to the Prime Minister for drawing attention to my own tax return', which seems to be matching the orientation of face concerns that David Cameron has exhibited at the beginning of his turn. Jeremy Corbyn's next utterance is 'there to see, warts and all, the warts being my handwriting, and the all being my generous donation to HMRC I actually paid more tax than some companies owned by people he might know quite well' is accompanied by cheers and laughter from Jeremy Corbyn's side. The last bit of this utterance 'people he might know quite well' arguably floats Grice's maxim of quantity because it gives a vague meaning. This turn reflects a reciprocal use of humour which can be seen as a means of creating a light atmosphere in the Parliament.

The extract discussed above has shown that humour plays a strategic role in parliamentary discourse. This strategy appears to be used to display mitigation and orient to face concerns. In addition, it serves to establish solidarity and provide amusement during the interaction. Switching to the humorous mode may also delay serious unwanted discussions through diverting the audience's attention from these discussions (Archakis and Tsakona, 2011: 63) and hence, serves as an evasion technique. However, humour can also be used as a means of ridiculing the opponent and threating his/her positive face in a more effective manner than overtly aggressive linguistic behaviour (Harris, 2001: 467). Therefore, parliamentary humour is described as "a means of expressing criticism and aggression in a mitigated and socially acceptable manner, namely without violating parliamentary rules of

conduct" (Tsakona, 2009: 223). This type of humour will be discussed in more detail in chapters 5 and 6 (See sections 5.3.2 and 6.2.3).

5.Euphemism

The analysis of the LO-PM exchanges shows instances of euphemism which seem to be used to soften the potential effect of FTAs during the interaction. Euphemism in political discourse has been defined as "the use of mild and polite-sounding language to soften the potential face affront both to the speaker (for self-presentational purposes) and to the hearers (out of concern for their sensitivities)" (Crespo-Fernández, 2014: 8). In other words, euphemism means replacing the more direct representation of a referent with some indirect, less unpleasant associations and polite alternative one for argumentative purposes (Halmari, 2011; Crespo-Fernández, 2014). Therefore, it can be a face-saving strategy through which politicians can formulate safe areas of argumentation while talking about unpleasant or conflictual topics that may convey criticisms of the opponent.

Given that euphemism is used to soften the effect of what they really want to communicate, it serves a variety of purposes and one of these purposes is polite criticism and mitigation. However, other purposes, such as sensitivity to audience concerns and concealing unsettled topics, may also lead to achievement of the mitigation purpose. In this respect, euphemism can be one resource of mitigation in parliamentary discourse, as it can play a crucial role in attenuating FTAs and maintaining one's positive face during PMQs interaction.

Euphemistic constructions appear to be used to mitigate, for example the taboo of death. Words like 'loss', 'passing' and 'lay to rest' indicate more respect and appreciation, and hence mitigation, than the words 'die' and 'death'. In the following extract, which is taken from the session of 2 November 2016, Jeremy Corbyn seems to use euphemism as a means of avoiding the negative connotation of 'death' in his plea to the PM regarding the cost of children's funerals.

38. Jeremy Corbyn: […] the Prime Minister may be aware that the *Sunday Mirror*, with the support of the Labour party, are calling for an end to council charges for the cost to parents of laying a child to rest (.) it would cost £10 million a year (.) a very small proportion of total Government expenditure to ensure that every council could ensure that those going through the <u>horror</u> (.) of laying a child to rest did not have a bill imposed on them by the local

authority to put that child to rest (.) I hope the Prime Minister will be able to consider this and act accordingly (lines 111-118)

Theresa May: I recognise the issue that the right hon. Gentleman has raised (.) there are (.) of course facilities available through the social fund funeral expenses payment scheme for payments to be made available to people who qualify (.) meet the eligibility conditions (.) of course it's difficult for anybody when they have to go through the tragedy of losing a child and then facing the consequences of the sort that the right hon. Gentleman mentions […] (lines 120-125)

The question-turn presents Jeremy Corbyn's plea on behalf of parents who struggle to afford funeral costs for children who die (Sparrow, 2 November 2016: *The Guardian*). During his plea, Jeremy Corbyn uses the construction 'laying a child to rest' in 'calling for an end to council charges for the cost to parents of laying a child to rest'. This construction can be considered as euphemism because it is more socially appropriate than using for example, 'bury a dead child'. Jeremy Corbyn uses this construction three times, which is likely to emphasise the seriousness of this problem. The meaning that can be constructed from the way this euphemistic construction is used by Jeremy Corbyn might serve as a means of projecting the image of a caring leader (Section 5.6).

The effect of using this euphemistic construction has promoted a semi-consensual response from Theresa May who "mirrors the behaviour" of Jeremy Corbyn (Murphy, 2014: 27). In other words, the way that Jeremy Corbyn performs his utterance with mitigation to present the problem has an influence on Theresa May's way of responding. First, she expresses some agreement with Jeremy Corbyn's claim when she says, 'I recognise the issue that the right hon. Gentleman has raised'. Then, she says 'of course it's difficult for anybody when they have to go through the tragedy of losing a child and then facing the consequences of the sort that the right hon. Gentleman mentions', which indicates an acknowledgement of the difficulty for parents facing 'the tragedy of losing a child'. She also seems to avoid referring to the concept of 'death' and substitutes it with the word 'losing' which is more socially acceptable and conveys respect to the deceased children and their families and relatives. This question-response interaction reflects a reciprocal use of euphemism and an orientation to face concerns.

6. Metaphor

Metaphor is a figure of speech, which is defined as a "way of conceiving of one thing in terms of another, and its primary function is understanding" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 36). It can be employed for "connotative or emotional purposes in arousing emotions and reinforcing particular perspectives" (Wilson, 1990: 104). Moreover, it can be used to "elicit absurd images which can then be employed for the purpose of ridiculing one's opponent" (*ibid*). For Brown and Levinson (1987), metaphor is an off-record strategy that is employed to minimise the accountability of the speaker by leaving the metaphorical entailments and relevance to the communicative situation to be inferred by the hearer. It can be used to avoid a direct reference to an FTA (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993: 9). Metaphor has been classified into several types, such as "container" (words and sentences have meaning in themselves), "building" and "object" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980).

For instance, during a debate from PMQs session in 27 April 2016 over the government's 'controversial proposal' to force all English schools to become academies (Sparrow, 27 April 2016: *The Guardian*), Jeremy Corbyn regards this plan as an object as presented in the following example:

39. **Jeremy Corbyn**: […] last week (.) the Prime Minister told (.) the House that he was going to put rocket <u>boosters</u> on his forced academisation proposals (.) this weekend (.) in the light of widespread unease (.) including among his own MPs (.) it seems that the wheels are falling <u>off</u> the rocket boosters ((Chamber: laughter)) […] (lines 15-18)

    David Cameron: [….] turning to the issue on academies (.) I haven't yet met a rocket booster with a wheel on it ((Chamber: laughter and DC: smiles)) but I am sure um (.) rocket science is not really my subject (.) and I think apparently it is not his ((Chamber: laughter)) I will repeat again (.) academies are raising standards in our schools ((Chamber: cheering)) and I want a system (.) and I want a system (.) where heads and teachers run schools (.) not bureaucrats (lines 29-34)

During this question-turn, Jeremy seems to make a link between the utterance 'last week, the Prime Minister told, the House that he was going to put rocket boosters on his forced academisation proposals', which is accompanied with a stress on the word 'booster', and the one after 'this weekend, in the light of widespread unease, including among his

own MPs, it seems that the wheels are falling off the rocket boosters'. This linkage is arguably used to build a presupposition that the government is intending to change the proposals of 'academicisation' which have been opposed by the public as well as a number of Conservative MPs. Therefore, Corbyn uses 'the wheels are falling off the rocket boosters' as a metaphor, for it is impossible for 'the rocket boosters' to have 'wheels.' The plan of academisation is viewed as a "moving object" (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 58) which is based on the correlation between an object that should move towards us and the concept of academisation that the PM is forcing on people. However, this metaphorical construction is preceded by the hedging 'seem' to downplay the FTA that can be performed because of the following criticism. There seems to be a strong relationship between the physical aspect of 'the wheels' that are 'falling off' and the idea of the 'failure of movement' (Wilson, 1990: 128). This idea means that rocket boosters have wheels to make them move forward and the falling off these wheels prevents these boosters (academisation plan) from moving on. The phrasal verb 'falling off' performs the function of negative evaluation (Handford and Koester, 2010) and hence, the metaphorical meaning indicates weak support for this plan. The way this metaphor is used can be interpreted as sarcastic, however, it is met by loud laughter from Conservative MPs.

The use of the sarcastic metaphor in the question-turn above impacts the way David Cameron formulates his answer. During his response-turn, David Cameron says 'turning to the issue on academies, I haven't yet met a rocket booster with a wheel on it', which is accompanied by David Cameron' smile and laughter from the Chamber. The metaphoric construction 'rocket booster' seems to be used to ridicule Jeremy Corbyn's claim regarding the plan of 'academisation'. However, it is followed by the utterance 'but I am sure um rocket science is not really my subject and I think apparently it is not his', which is accompanied by laughter from the Chamber, but this time shows an orientation to face concerns.

Metaphor, hence, plays an interactional role as it serves as a means of avoiding a direct referencing to the addressee and minimising the speaker's responsibility of performing FTAs (Chilton and Ilyin, 1993). Before proceeding to the analysis of various linguistic resources of mitigation, the following section presents the frequency of these resources as evidenced in the data.

4.3 Frequency of Mitigation Strategies

The purpose of this section and the following subsections is to investigate the frequencies of the different features and patterns that are employed in the dataset of the LO-PM interaction.

4.3.1 Lexicogrammatical Features (Routines and Formulaic Language)

Figures 2 and 3 present the distribution of the features and patterns that are used by the leaders in the LO-PM interaction and exhibit the differences (and similarities) between them. Looking at figure 2, Jeremy Corbyn's question-turns show that 'Why questions are more frequently used (33), followed by downtoners (23), whereas the less frequently used feature is defocalisation (4). David Cameron's turns, on the other hand, show the highest number of occurrences for the hedged performatives (85), followed by downtoners (50). The least frequently occurring feature is defocalisation (0), interrogative requests (0) and negative interrogatives (0). However, the feature of address forms seems to have approximately similar occurrences in Jeremy Corbyn's (14) and David Cameron's turns (13). In addition, the feature of declarative requests has equal distribution (9) in both question and response turns.
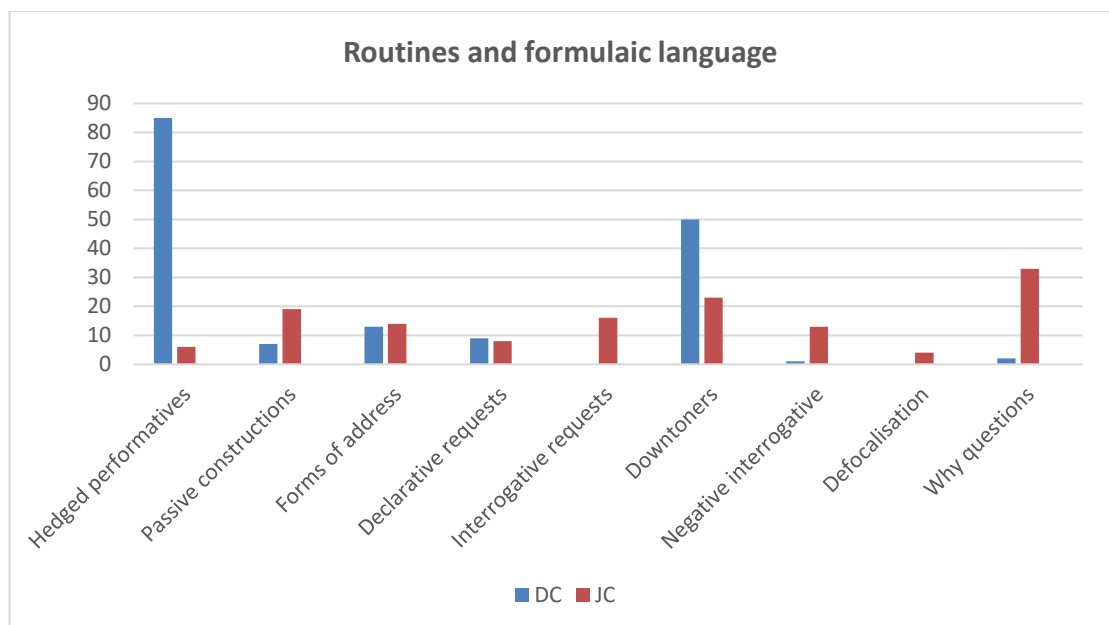
Figure 2 Lexicogrammatical Features in JC-DC Exchanges

Figures 3 below outlines that passive constructions (42) are the most favoured feature in Jeremy Corbyn's question-turns, followed by downtoners (34), while the least frequent feature is defocalisation (4). In contrast, the most common feature in Theresa May's

response-turns is forms of address (126 occurrences), followed by hedged performatives (55 occurrences), while the least common feature is negative interrogatives (0). This figure also shows that the feature of downtoners seems to have approximately similar occurrences in Jeremy Corbyn's (34) and Theresa May's turns (33).
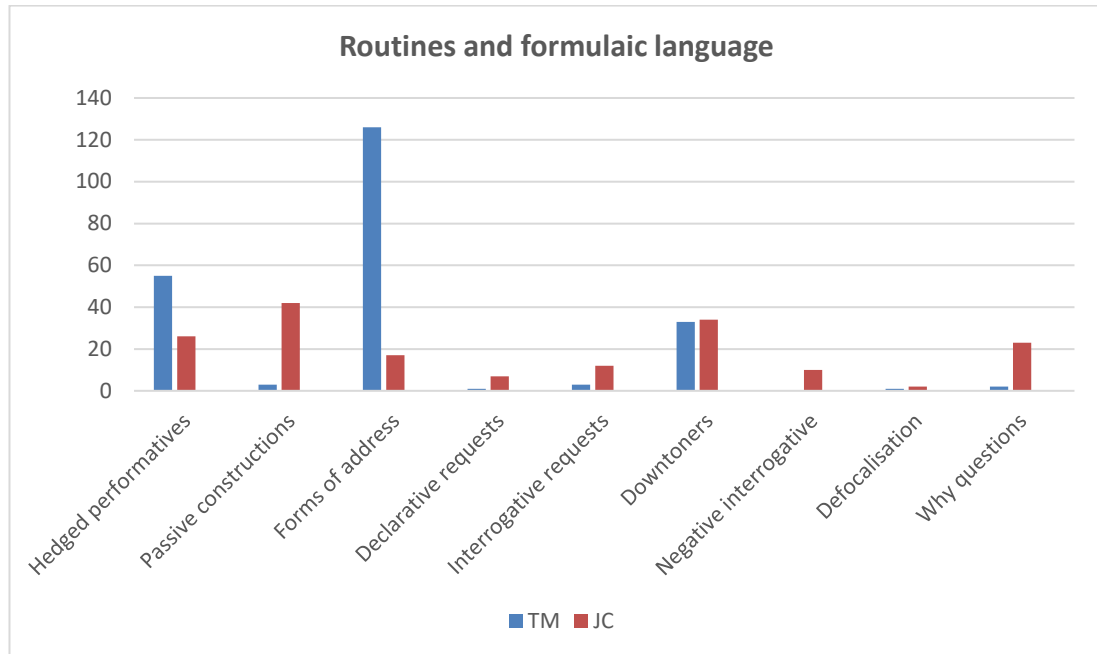
Figure 3 Lexicogrammatical Features in JC-TM Exchanges

To compare both figures, Jeremy Corbyn addresses more 'why' questions to David Cameron (33) than he does to Theresa May (23). However, he employs more passive constructions with Theresa May (42) than he does with David Cameron (19). In addition, Jeremy Corbyn's question-turns present more declarative, interrogative, and negative interrogative requests to David Cameron (8, 16 and 13, respectively) than they do to Theresa May (7, 12, and 10, respectively). In addition to the breakdown of the lexicogrammatical features illustrated above, the frequency of the discursive/stylistic features will be shown in the next section.

4.3.2 Discursive/Stylistic Strategies

Figures 4 and 5 break down the overall number and frequency of the discursive/stylistic features that entail mitigation in the dataset. Both figures show that acting as a mouthpiece is only used by Corbyn. Figure 4 exhibits that the most frequently used feature

in Jeremy Corbyn's question-turns is non-public quotations (40), followed by supportive comment and humorous discourse, which seem to have equal distribution (20). The least frequently occurring feature is euphemism (3). On the other hand, supportive comments rank the highest (33) in David Cameron's response-turns, followed by humorous discourse (25), whereas the least commonly used feature is euphemism (3).
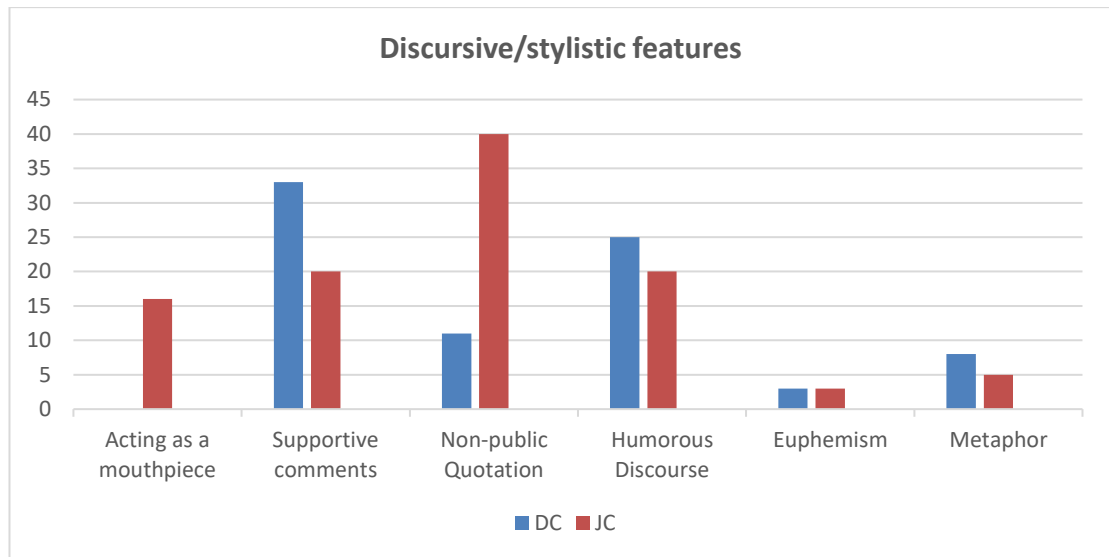
Figure 4 Discursive/Stylistic Features in JC-DC Exchanges

Figure 5 below shows that the most frequently occurring feature in Jeremy Corbyn's question-turns is also non-public quotations (61), followed by humorous discourse (23), whereas the least commonly occuring feature is euphemism (1). Similarily, the most commonly used feature in Theresa May's response-turns is non-public quotations (16), followed by humorous discourse (15), while euphemism ranks lowest (1).
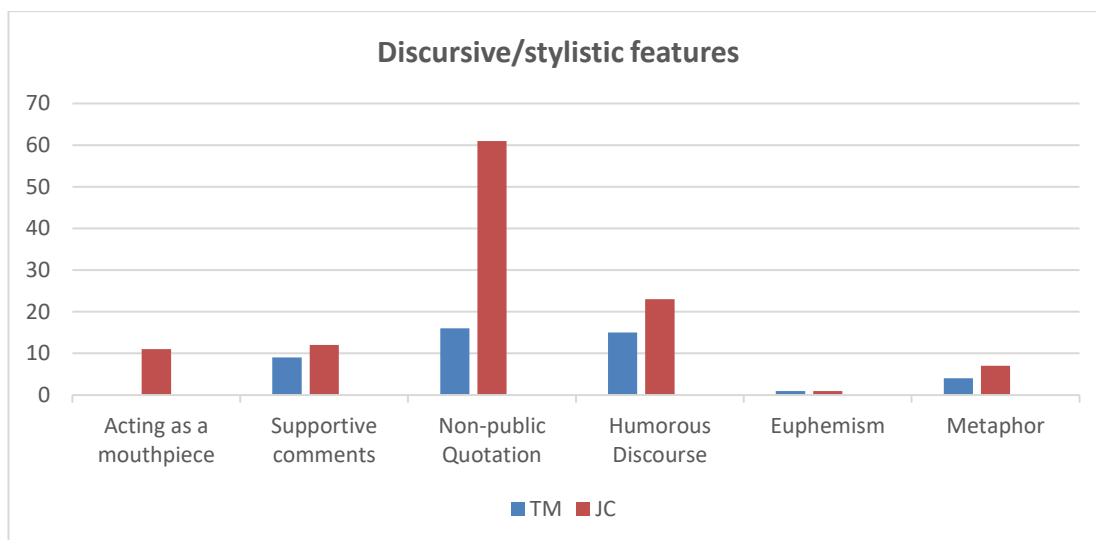
Figure 5 Discursive/Stylistic Features in JC-TM Exchanges

As presented in both figures, question-turns of the exchanges between Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron show more occurrences of acting as a mouthpiece and supportive comments (16 and 20, respectively) than the occurrences in question-turns of the exchanges between Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May (11 and 12, respectively). It is noticeable that features of euphemism and metaphor rank the lowest in both figures. Euphemism, for example, has equal occurrences in both exchanges between Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron (3), and exchanges between Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May (1).

4.4 Summary

This chapter has used the dataset of PMQs exchanges between the LO and the PMs to establish a taxonomy of mitigation features that are used in the House of Commons. Drawing on the categorisation presented in Chapter 3 (Aijmer's, 1996; Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Leech, 2014), this taxonomy is based on two types of mitigation: routinised i.e. lexicogrammatical and non-routinised i.e. discursive/stylistic features. These features represent various strategies of negative politeness that are used to mitigate the imposition on the addressee. The lexicogrammatical features in practice have become highly conventionalised, which can simply be understood as formulaic polite forms. Both types of mitigation features can easily occur in combination with one another to add another layer of mitigation (albeit conventionalised) to the argument. This chapter has also highlighted the frequency of mitigation features and patterns in the dataset. These features and patterns appear to constitute part of the leaders' linguistic repertoire. This can be due to the institutional constraints of PMQs interaction, which oblige the MPs to

follow certain linguistic conventions to remain within the appropriate boundary of parliamentary language.

Drawing upon the findings of this chapter, the next two chapters carry out an investigation on the role of mitigation in PMQs exchanges between the LO and the PMs. Chapter 5 will examine how mitigation is used to enact leadership style and identity, based on insights from traditional approaches to politeness and the post-modern perspective of relational work to examine how the leaders' meanings are construct and defined as politic appropriate during the ongoing interaction. It uses examples from the dataset to illustrate how mitigation strategies can be used to entail face management, self-presentation, positioning and leadership qualities.

Chapter 5: Mitigation and Leadership Style

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how the three politicians under investigation, Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron and Theresa May enact their leadership style by using mitigation strategies. In the context of PMQs interaction, specifically the exchange between two leaders in the part of this study, leadership identity and style can be a salient feature. While Chapter 4 outlined the linguistic features that entail mitigation in PMQs interaction, this chapter takes the discussion forward by answering the following research question: *How is leadership style and identity enacted by using mitigation strategies and relational work?*

   To address this question, the role of mitigation in constructing leadership style and identity is investigated with respect to facework and self-presentation by accounting for relational work. In addition, this chapter will demonstrate how the leaders promote their leadership objectives while adhering to the institutional rules of appropriate parliamentary language. Having clarified the linguistic resources that serve as mitigation within LO-PM debates (Chapter 4), the analysis in this chapter provides a range of examples to illustrate ways in which the three politicians exploit the potential of mitigation features to construct their leadership style and identity within the context of PMQs. As such, this chapter begins by providing an overview of leadership identity and its role in building leader's skills and linguistic style. It then explores the types of leadership style and outlines the role of humour in leadership style. Next, the link between face management and self-presentation is addressed along with its role in presenting a positive image of the self in the adversarial interaction of PMQs. As part of self-presentation, positioning and leadership qualities with respect to mitigation are also discussed in section five. Finally, the role of mitigation strategies in displaying leadership qualities is discussed to demonstrate the effect of mitigation in presenting the leaders' best advantage.

5.2 Leadership Identity

Leadership is defined as a "relationship between one or more persons exercising influence (i.e., the leader) and one or more persons submitting to that influence (i.e., followers)" (Dion, 1968: 3). People in leadership positions face specific expectations about what "behaviours are considered 'effective' and appropriate aspects of leadership performance in the context in which they operate" (Schnurr and Chan, 2009: 133). Leadership performance is characterised by "the skilful meshing of transactional and relational discourse features" (Holmes, 2006: 67). Transactional behaviour focuses on "the task to be

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achieved" and "the problem to be solved" (Dwyer, 1993: 572), while relational behaviour focuses on maintaining a relationship between participants to create a positive atmosphere at workplace (Holmes, 2006). Mitigation can thus be one means of displaying both aspects of leadership performance to enact effective leadership.

PMQs interaction is a competition of power and credibility, and hence, a means of gaining fame and popularity (Ilie, 2003). Power as a specific relational aspect (Culpeper, 2008) does not mean physical force, but rather it is expressed through language irrespective of one's social status. This means that power does not necessarily correspond with higher status (hierarchy/authority), but rather can be "met with resistance and […] the face accompanying this would lead to a negotiation of face by both speaker and addressee, with the possibility of further instances of the exercise of power" (Locher, 2004: 208). Power thus based on "control of resources, and their defence" (Henley, 1977 cited in Shaw, 2000: 402). In the context of PMQs, how MPs "control the resource of the debate floor, as evidenced by linguistic exchanges, is one element contributing to the extent to which an MP has power in debates" (Shaw, 2000: 402). From this perspective, power in parliamentary debates has been identified as an interactant's ability to conform to the institutional norms of interaction or exploit them for their own advantage (Shaw, 2011: 83). Therefore, the interplay between (im)politeness, power, leadership, and identity construction can best be explored and investigated in institutional contexts (Harris, 2001).

In conflictual discourse, a great deal of disagreement occurs, and such discourse thereby manifests an interface between power and mitigation, as the interactants may wish to soften the criticism entailed in the disagreement (Locher 2004). This suggests that mitigated utterances can be used as a means of impressing and influencing people. In PMQs interaction, mitigation features may not only be manipulated to achieve persuasion, but also to present argumentation, use of threats, requests, demands and orders. While politicians must comply with norms of appropriate behaviour in the House of Commons, the LO and the PM appear to employ mitigated messages to exercise power while negotiating their public face to likely gain more supporters and hence, win the premiership.

Effective leaders make use of a wide range of linguistic styles. Leadership style has been identified as relational and authoritarian, which serve to maintain effective communication during the interaction (Holmes, 2006). The following section draws on how mitigation strategies contribute to both types of style.

5.3 Leadership Styles

Holmes (2006:34) considers leadership as a "gendered concept" due to the prevailing stereotype of a leader (male or female) which has traditionally been conceptualised as masculine. The standard measures of effective leader seem "embedded in an authoritarian and masculine perspective" (*ibid*). Leadership style is classified into "authoritarian" style, which is indexed as masculine, whereas "supportive" style is indexed as feminine (Holmes, 2006: 42). However, both types of style can be used by leaders regardless of their gender. It is worth mentioning that masculine and feminine leadership styles in this thesis are not concerned with gender role (masculinity and femininity), and thereby I will use 'mitigated' (or relational) and 'unmitigated' (or authoritarian) styles instead of 'feminine' and 'masculine' styles respectively.

In many social contexts, relational style, as Holmes (2006: 39) states, is indicated by using indirect strategies including interrogatives (e.g. could you…?), which is "the least forceful" (Vine, 2004: 153) way of giving directives, rather than imperatives, which is "the most forceful" (*ibid*) way of giving directives, epistemic modals (e.g. might, could) and hedges (e.g. perhaps, sort of) to attenuate requests and statements. This suggests that mitigation features (see Chapter 4) can be employed as one means of enacting relational style during the interaction. Authoritarian style, on the other hand, is characterised by using direct strategies such as imperatives associated with aggressive, competitive, and confrontational tone of voice that indicate authoritarian, powerful and assertive talk (*ibid*). However, effective leaders may have the skills of integrating authoritarian discourse strategies with relational discourse strategies to achieve their communicative goals (Holmes, 2006: 62).

The norms of interaction in the community of practice of PMQs are interpreted as masculine because men have invented these norms, which are institutionalised to be the better and only way to talk (Shaw 2000). The leaders may adopt relational and authoritarian types of style as a means of displaying polite and appropriate behaviour while adhering to the institutional rules of parliamentary language. In other words, they may use a range of mitigation features to enact effective leadership and reach a desirable outcome (cf. Holmes, 2006). These relational strategies account for the addressee's face needs, whereas authoritarian strategies focus on transactional objectives (*ibid*). However, the ways of choosing either type of style in making requests, countering criticism, or running

confrontational debates can be influenced by "the formality of the setting of the interaction, the nature of the topic, and the role relationships involved" (Holmes, 2006: 65).

5.3.1 Authoritarian Style VS Relational Style

As mentioned in section 5.3 above, authoritarian style means employing an unmitigated (direct) way of giving directives (imperatives) associated with aggressive and confrontational tone of voice, whereas relational style means employing a mitigated (indirect) way of giving directives by using, for example, modal verbs, hedging and interrogatives rather than direct imperatives (Holmes, 2006). Despite the masculine community of practice of PMQs, the relational style seems to be normally and frequently used by the three leaders. The exchanges between the LO and the PM show that mitigation strategies of the relational style can be used to reduce the effect of FTAs towards the addressee when performing requests, accusation, ridiculing and criticisms during interaction. This is likely to be because the leaders should comply with the requirements of the institutional rules of parliamentary language to maintain positive impression. However, relational style may apparently be used to attenuate face threat to the opponent, but in some sense, they may construct implicit face-threatening to that opponent. The following extract presents how Jeremy Corbyn uses relational style from which others can draw inferences about the appropriate way of displaying a criticism against David Cameron. This extract is taken from the exchange of 13 April 2016, which was dominated by the issue of 'the Panama Papers tax revelations' with "David Cameron defending the actions taken from opposition attacks" (BBC news, 13 April 2016).

1. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) if the proposals were put forward by the British Government (.) why did Conservative MEPs vote against them? ((Labour members: laughter)) there seems to be a sort of a bit of disconnect here ((Chamber: laughter)) the Panama papers Mr. Speaker (.) exposed the scandalous situation (.) where wealthy individuals seemed to believe that corporation tax and other taxes are something optional (.) indeed (.) as the right hon. Member for Rutland and Melton (Sir Alan Duncan) informed (.) this is only for "low achievers" apparently (.) so when Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs says that the tax gap is £34 billion (.) why then is he cutting HMRC staff by 20% and cutting down tax offices (.) which loses the expertise of people to close that tax gap? (lines 23-31)

> **David Cameron:** well I am glad that the right hon. Gentleman wants to get
> on to our responsibilities to pay our taxes (.) which I think that is very
> important I thought his tax return was a metaphor for Labour policy (.) it
> was late (.) it was chaotic (.) it was inaccurate and it was uncosted ((DC and
> JC: smile accompanied by Chamber: laughter)) […] (lines 33-36)

The question-turn starts with the utterance 'Mr. Speaker, if the proposals were put forward by the British Government, why did Conservative MEPs vote against them? there seems to be a sort of a bit of disconnect here', which is received by laughter from the Chamber. This utterance seems to be attenuated with mitigation features such as interrogative ('why' question), defocalisation and hedging (seem, a sort of, a bit), which indicate a sense of politeness. However, including all these features in the utterance may entail sarcasm, which presupposes a contradiction between the overt meaning, which is polite and the covert meaning, which implies a criticism of David Cameron. The sarcastic remark contributes to drawing inferences about the controversy between the Conservatives' words and actions. Nevertheless, using this sarcastic remark at the beginning of the turn serves as a transition technique to attenuate the attack, which seems to be escalated towards the end of the turn. As such, Jeremy Corbyn's claim is expressed in terms that conform to "relational aspects of interaction" (Holmes, 2006: 91). Here, the relational style supports the interpretation that Jeremy Corbyn tends to soften face-threatening towards David Cameron while delivering his criticism indirectly, and simultaneously comply with the institutional rules of politeness (as stipulated by Erskine May). Thereby, in this community of practice, this style looks "unsurprising" (Holmes, 2006: 40) and expected with respect to the PMQs norms of conduct, and hence can be interpreted as "appropriate", "unmarked" or "politic" (Locher and Watts, 2005: 10). Consequently, the perlocutionary effect of mitigation features used in the question-turn invites a reciprocal use of sarcasm in David Cameron's response-turn, which is accompanied by smile from both leaders and laughter from the Chamber.

The authoritarian style, on the other hand, can typically be indexed by employing unmitigated ways of speaking. This type of style is "commonly used by more powerful to less powerful people" (Holmes, 2006: 38). However, unmitigated utterances may be used "without any suggestion of an authoritarian style when the actions required are embedded in the surrounding utterances which have the effect of softening them" (Holmes, 2006: 41). It appears that the interactional role of Jeremy Corbyn in PMQs interaction allows him to

exercise power over the PM and employs imperative directives as in the following exchange from the session of 3 February 2016. The force of these imperatives seems to be retrospectively modified by the preceding mitigation features. This exchange is regarding the NHS and cancer treatment in which "Jeremy Corbyn challenges David Cameron for his government's record on cancer treatment spending, and in particular the reduction of funding for radiologists despite the government own taskforce warning last year that they were essential" (Sparrow, 3 February 2016: *The Guardian*).

2. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] the Prime Minister used to say (.) that "those with the broadest shoulders should bear a greater load" (.) can it be right that cancer patients and those with disabilities on £102 per week really are those with the broadest shoulders who should bear this cut? please (.) Prime Minister (.) think again (.) and don't try and reverse the decision of the House of Lords on this important matter ((Chamber: cheering)) (lines 137-142)

   David Cameron: The people with the broadest shoulders are the highest earners in this country (.) and they are paying a higher share of tax than they ever did under Labour (.) and that money is paying for our NHS (.) is paying for our welfare system […] but it is quite clear what Labour's policy is (.) cut the NHS in Wales (.) put up taxes in Scotland to pay for more welfare (.) that is not the approach that this country needs (lines 144-152)

Towards the end of this question-turn, Jeremy Corbyn uses the utterance 'please, Prime Minister, think again, and don't try and reverse the decision of the House of Lords on this important matter'. This utterance includes the imperative forms 'think again' and 'don't try and reverse' which seem to show an act of directing David Cameron towards a required action. However, these imperatives are preceded by the interrogative 'can it be right 'can it be right that cancer patients and those with disabilities on £102 per week really are those with the broadest shoulders who should bear this cut?' and the polite marker 'please' whose mitigating effect serves to attenuate these imperatives and soften the effect of the threat towards the PM. The imperatives are mitigated, therefore, not only by the earlier polite features, but also by the fact that they arise from an "extended discussion of the same topic" (Vine, 2004: 154).

In response to the authoritarian style employed in the question-turn, David Cameron response-turn starts by defining 'the people with the broadest shoulders.' This definition

seems to be used as a means of refuting Jeremy Corbyn's claim and displaying a criticism against the Labour party and their policy. The response-turn ends with 'but it is quite clear what Labour's policy is, cut the NHS in Wales, put up taxes in Scotland to pay for more welfare, that is not the approach that this country needs' which reveals an overt attack to Jeremy Corbyn and Labour party.

The authoritarian style can also be displayed in terms of humorous discourse, and more specifically sarcasm. In the following extract, the response-turn expresses this type of style, which is very likely to be used as a means of ridiculing Jeremy Corbyn. The extract, which is taken from the exchange of 15 March 2017, is regarding the government's "U-turn over budget plan to increase national insurance rates for self-employed people" (BBC News, 15 March 2017).

3. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Thank you Mr. Speaker (.) first of all (.) can I wish everyone a very happy St Patrick's day for the 17th in my constituency (.) in Ireland and all around the world? Mr. Speaker (.) we've just heard that the Prime Minister is about to drop the national insurance hike announced only a week ago (.) it seems to me that the Government is in a bit of chaos here ((Chamber: laughter and TM: smiles)) a budget (.) a budget that unravels in seven days (.) a Conservative manifesto with a very pensive Prime Minister on the front page saying there will be no increase a week ago an increase was announced (.) if they are to drop this increase as they're indicating (.) then this is a time that she should thank the Federation of Small Businesses and all those who have pointed out just how unfair this increase would be (.) but also how big business evades an awful lot of national insurance through bogus self-employment   (lines 2-12)

Theresa May: I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman I don't think he actually listened to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle (Huw Merriman) but I normally stand at this Dispatch Box and say I won't take any lectures from the right hon. Gentleman (.) when it comes to lectures on chaos (.) he would be the first person I turned to ((Chamber: laughter and cheering)) (lines 14-18)

The whole question-turn shows indirect ways of performing criticisms of the government regarding the issue of national insurance. Following his greetings for St

Patrick's day, Jeremy Corbyn says 'we've just heard that the Prime Minister is about to drop the national insurance hike announced only a week ago, it seems to me that the Government is in a bit of chaos here', which is met by laughter from the Chamber and a smile from Theresa May. This smile could be interpreted as a means of face-saving against Jeremy Corbyn's criticism. The hedging (or downtoners) 'seems' and 'a bit' in the utterance 'it seems to me that the Government is in a bit of chaos here' seems to be used to soften the force of the word 'chaos'. However, this utterance serves to display an "understated criticism" (Leech, 2014: 193), which is likely to construct a threat to Theresa May and her government. Towards the end of the question-turn, 'she should' in 'then this is a time that she should thank the Federation of Small Businesses…' implies a "diplomatic way" (Leech, 2014: 151) of downplaying the requirement Jeremy Corbyn is imposing on Theresa May that is to 'thank the Federation of Small Businesses…'.

However, the force of the understated criticism employed earlier in the turn seems to influence Theresa May's response. The response-turn starts with the hedged performative 'I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman', as an opening to reduce the force of the "pure" performative (Leech, 2014: 147) 'I say'. Following this opening, 'I don't think' in 'I don't think he actually listened to the answer I gave to my hon. Friend the Member for Bexhill and Battle' seems to be used as a means of mitigating "the negation" (Leech, 2014: 177) which is likely to conflict with Jeremy Corbyn's claim. The turn ends with 'I won't take any lectures from the right hon. Gentleman, when it comes to lectures on chaos, he would be the first person I turned to', which is received by loud laughter and cheering from the Chamber. This utterance could simply be a "reaction to the face-threat involved in the perceived sarcasm" (Grainger, 2018: 34) in Jeremy Corbyn's turn. It appears that it is the use of the word 'chaos', which Theresa May takes up as a face-threat. Theresa May apparently seeks to directly damage Jeremy Corbyn's positive face. Consequently, this type of humour is likely to be "challenging or competitive" (Holmes, 2006: 116), which can be seen as a threat to Jeremy Corbyn's positive face. Such a type of humour suggests a "negative evaluation of his state of knowledge" (Grainger, 2018: 26). suggesting a criticism of Jeremy Corbyn and his leadership capabilities. This mode of humour in the LO-PM interaction can be regarded, then, as typical of an authoritarian style.

The discussion above reflects how the leaders enact their style in PMQs exchanges as appropriate with respect to the institutional constraints of politeness. Although both relational and authoritarian types of leadership style contribute to projecting their

leadership effectiveness and achieving their political goals, relational style shows an orientation to face concerns and good relations with others.

5.3.2 Humour at PMQ Interaction: Supportive Style VS Contestive Style

Humour is one of the discursive features which the leaders employ when performing relational work (Schnurr and Chan, 2009). Humour is considered to be one component of the linguistic repertoire of the leaders to "construct their professional identities and portray themselves as effective leaders in ways that are considered appropriate or politic in the context of their community of practice" (Schnurr and Chan, 2009: 135-136). It is a "multifunctional" feature which allows the leaders to achieve their leadership objectives (Holmes and Marra, 2006: 134). Humour not only contributes to building rapport or maintain solidarity with others, but also to mitigating the negative effect of FTAs (Schnurr and Chan, 2009). However, Humour can also be used as "supportive" and "contestive". Supportive humour "builds on and expands previous humorous propositions, and [...] is expressed in collaborative style" (Holmes, 2006: 136). Contestive humour, on the other hand, is used to "challenge a claim or disagree with a point or refute an argument (see Section 6.2) put forward by previous contributors" (Holmes, 2006: 114).

When humour contributes to building rapport and mitigating FTAs, it can then be described as supportive. Although the focus of the current study is mitigation, I pursue interest in both functions of humour to highlight the connection between them. In the following exchange, which is from 10 February 2016 regarding the issue of 'housing', humorous discourse reflects an attempt to build rapport with others:

4. **Jeremy Corbyn:** [...] I have a question on housing (.) I have an email from Rosie (.) She is in her 20s [Interruption] ((Chamber: laughter and Corbyn smiling and pointing to Labour chief whip, Rosie)) unfortunately ((raising tone of voice)) unfortunately Mr. Speaker (.) the Rosie who has written to me doesn't have the same good housing that the Chief Whip of our party does ((Chamber: laughter)) but aspiration springs eternal (lines 17-22)

    David Cameron: First of all (.) let me say to the right hon. Gentleman that when you get a letter from the Chief Whip (.) that normally spells trouble ((Cameron: smiles and Chamber: laughter)) [...] (lines 29-31)

In his turn, Jeremy Corbyn shares Rosie's (a member of the public) story as part of the issue (via the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece). However, the name 'Rosie' is coincidentally the name of Labour's chief whip, Rosie Winterton, a situation that invites laughter from the Chamber. The moment MPs start laughing, Jeremy Corbyn realises this coincidence. Therefore, in a smiling face, he exploits this coincidence by generating more humour. He pauses to point with his left hand at her and says 'unfortunately Mr. Speaker, the Rosie who has written to me doesn't have the same good housing that the Chief Whip of our party does'. As shown in the video, Rosie Winterton who is sitting on the front bench looks suitably amused about the fact.

The response-turn shows a reciprocal use of humour when David Cameron says, 'when you get a letter from the Chief Whip, that normally spells trouble.' This remark is accompanied with a smile from David Cameron and laughter throughout the House. Therefore, humour here serves to be a way of minimising status differences among participants (subordinates and colleagues), portraying David Cameron as "one of them" (Schnurr and Chan, 2009: 138) rather than as their superior. It may also contribute to "emphasising collaboration and fostering egalitarian relationships" (*ibid*). David Cameron's remark here, is likely to support the proposition of Jeremy Corbyn's humorous discourse. This case reflects the role of humour as not only a means of building rapport, but also as an indicative of supportive talk, in which David Cameron supports what was said by Jeremy Corbyn. Humour, thereby serves as one feature of relational interactive style.

By contrast, contestive style can be displayed in terms of sarcasm or "conversational irony" (Leech, 2014: 100). Conversational irony, which is used to "maintain courtesy on the surface level of *what is said,* but at a deeper level is calculated to imply a negative evaluation" (*ibid*) (Italics in original). In the following exchange, which is from the session of 1 March 2017, Theresa May's response-turn presents a contestive type of humour in response to Jeremy Corbyn's indirect criticism. The exchange is regarding the issue of 'mental health and changes to personal independent payments benefits' (Eaton, 1 March 2017: *New Statesman*):

5. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] Mr. Speaker (.) as a society (.) we are judged by how we treat the most vulnerable (.) the respected mental health charity Mind has said (.) "this misguided legislation must be reversed" (.) can the Prime Minister look again (.) look again (.) at the decision of the court (.) look again at the consequences of it (.) and withdraw this deep decision (.) this <u>nasty</u>

decision (.) accept the court's judgment and support those are going through a very difficult time in their lives? that is how we will all be judged (lines 136-142)

Theresa May: […] he talks about accepting the court's decision and paying for that (.) well I understand that the Labour Shadow Health Secretary today when asked how Labour would pay for the increase if it was put in place said (.) "Err (.) we've not outlined that yet" ((Conservative MPs: laughter)) that just sums up the Labour party (.) and the Labour party leadership (.) you know (.) after the result in Copeland last week (.) after the result in Copeland last week (.) the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith) summed up the by-election result by saying it was an "incredible result" for the Labour party ((Chamber: laughter)) you know I think that word actually describes the right hon. Gentleman's leadership (.) in-cred-ible (Chamber: jeering) (lines 152-160)

This question-turn reveals Jeremy Corbyn's denouncement of this issue. He employs the strategy of non-public quotation to indirectly criticise the decision that has been made by the government regarding this issue. The indirect criticism results in employing the strategy of non-public quotation in the response-turn, whereby Theresa May quotes a Labour MP's (Cat Smith) words 'the hon. Member for Lancaster and Fleetwood (Cat Smith) summed up the by-election result by saying it was an "incredible result" for the Labour party'. These words may lead to the conclusion that Theresa May is ascribing a positive evaluation to Jeremy Corbyn and Labour party. However, they seem to be used as a means of ridiculing Jeremy Corbyn. The adjective 'incredible' in 'you know I think that word actually describes the right hon. Gentleman's leadership, incredible' is articulated with special prosodic cues, slowing down the speaking rate along with a very heavy stress and exaggerated emphasis (Gibbs, 2000). Although mitigated with polite hedging (you know, I think), the utterance indicates a discrepancy between what she literally says, which is superficially interpretable as polite and how the utterance is said, which is indirectly or deeply interpreted as face attack, and thereby can be a trigger of sarcasm or conversational irony. Although this situation invites laughter from her side's MPs, it causes the audience on Jeremy Corbyn's side to respond in jeering as a reaction against this remark. Here, the contestive style serves to challenge and contest Jeremy Corbyn's claim with his colleague's word 'incredible' by using it as a target of a "jocular insult" (Holmes,

2006: 115). The contestive style used in Extract 6 seems to be associated with aggressive facework and more authoritarian ways of interaction. However, there is no sign that this interaction is inappropriate, and thereby it can be interpreted as unmarked politic behaviour, which is neither polite nor impolite but simply follows the institutional conventions.

However, contestive humour can be less face-threatening than in Extract 5, as the sarcastic remark constitutes a number of mitigating features. This type of humour is exhibited in the question-turn of the following exchange from the session of 2 November 2016 in response to the humour displayed in the response-turn. The humour of Theresa May's turn looks different. It is described as "power-oriented humour" (Holmes and Marra, 2006: 130) which is used to mitigate an admission of error addressing the leader's need to maintain face. When making an error, especially by a speaker who is in a position of power and authority, humour serves to reduce the embarrassment and attenuate its negative impact on the speaker's face (*ibid*).

6. **Theresa May:** First of all can I congratulate the right hon. Gentleman on the birth I understand (.) of his granddaughter? [interruption] no? I am sorry in that case (.) I am completely mystified ((TM and Chamber: laughter (5.0) and JC: smiles)) in that case ((Chamber: laughter)) in that case (.) wait for it (.) in that case Mr. Speaker perhaps one should never trust a former Chief Whip ((Chamber: laughter)) (lines 13-17)

   Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker ((JC: laughs)) it is a bit unfair to blame a former Chief Whip for some little bit of confusion very ungallant ((Chamber: laughter and JC: smiles)) can we not just admire my hon. Friend the Member for St Helens North for his work? ((Chamber: laughter)) (lines 26-28)

The response-turn shows a situation where hilarity is provoked in the House of Commons while Theresa May is by mistakenly congratulating Jeremy Corbyn on "the birth of his granddaughter" (BBC news, 2 November 2016). Due to this situation, which seems to be embarrassing to Theresa May, her congratulation is immediately followed by an apology 'I am sorry in that case, I am completely mystified' when she suddenly realises that she is wrong. The apology suggests her attempt to show face concern for both Corbyn and herself. The whole situation invites laughter (that lasts for about five seconds) from Theresa May herself as well as the Chamber. In an attempt to hold the floor, she uses the

utterance 'wait for it', which suggests a means of attracting the Chamber attention regarding what she is going to say. She then provides a reason for her confusion, saying jokingly 'in that case Mr. Speaker perhaps one should never trust a former Chief Whip', blaming the former chief whip, Patrick McLoughlin who has passed her this wrong information. Here, the humorous scenario could be an attempt to boost her face-saving and her position as PM.

Following this response-turn, the question-turn starts with the utterance 'it is a bit unfair to blame a former Chief Whip for some little bit of confusion very ungallant', which invites laughter throughout the House, including Theresa May. Although this utterance includes the downtoners 'a bit' and 'a little bit' and associated with a laughing tone of voice, it could be regarded as "subversive" (Holmes, 2006: 120) i.e. implicitly criticising Theresa May for blaming the former Chief Whip for her confusion. Here, the humour is seamlessly integrated into the contestive style, which can be face-threatening to Theresa My, but she does not appear to take this up as offensive.

These different ways of doing humour described above involve two major types: supportive and contestive. They provide rich pragmatic resources which are available for the construction of leadership style in PMQs interaction. Humour is used to display supportive aspects of interaction, which serve to maintain participants' relationship and mitigate face threatening to the addressee, and contestive aspects to challenge a claim, disagree with a point or construct a criticism. Wrapping criticisms with humorous remarks contributes to communicating these criticisms in a rather mitigated way, which leads to a conclusion that the speaker is being polite. The next section will present the link between face impression, impression management and self-presentation in projecting leadership identity and style in LO-PM interaction.

5.4 Face Management, Self-Presentation, and Impression Management

The data reveals that face management does not only mean avoiding formulating a negative image of oneself, but also presenting a positive image of the self and the party that one represents (Bull, 2008a). On the basis of their performances at PMQs, MPs may gain or lose peer and media respect, hence "it constitutes pressure on them and effects the way they view themselves as parliamentarians" (Lovendusky, 2012: 316). From this perspective, speakers exert efforts to influence other people's perceptions by projecting the best image of themselves, which is what Goffman (1969) calls "impression management." The most common types of impression management have to do with self-

presentation, and in political discourse, the "presentation of political self" (Johansson, 2008). Therefore, politicians and, more specifically, leaders know that they have a lot to lose in the eyes of the audience, more specifically their supporters, if their self-presentation is not successful, and consequently they will not be re-elected (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 129).

For Peck and Hogue (2018), impression management is "important for effective leadership. Followers accept influence from individuals who meet their perceptions of what it means to be a leader, and impression management is an important way of impacting those perceptions" (p. 123), as I assume is the case with the LO and the PM during the PMQs interaction. To monitor impact on others, as Extract 7 from 14 December 2016 shows, Jeremy Corbyn attempts to project a positive image of himself:

7. **Jeremy Corbyn:** the current Chair of the Health Committee the hon. Member for Totness (Dr Wollaston) said and I quote (.) "this issue can't be ducked any longer because of the impact it is having not just on vulnerable people but also on the NHS" (.) why can't the Prime Minister listen to those in local government the King's Fund the NHS Confederation and her own council leaders and recognise this social care crisis forces people to give up work (.) to care for loved ones because there is no system to do it (.) makes people stay in hospital longer than they should and leads people into a horrible isolated life when they should be cared for by all of us through a properly funded social care system (.) get a grip and fund it properly please↓ (lines 118-127)

 Theresa May: The issue of social care is indeed one that has been ducked by Governments for too long (.) that is why it is this Government (.) it is this Government that will provide a long-term sustainable system for social care that gives reassurance to people (.) now when he talks about Governments ducking social care (.) let's talk about the 13 years of Labour in government (.) they said in 1997(.) they said they would sort it in their manifesto (.) they had a royal commission in 1999 (.) a Green Paper in 2005 (.) the Wanless report in 2006 (.) in 2007 in the CSR (the comprehensive spending review) they said they would sort it in (.) in 2009, they had another Green Paper (.) 13 years and no action whatsoever (lines 129-137)

At the final exchange of the year, Jeremy Corbyn challenges Theresa May on what he calls the crisis in social care (Stewart & Campbell, 14 December 2016). To support his argument regarding this issue, Jeremy Corbyn precedes his question by a quotation when he refers to the Chair of the Health Committee the hon. Member for Totness' (Dr Wollaston) words. These words indicate a negative evaluation of the government's policy of cutting the funding of social care. Then, Jeremy Corbyn uses a negative 'why' question in 'why can't the Prime Minister listen' as a polite request to evoke the audience's sentiment and elicit the PM's assent. Such a question serves as a persuasion device or, as Berlin (2015) puts it, an "emotion-generating element." This is particularly apparent when Jeremy Corbyn employs indirect propositions, such as blaming the 'social care crisis' instead of the PM's administration. In addition, he uses the phrase 'loved ones' to talk on behalf of people as an alternative for, for example, 'old relatives' (which may have a negative impression formation), and thereby, serves as a persuasion device. Furthermore, he uses a passive voice construction with a late agent 'us' in 'they should be cared for by all of us', including himself as part of the whole community and sharing the responsibility for providing proper care for 'them', and hence projecting himself as a caring leader (Section 5.6). The turn ends with a polite expression 'please' with a falling tone to make it sound serious. As such, Jeremy Corbyn appears exasperated, "accusing the PM of inaction" (Murphy, 2014: 8). Alternatively, it may follow his command-like request to reduce the adversarial conflict of the debate. Accordingly, these resources enable him to establish a positive image and enhance his face among his supporters.

On the other hand, the mitigation features used by Jeremy Corbyn construct an indirect threat to the face of Theresa May whose reaction can be seen as follows. Theresa May starts her turn by reasserting the critical issue of social care by using the agreement expression 'indeed'. First, she emphasises her government's achievement towards this sector (Chapter 6, Section 6.2). Then, she shifts to counterattack Jeremy Corbyn's claim by accusing the previous Labour government of not sorting this issue. The counterattack formulates a challenge to Jeremy Corbyn to oppose his proposal, and simultaneously a support for her argument when she refers to what has been said and done by the Labour government. Her challenge implies an accusation of Jeremy Corbyn and his party's inaction to undermine their credibility, and thereby, maintains her government's credibility and saves her face.

Prosodic features also play a crucial role in expressing mitigated utterances to perform face-saving to the addressee(s). For example, at times Jeremy Corbyn's question turns include polite requests, but they seem firm. However, they are accompanied by a light tone to avoid causing offence (Holmes, 2006), as the case presented in the following extracts from exchanges of 20 January 2016, 3 February 2016, and 13 July 2016, respectively:

8. **Jeremy Corbyn:** If you will allow me for one moment (.) can the Prime Minister tell the House (.) where in his election manifesto (.) he put his plan (.) to abolish maintenance grants (.) for all students? (lines 3-5)

9. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Could the Prime Minister explain why we are cutting by 5% (.) the number of training places available for therapeutic radiographers? (lines 26-28)

10. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Will he also perhaps for a moment (.) express some concern at the way that homelessness has risen for the past six years and looks like it is going to continue to rise in this country? (lines 12-14)

It is noticeable that all the three instances (8, 9, and 10) are questions which refer to David Cameron using the address form 'the Prime Minister' or in the third person 'he' which indicate the formal and mitigated situation of the interaction. However, prior to addressing his question to the PM in Extract 8 regarding the issue of 'students' grants', Jeremy Corbyn uses a polite formulaic request, asking the Chamber (in a falling tone) and directly using the informal pronoun 'you' in 'If you will allow me for one moment'. The request seems to be used to seek the Chamber's attention and allow him to take the floor. The question in Extract 9 which is about the issue of 'cutting training places' is preceded by an indirect request 'could the Prime Minister tell us.' The request here serves to attenuate the effect of a potential threat included in the following positive 'why' question. The question of Extract 10 'Will he also perhaps for a moment express…', which is regarding the issue of 'rising homelessness' indicates a mitigated way of questioning by including the hedging in 'perhaps for a moment' and a light tone of voice. These questions show the mitigating effect of a request in that they are initiated by hedged formulae and prosodic features that help to reduce the severity in Jeremy Corbyn's questioning. This helps Jeremy Corbyn to present himself as a political figure who considers others' face, and thus maintains good relations (e.g. his electorate) and preserves his leadership role (Holmes, 2006). Nevertheless, this way of questioning still encompasses a challenge to the PM. The purpose of doing this can be to weaken David Cameron's position as PM, presenting him as

incapable of providing proper solutions for pressing issues. At the same time, this attempt serves to foster Jeremy Corbyn's leadership identity as LO who can best enhance his face through producing attenuating potentially threatening behaviour towards the PM (subverting the credibility of the government (Harris, 2001)).

Similarly, David Cameron's response-turn (Extract 11 from the session of 2 March 2016) shows the tendency of projecting himself to the best advantage, and challenging Jeremy Corbyn's accusation of the PM breaking his promise to give families in England 30 hours free childcare a week (BBC news, 2 March 2016):

11. **Jeremy Corbyn**: Today Mr. Speaker (.) the National Audit Office report confirms that one third of the families promised 30 hours of free childcare now won't receive it (.) this is a broken promise the annual report also warns that many childcare providers are not offering the new entitlement due to insufficient funding (.) there are 41,000 three-year-olds are missing out on free early education as a result of this (.) will the Prime Minister intervene (.) and ensure those children are given the start in life that they deserve? (lines 27-32)

   David Cameron: We want all those children to have the start in life that they deserve (.) I'm glad that he mentioned the National Audit Office report (.) let me read to him some of the things that it says (.) it says this (.) "the Department has successfully implemented the entitlement to free childcare for 3- and 4-year olds (.) with almost universal take-up of hours offered to parents" (.) I think that we should be congratulating the Secretary of State (.) it also says (.) "the Department has made significant progress in providing free entitlement to early year's childcare (.) parents and children are clearly benefiting from these entitlements (.) stakeholders are (.) positive about increasing the entitlement to 30 hours" (.) all those things we are able to do because we have a strong and sound economy (.) what a contrast it would be if we listened to the right hon. Gentleman (.) because I regularly subscribe to the Islington Tribune (.) I can announce to the House that his latest economic adviser is one Mr Yanis Varoufakis (.) he was (.) he was (.) the Greek Finance Minister who left his economy in ruins (.) that is Labour's policy in two words (.) acropolis now (lines 34- 47)

Regarding the issue of 'childcare funding', David Cameron's turn starts with a supporting comment 'I'm glad that he mentioned the National Audit Office report'. This comment reveals a form of approving mentioning the report which give the appearance of agreement without agreeing with Jeremy Corbyn. Consequently, it looks supportive up to a point. However, it serves in softening the face threat to Jeremy Corbyn and maintaining David Cameron's own face as well, and hence construct a positive image for his political self as PM. Therefore, the mitigation strategy of supportive comment can be used as a means of displaying face-saving and identity construction (the immediate claims about who a person is in the interaction (Heritage, 2001: 48)). This interconnection illustrates how mitigation can be one important aspect of facework in PMQs interaction. Furthermore, this supportive comment serves to minimise the threat inherent in the next utterance (Murphy, 2014), which starts with 'what a contrast', which in turn, threatens the addressee's face. Mitigation, hence, can be a strategy used to give the appearance of support here, whereas it merely gives David Cameron the opportunity to read out positive comments from the report. However, he does not seem to be sincere about his approval.

The possibility of the leaders to gain or lose their face constitutes a "pressure on them and affects the way they view themselves as parliamentarians" (Lovenduski, 2012: 316). At this point, a question may be addressed as to how leaders can situate themselves through their linguistic choices, more specifically, mitigation features. From this perspective, the interplay between the leaders' self-presentation and identity construction is based on their linguistic behaviour which contributes to displaying them as reliable (future) prime ministers (Johansson, 2008). This results in the leaders' attempt for an aggressive competition to score points (Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012). According to Culpeper (1996), "in some circumstances it is not in a participant's interests to maintain the other's face, for example, [...] only one participant can win and in doing so cause the other participant to lose" (p. 354). Here comes the role of self-presentation to achieve constructing the desirable identity.

One mode of self-presentation in the LO-PM exchanges is Jeremy Corbyn's strategy of 'acting as a mouthpiece', through which he seems to portray himself as striving to ask questions on behalf of members of the public (cf. Clayman, 2009). This strategy of acting as a mouthpiece, which is also referred to as a "public-framed question" (Clayman, 2009: 242) draws on direct reported speech, as shown in Extract 12 from the session of 11 January 2017 with a debate regarding 'National Health Service' (NHS):

12. Jeremy Corbyn: but can I ask if she listens to Sian who works for the NHS? she has a 22-month old nephew (.) he went into hospital there was no bed (.) he was treated on two plastic chairs pushed together with a blanket (.) and she says (.) "one of the nurses told her sister that it's always like this nowadays" (.) and she asks a question to all of us "surely we should strive to do better than this?" does the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary think this is an acceptable way treating a 22-month-old child needing help? (lines 54-60)

Theresa May: I accept there have been a small number of incidents where the ((protesting noise)) where unacceptable practices have taken place (.) but what matters (.) we do not want those things to happen (.) what matters is how you then deal with them (.) and that's why it is so important that the NHS does look into issues when there are unacceptable incidents that have taken place and then learns lessons from them but I come back to the point that I was making earlier (.) he talks about the hard-working healthcare professionals like Sian in the National Health Service (.) and indeed we should be grateful for all those who are working in the NHS (.) over the Christmas period (.) on the Tuesday after Christmas we saw the busiest day ever in the National Health Service (.) and over the few weeks around Christmas we saw the day when more people were treated in accident and emergency (A&E) within four hours than had ever happened before this is the reality of our National Health Service (62-73)

This question-turn shows an emotional rather than rational appeal (Ilie, 2010) to the PM, the health secretary, and the audience regarding this issue. The strategy of acting as a mouthpiece here serves to share a problem from a member of the public whose name is Sian, an NHS worker and whose nephew (a young child) did not get proper help in hospital. This strategy is likely used as a persuasive device to highlight an implied negative evaluation of the situation. This evaluation is displayed through the rhetorical question (see Chapter 6, Section 6.2.3) 'does the Prime Minister and the Health Secretary think this is an acceptable way treating a 22-month-old child needing help?' Posing a question whose answer is, as Brown and Levinson (1978: 288) state "hanging in the air", flouts the sincerity condition of the utterance, which allows a FTA (i.e. criticising) to be performed indirectly to minimise face threat towards the PM (cf. Frank, 1990: 725). The contrast between the overt meaning of the Yes/No question and the meaning is apparent by using the adjective

'acceptable', which can describe the situation in a totally opposite meaning, i.e. 'unacceptable'. Therefore, offering a question with an overt reference to the public serves to: (a) strengthen the persuasive effect, in this case to emphasise the issue of the NHS and social care, and (b) invite the PM to comment on the broadly focused issue of the NHS. Accordingly, the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece allows the speaker to invoke a powerful symbolic resource to legitimate lines of questioning (Clayman, 2009: 242).

In addition, sharing stories from members of the public regarding certain issues allows Jeremy Corbyn to provide evidence from the victims themselves towards these issues. This confirms Van Dijk's (2006) argument "when sources are actually being quoted, evidentiality is linked to intertextuality" (p.236). As such, Jeremy Corbyn's strategy of sharing short stories from members of the public would have more emotional impact and more persuasiveness than mere arguments. Moreover, it further narrows the distance between the audience and those victims, whereby the argument becomes more powerful (Van Dijk, 2006). This strategy allows Jeremy Corbyn to play the role of the "character" when he brings others' voices as testimonies attesting certain problems (Reyes, 2011: 3). The word "character" is defined as the recontextualisation of others' words into the speaker's own discourse to support and justify his/her ideology (*ibid*). From this perspective, persuasion contributes to draw a favourable image of the self and hence, to construct a positive impression about the speaker while negotiating his/her claim. At the same time, the speaker may display a negative other presentation (Wodak, 2007) about the opponent without explicitly stating anything negative.

Finally, the perlocutionary effect of the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece increases the pressure on Theresa May to start her response by acknowledging that few unacceptable incidents have taken place. Her acknowledgement is accompanied with a protesting noise from the Chamber. However, the public-framed question is likely considered as conflictual, which creates pressure on Theresa May towards equivocation (Bull and Wells, 2012) (see sections 6.2 and 6.2.1). Instead of dealing with the issue of the NHS, the response is shifted to praise the NHS staff. This is likely to turn the audience's attention to a different topic, which may contribute to advance Theresa May's face-saving.

As discussed above, the political leaders communicate favourable images of themselves rather than just providing factual information (Schutz, 1997). Therefore, they make efforts to create a positive impression in the minds of others via the process of impression management. Hence, fostering impressions in others' minds to portray a positive image of

the self is closely related to facework. The speaker's face concern is "focusing on one's own face without directly affecting the addressee's face," which is what distinguishes facework from politeness, i.e., "achieving an 'ideal' balance between the addressee's face and the speaker's face by confirming their own face wants" (Haugh, 2013: 52). As a result, politicians often try to establish positive impressions through mitigation, which serves to reflect positively on their self-presentation, and whose perlocutionary effect contributes in persuading the public to gain more supporters and votes (Johansson, 2008). This supports the assumption that mitigation is a speaker's face-saving and enhancing strategy, rather than an addressee's face-saving and enhancing strategy (Leech, 2014: 87). The next section aims to show the role of mitigation in positioning during the LO-PM interaction.

5.5 Positioning in PMQs Exchanges

Positioning is a discursive practice through which speakers situate the others, while simultaneously, situating themselves during interaction (Harré and Langenhove, 1999). Similarly, parliamentary positioning can be achieved when an MP situates him/herself linguistically at discursive levels (Ilie, 2015). Clayman (2017: 48) states that political positioning in question-answer sequences gears to the task of revealing politicians' opinions and policies. As a result, in the context of PMQs, this task has a conflictual nature, with the LO opposing the PM. Clayman (2017) distinguishes forms of political positioning questions from other types of questions "in their primary focus on *identifying where the politician stands on some salient issue*" (italics in original) (p.48). Negative interrogative for instance, can be used as one means of displaying positioning (more discussion on question types in Chapter 6), as shown in Extract 13 from the exchange of 20 January 2016 regarding "the axing of student grants and bursaries for nurses in England" (BBC news, 20 January 2016):

13. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] the Prime Minister will be aware that nine out of 10 hospitals currently have a nurse shortage (.) isn't what he is proposing for the nurse bursary scheme going to exacerbate the crisis (.) make it worse for everybody and make our NHS <u>less effective</u> than more effective? what is his answer to that point? (lines 108-111)

    David Cameron: ah-h-h-h I will give the right hon. Gentleman a very direct answer (.) which is we are going to see 10,000 extra nurse degree places

because of this policy (.) because we are effectively uncapping the numbers that can go into nursing […] (lines 113-115).

The question-turn shows that the negative interrogative does not seem to be used for requesting information, but rather asserting Jeremy Corbyn's opinion towards the new proposal. Instead of performing a direct criticism towards the PM, this question is used to presuppose that the new proposal makes the NHS less effective. Thus, it serves to convey Jeremy Corbyn's positioning against the PM's new proposal and an assertive in search of agreement (Heritage, 2012). As a result, negative interrogatives can be used as a means of conveying indirect disagreement. For Locher (2004), conveying disagreement in a form of questions "mitigate face-threatening aspects because the objection is formulated less directly" (p. 133). As such, implied disagreement can be one way of expressing relational work and hence, face consideration (*ibid*).

The response-turn demonstrates another means of displaying political positioning that is through the 'pronominal choice' (Vuković, 2012), which serves to construct David Cameron's positioning. In a hesitant tone of voice, he says 'we are going to see 10,000 extra nurse degree places because of this policy, because we are effectively uncapping the numbers that can go into nursing'. The plural pronoun 'we' here not only indicates David Cameron's belonging to the Conservative government, but also contributes to constructing his positioning that fosters the policy of a nurse bursary.

Both means of positioning (negative interrogative and pronominal choice) can work collaboratively as in the following question-turn in Extract 14 from the session of 1 March 2017 regarding the government's proposal of cutting the disability benefit. However, positioning here reflects another use of negative interrogative. This time it is not for conveying disagreement, but rather as a means of expressing assessment which invites agreement.

14. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] can she not recognise parity of esteem means funding it properly and not overriding court decisions that would benefit people suffering from very difficult conditions? (.) we should reach out to them (.) not deny them the support they need ↓ (lines 113-115).

   Theresa May: As I say we are spending more than ever on mental health than £11.4 billion a year (.) more people each week (.) are now receiving treatment in relation to mental health than have done previously (.) is

there more for us to do on mental health? yes there is I have said that in this Chamber in answer to questions that I have received previously […] (lines 117-120).

As the question-turn shows, the negative interrogative 'can she not recognise parity of esteem means funding it properly' appears to be as an assessment of the Conservative government's dealing with mental health in the NHS. Jeremy Corbyn then uses 'we' in 'we should reach out to them, not deny them the support they need', which implies a viewpoint emphasising a "joint decision" (Holmes and Stubbe, 2003: 41), rather than his own decision. Therefore, it refers to a collective responsibility (including the opposition and the government), which may generate an implicature that this government has overridden this policy instead of supporting it. In response to Jeremy Corbyn's indirect challenge, position-taking occurs in Theresa May's turn. She employs constructions of self-quotation in 'as I say we are spending more than ever on mental health than £11.4 billion a year…' and 'I have said that in this Chamber', which serve to endorse her positioning on this policy (parity of esteem). Simultaneously, this positioning can be used as a strategy to deconstruct Jeremy Corbyn's claim against this policy.

In sum, this section has examined the leaders' position-taking and facework as it emerges in PMQs questions and responses of the LO and the PMs. The act of positioning (with or against government's proposals or policies) are negotiated in terms of pronominal choice and negative interrogative formulation during the interaction. The following section will explore how mitigation serves to conceptualise qualities of leadership.

5.6 Leadership Qualities

Due to the fact that leadership is "hardly ever a permanent role but needs to be renewed after a certain period of time […], leaders need to perform successfully in order to be re-elected" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 129). This can be accomplished by displaying good leadership qualities, such as doing "competence" when the leader presents him/herself as decisive and principled, and "responsiveness" when the leader presents him/herself as caring and may find favour in the narratives and reports of others (*ibid*). However, "the interactional organisation of leadership with respect to competence and responsiveness" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 132) are employed and negotiated by both the LO and the PM while the interaction unfolds. At this point, mitigation can be one possible means to fulfil this interactional goal. To illustrate this point, the strategic use of mitigation allows the leaders to portray themselves to their best advantage, and thereby enhance their positive face. The

LO-PM exchanges show that in most situations the leaders attempt to do competence and responsiveness. The reason is likely to save own face and score points on the expense of the opponent's face. The extract below shows how the leadership qualities of 'caring' and 'principles' are enacted while the Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron negotiate their meaning during the interaction of the session of 20 April 2016 regarding the issue of 'forced academisation'. 'Caring leader' is defined as listening to people and showing responsiveness (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 133), whereas 'principled leader' is defined as "doing what is right and sticking to it" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 130).

15. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] he (the PM) claims to be an advocate of devolution (.) so is he not concerned about criticisms from his hon. Friend the Member for Altrincham and Sale West (Mr. Brady) who says, "there is little accountability or parental involvement"? can the Prime Minister understand (.) the anger so many people feel that's just been imposed on them (.) a system (.) they don't want (.) on what are often already very good if not outstanding schools? (lines 53-59)

David Cameron: […] the truth is (.) the truth is (.) creating academies is true devolution (.) because we are putting power in the hands of headteachers and teachers (.) and of course (.) of course (.) we will find people in local government who want to keep things exactly as they are (.) but the truth is (.) one of the reasons I so strongly support academies is that when they fail (.) they are intervened on so much faster (.) local authority schools are often left to fail year after year after year (.) I think that one year of a failing school (.) is one year too many (.) let's encourage academies (.) let's build a great education system (.) and let's have opportunity for all our children (lines 63-70)

Jeremy Corbyn's question-turn involves the negative interrogative 'is he not concerned…?' which seems to serve two functions. First, it displays an indirect disagreement with the government's policy of "forcing all state schools in England to become academies" (BBC News, 20 April 2016). Second, it suggests the idea that David Cameron is an irresponsive and uncaring leader for imposing a new unwanted education system. Jeremy Corbyn seems to exploit Conservative members' divisions over forced academisation, and thus he quotes those who oppose this policy (Eaton, 20 April 2016: *New Statesman*). The strategy of non-public quotation here serves to construct an indirect criticism of David Cameron and his government, which implies that Jeremy Corbyn is the

one who is concerned for people who oppose the plan of academisation. Employing these mitigation strategies allows him to display himself as both a principled and a caring leader at the same time.

As the response-turn shows, David Cameron tries to defend this policy against Jeremy Corbyn's claim and criticism. However, the repetitive phrases 'the truth is' and 'of course' suggest his attempt to reconstruct the leadership qualities as responsive and caring leader which has been threatened by Jeremy Corbyn. Towards the end of the turn, as part of David Cameron's defence, he repeated the hedged performative 'let's + verb' three times. This feature serves to express a polite offer to encourage and support the government's plan of academisation. The offer, as explained in Section 3.2, may belong to Searle's (1969) commissive category of speech acts, whereby the speaker (David Cameron) proposes to do or provide something for the benefit of the addressee (Jeremy Corbyn and the Chamber) (Leech, 2014: 180). This suggests David Cameron's attempt to reconstruct and maintain his leadership qualities as a "principled leader who knows what he does and therefore is in control of the situation" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 137).

Another example shows that Theresa May acts both as 'caring' and 'principled' leader as in Extract 16 from 2 November 2016 from a debate over cuts to the employment support allowance for disabled people:

16. **Jeremy Corbyn:** I asked the Chancellor (.) Mr. Speaker to abandon the £30 cut for disabled people on employment and support allowance (.) unable to work (.) but who with support may be able to work in the future (.) they want to be able to get into work (.) what evidence does the Prime Minister have that imposing poverty on people with disabilities actually helps them into work? (lines 89-94)

    Theresa May: I'm pleased to say that what we have seen under this Government is nearly half a million more disabled people actually in the workplace (.) my right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions has launched a Green Paper (.) on work which is starting to look at how we can continue to provide and increase support for those who are disabled (.) who want to get into the workplace (.) but he started his question by asking me about the increase in the money that is being spent on housing benefit (.) if he thinks that the amount of money being spent

on housing benefit is so important (.) why did he oppose the changes we

made to housing benefit to reduce the housing benefit bill? (lines 96-104)

Here, in response to Jeremy Corbyn's unmitigated question 'what evidence does the Prime Minister have that imposing poverty on people with disabilities…?', Theresa May's turn starts with 'I'm pleased to say that what we have seen under this Government is nearly half a million more disabled people actually in the workplace' which seems an attempt to talk up the positive face of her government (Chapter 6, Section 6.2). This utterance portrays Theresa May as a 'caring leader' (cf. Fetzer and Bull, 2012), who is concerned about helping people with disabilities to get into the workplace. Theresa May then continues saying 'we can continue to provide and increase support for those who are disabled', in which she is depicted as a principled leader. This bit is implied in connection with the quality of a caring leader when she euphemistically downplays the utterance with the construction 'those who are disabled' in a way that implies emotions. Simultaneously, both qualities are employed strategically to "generate implicatures" (Fetzer and Bull 2012: 131) to guide the audience in their interpretation of meaning, which suggest a challenge to Jeremy Corbyn's public image as a leader, emphasising the idea that he is an irresponsible leader who opposes the changes made by the government to reduce the housing benefit bill.

The strategy of 'acting as a mouthpiece' also serves to depict Jeremy Corbyn as a 'caring' leader (Fetzer and Bull, 2012). Narrating others' problems, as well as sharing their thoughts and feelings allows him to maintain a connection with his followers, understand their problems, feel their pain, and work hard to provide suitable solutions for these problems. This is reflected in Extract 17 from the last session (26 April 2017) before the general election with a debate regarding the 'future of the NHS':

17. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] Sybil Mr. Speaker (.) who witnessed the Labour founding of the national health service which made healthcare available for the many (.) not just the few wrote to me this week, and she says this (.) "I am 88 and have had a wonderful service from the national health service (.) but nowadays I am scared at the thought of going into hospital" ((Chamber: noise)) with more people waiting more than four hours in A & E (.) more people waiting on trolleys in corridors (.) more delayed discharges Mr. Speaker (.) thanks to the Tory cuts (.) is not Sybil right to be frightened

about the future of our NHS so long as this Government remain in office? (lines 113-120)

Theresa May: can I just say to the right hon. Gentleman that our national health service is now treating more patients than has ever before (.) we are seeing more people having operations (.) we are seeing more doctors (.) more nurses (.) more midwives (.) more GPs (.) and record levels of funding into our national health service (.) but that is only possible with a strong economy (.) and that's only possible with a strong and stable Government (.) and of course over the coming weeks we are all going to be out there campaigning across the country (.) as I will be taking our record on the national health service […] (lines 122-129)

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker (.) my question was about the national health service and Sybil's concerns (.) the NHS has not got [interruption] all right (.) all right ((JC wants to win the floor)) the NHS has not got the money it needs (.) the Prime Minister knows that (.) she knows that waiting times and waiting lists are up (.) she knows there is a crisis in almost every A & E department (.) maybe she could go to a hospital and allow the staff to ask her a few questions […] (lines 139-144)

As shown in Jeremy Corbyn's question-turn, the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece includes a quotation of complaint from a member of the public, Sybil regarding her fears to use the "underfunded and overstretched health service" (Walker, 26 April 2017: *The Guardian*). She wrote to Jeremy Corbyn concerning the problem of the long waiting time in A&E departments. The short narrative sequence invites implicatures firstly assigning Jeremy Corbyn the leadership quality as "caring and listening to reason" (Fetzer and Bull, 2012: 131), secondly leaving the interpretation to the audience to draw the inferences that this problem has occurred under this Conservative government and not before, and thereby, thirdly creating the implicature that the previous Labour government kept its promises.

Following this strategy, Jeremy Corbyn uses the construction 'thanks to the Tory cuts' which reveals an overt clash between polite and impolite parts which occur side by side in the same utterance. The polite part is 'thanks', which should be a means of expressing gratitude and hence should be "face enhancing" (Leech, 2014: 197) to Theresa May, and

the impolite part is 'to the Tory cuts.' This case is called "attitude clash" (Leech, 2014: 238), which may not conform to the earlier definition of conversational irony (Section 5.3.2) because the polite and impolite meanings are overt. However, there is an opportunity to interpret 'thanks' as ironical in the context of what follows (to the tory cuts). There is no doubt that this ironic construction indicates a criticism of the Conservative government's policy of the NHS funding. At the end of the question-turn, Jeremy Corbyn addresses a question via a negative interrogative form 'is not Sybil right to be frightened about the future of our NHS so long as this Government remain in office?'. This grammatical construction serves not only to display his positioning (Section 5.5) against this policy (the NHS cuts), but also to imply a criticism of the government, albeit with more aggressive facework (via rising volume and angry tone of voice). Integrating the linguistic aspect of mitigation with prosody contributes to depicting Jeremy Corbyn as a caring leader. Simultaneously, the criticism of the government stems from this quality (Jeremy Corbyn is concerned and hence by necessity critical).

Theresa May's response-turn seems to have no explicit claims that the Conservative government has succeeded in reforming the NHS system. Rather, the comparative constructions, which are used in 'our national health service is now treating more patients than has ever before, we are seeing more people having operations, …', trigger a presupposition that the issue occurred under the last Labour government. This proposition could be an implicit criticism against Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour party. However, the turn is shifted to lay the responsibility for reforming the NHS system on 'a strong economy' and 'a strong and stable Government'. This transformation could be an attempt to present herself to the best advantage, thereby to enhance her positive face. Therefore, the turn does not include a direct answer regarding the issue of the NHS funding and Syble's concern. This suggests that Theresa May has evaded the question. This evasion has been confirmed at the beginning of Jeremy Corbyn's next question-turn, when he says 'Mr. Speaker, my question was about the national health service and Sybil's concerns…', which implies that his question has not been answered yet by Theresa May.

The extracts discussed above indicate that leadership qualities of caring and principled can be foregrounded with the use of mitigation strategies as negotiated by the LO and the PMs during the interaction. This allows the leaders to not only doing politics, but also doing leadership and facework to demonstrate their own 'competence' and 'responsiveness', while simultaneously displaying an implicit challenge to their opponent's competence and

responsiveness. The interplay between mitigation and leadership provides leaders with a linguistic platform to perform facework by projecting their best advantage and hence, enhancing their positive face, whilst implicitly threatening the opponent's face.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has explored the way in which the leaders reflect and construct their leadership style as appropriate and consistent with institutionally specific norms and expectations of relational work. The exchanges discussed in this chapter suggest that effective leaders make use of a wide range of styles associated with mitigation strategies, expressing themselves and instantiating many different (conflictual) points as the interaction unfolds. The discussion has demonstrated how the participants enact both their leadership identity and style as they negotiate and construct meanings during the interaction. The leadership seems to be embedded in two types of style; authoritarian and relational, which are used to promote the communicative goals of interaction. However, mitigation features are seen as contributing to relational style rather than authoritarian style.

The discussion also illustrates that humour serves as a useful resource for indexing the leadership identity within PMQs Community of Practice. It tended to be supportive, i.e. supports previous humorous propositions, and contestive, i.e. humorously contests previous speaker's propositions. Humour contributes to instantiating leadership in more relational and less authoritarian ways of interaction. In addition to humour, other mitigation strategies are employed to provide an institutionally acceptable packaging to attenuate the negative impact of inevitable face-threatening behaviours involved in the role relationships during PMQs interaction. This suggests that mitigation serves to disguise the offensive effect of the leaders' messages to enact their leadership in a subtle manner and hence, reflect the institutional norms of appropriate behaviour. Mitigation thus can be one of the best resources, which contributes to not only doing facework (including aggressive facework) and political identity, but also to doing leadership by displaying the qualities of competence (i.e. principled and decisive) and responsiveness (i.e. caring).

The final analysis chapter turns to investigate the discursive functions of mitigation in the questions that are addressed by the LO to the PM. It uses examples from the dataset to illustrate question types, which are used during question-turns and how these types influence the way the PMs respond to them. The findings are supported by tables which present frequency of occurrences of question types and their response strategies.

Chapter 6: Mitigation and Question Types

6.1 Introduction

This chapter seeks to examine the role of mitigation in questions with respect to relational work that is used by the leaders, and more specifically the LO, Jeremy Corbyn and how different types of question affect the way the PMs, David Cameron and Theresa May respond. Therefore, this chapter aims to investigate the following research question: *how can mitigated questions be interpreted as relational work in the ongoing PMQs interaction*. As it is common for the LO-PM exchanges to build on presupposition or construct implicature that are face-threatening to the PM (Harris, 2001), it is useful to explore a variety of question forms and types and how they make use of mitigation in the LO-PM interaction. The aim of this chapter is to investigate how the questions that are addressed by Jeremy Corbyn to David Cameron and Theresa May function. The term 'Prime Minister's Questions' implies a heavy reliance on interrogatives as part of the wider questioning turn in order to probe the PM to offer his/her response and undertake to perform actions. Given that the LO can address 6 questions to the PM during their exchanges, one might expect their form to be Yes/No questions or WH questions. However, there is a variety of different types of mitigated and unmitigated, answerable, and rhetorical questions, often used for relational work purposes.

To answer the research question presented above, I read the transcripts to determine what specific patterns could be found (Creswell, 2014). I devised several descriptive codes which enabled me to organise the questions into mitigated and unmitigated ones. For the mitigated questions, I discovered two major categories from my dataset including some subcategories. With the help of Nvivo Pro 12, I coded the question types in my data. These categories along with their frequencies are shown in the following table.

Table 8 Types of Questions used by the LO to both PMs

	Types of Questions	Description	No.
1	Mitigated Questions	Questions that include mitigation features	125
1.1	Standard Questions	Standard questions are defined as questions which are straightforward to answer. There are two types of these questions: yes/no and WH questions	45
1.2	Helpful Questions	The questions act as a 'helpful question' that	10

	Types of Questions	Description	No.
		seeks agreement from the PM	
1.3	Rhetorical Questions	These questions appear to be designed deliberately to provoke discomfort and evasion	70
2	Unmitigated Questions	Questions that do not include mitigation features	97

Table 9 shows the frequent occurrence of questions in LO-PM exchanges. These questions are classified into mitigated and unmitigated. Mitigated questions have 125 occurrences: 45 for standard questions, 10 for helpful questions, and 70 for rhetorical questions, which are the most used type of mitigation questions. The occurrences of unmitigated questions (97) might be due to the highly aggressive situations that take place during the debate.

As outlined above, the analysis in this chapter demonstrates the role of mitigation in questions and how that can have an effect on relational practice and the way the PMs respond. Therefore, this chapter proceeds in the following way: section 6.2 discusses the types of questions posed by Jeremy Corbyn to the PMs. Section 6.3 addresses the forms and functions of mitigated indirect requests in the form of declarative sentences. The chapter ends with section 6.4, a summary and concluding remarks.

6.2 Types of Question and Response in PMQs

The PMQs process involves a basic question-response framework where questions are addressed, and responses are expected. Although the questions are mainly yes/no and 'WH-questions in the context of PMQs, these questions can be divided into 'standard', 'unanswerable' and 'helpful' (Bates *et al*., 2014). The term 'unanswerable' seems quite vague, and in order to be more specific, I suggest using instead the term 'rhetorical'. Although questions can be the obligatory core of question turns, Corbyn usually provides the context of his argumentation to make sure that what he refers to is clear. However, these questions construct potential FTAs to the PMs. Consequently, the PMs use strategies to deal with these FTAs in their response-turns, as the following table outlines.

Table 9 The Strategies of the PMs' Responses

Strategies in response-turns		Types of Question		
Name	Standard	Helpful	Rhetorical	unmitigated
Attacking the questioner	15	2	34	65
Evasion	15	2	11	22
Rebutting	7	0	18	23
Self-Justification	38	11	61	73
Talking up the positive face	24	6	51	55

Table 10 shows that there are a variety of strategies employed by the PMs to deal with the face threats which are imbedded in the questions in the LO's turns. Each response-turn consists of more than one strategy which may be used more than once in the same turn. The most used strategy in the response turns is self-justification (73) in dealing with threats from unmitigated questions, followed by the strategy of attacking the questioner (65), talking up the positive face of the self and/or the government (55), rebutting (23) and evasion (22). Regarding mitigated questions, the strategy of self-justification has occurred 61 times in response to rhetorical questions, followed by 38 and 11 times in response to standard and helpful questions, respectively. The number of occurrences of the strategy of talking up the positive face of the self and/or the government shows the highest (51) in response to rhetorical questions, followed by the numbers 24 and 6 in response to standard and helpful questions, respectively. The strategy of attacking the questioner has been used 34 times in response to rhetorical questions, followed by its occurrence in response to standard questions (15) and helpful questions (2). In order to have more detail for mitigated types of question, the following sections discuss the types along with the ways the PMs respond to them.

6.2.1 Standard Questions

Standard questions are defined as questions which are straightforward to answer (Bates *et al.,* 2014). Yes/No questions are defined as polarised questions that aim to elicit a yes or no answer from the PM with a strong bias towards a "confirmation-giving answer" (Ilie, 2015: 202). However, in the context of PMQs exchanges, such questions often invite no direct 'yes' or 'no' answer in the response-turns. Addressing such questions is motivated by the need to "enhance the positive image of one's own party by contrasting it with a negative image of the government and its policies" (*ibid*). Consequently, as Ilie (2015: 4-5) notes, these questions intend to be used to embarrass or challenge the PM by forcing him/her to make uncomfortable damaging or self-revealing declarations. On the other hand, they may also be used to enhance both one's own and the others' positive image, as shown in Extract 1 of Jeremy Corbyn's question and David Cameron's response from the session of 11 May 2016:

1. **Jeremy Corbyn:** [….] Mr. Speaker (.) the Prime Minister will be (2.0) very well aware (.) of the concern across the whole country (.) about the question of unaccompanied child refugees across Europe (.) they are in desperate plight and they are in a very dangerous situation (.) everyone's heart reaches out to them (.) but we have to do more than that (.) and we have to be practical in our help for them (.) I got a letter this week from a voluntary worker with child refugees by the name of Hannah (.) she wrote to me about these children (.) that some of whom have family members in this country (.) can the Prime Minister <u>confirm</u> (.) that in response to Lord Dubs' amendment (.) there will be no delay whatsoever (.) in accepting 3,000 unaccompanied child refugees into this country to give them the support they need and allow them to enjoy the childhood they and all our children deserve? (lines 126-136)

   David Cameron: what I can say to the right hon. Gentleman is we will follow the Dubs amendment (.) that is now the law of the land (.) and of course (.) the Dubs amendment says that we have to consult very carefully with local authorities to make sure that (.) as we take these children in (.) we are able to house them (.) clothe them (.) feed them (.) make sure they are properly looked after (.) so we need to look at the <u>capacity</u> (.) of our care system (.) because if you look at some councils (.) particularly in Kent

and southern England (.) they are already struggling because of the large number of unaccompanied (.) err (.) children who have come in (.) just two figures for him (.) to put this in context (.) last year (.) 3,000 unaccompanied children arrived and claimed asylum in the UK (.) even <u>before</u> the scheme that is being introduced (.) second figure is of course (.) under the Dublin (.) children with a connection to the UK can already claim asylum in France or Italy and then come to the UK (.) we've accepted 30 such transfers since February (.) what I can say about Dubs (.) there won't be any delay (.) we'll get on with this as fast as we can (.) but in order to follow the law (.) we're going to talk to our local authorities first (lines 138-152)

The topic of this turn seems to focus on ensuring that there is no delay to plans to provide asylum to unaccompanied children seeking asylum (Sparrow, 11 May 2016: *The Guardian*). Regarding the issue of 'child refugees', Jeremy Corbyn uses a number of expressions, such as 'the concern', 'desperate plight', 'dangerous situation' and 'everyone's heart reaches out to them'. Arguably, these terms and phrases imply that Jeremy Corbyn is a caring leader, and thereby contribute as a persuasive device (persuading the addressee and the audience). Following these emotional terms, he shares a letter from a voluntary worker with child refugees, Hanna, who wrote to him about these children. The strategy of acting as a mouthpiece serves here to raise more concern regarding this issue and as evidence to support his claim. Jeremy Corbyn's narrative way of raising the issue of 'child refugees' ends with a question addressed to the PM, 'can the Prime Minster confirm that'. The question involves both the force of a directive and the force of a question at the same time, and the implicit force of the directive is conveyed by means of the explicit force of the question (Searle, 1975). In other words, the question seems to be both action and information oriented, which puts pressure on the PM to confirm or not. This form of interrogative sentence, starting with the modal auxiliary 'can' is a means of displaying a mitigated indirect request (Aijmer, 1996) (Chapter 4: Table 1) which is a routine way of making requests in English (Leech, 2014). In addition, it indicates an indirect directive which breaches Grice's maxim of Quality generating an implicature that Jeremy Corbyn is politely "pretending" that David Cameron may or may not be able to perform the action of confirmation (cf. Leech, 2014: 318). Here, mitigation is revealed through the opportunity that this question allows the PM to expound on his government's policy, and hence can be a good example of a face-enhancing question (Harris, 2001)*.* Simultaneously, David

Cameron takes advantage of this opportunity to emphasise his political positioning (Chapter 5, Section 5.5).

The response-turn starts with 'what I can say to the right hon. Gentleman is we will follow the Dubs amendment, that is now the law of the land' that shows no direct 'yes' or 'no' answer, but rather a qualified 'yes' (i.e. neither confirming nor denying). He justifies that he and his government are constrained by the law of the legal framework (the Dubs amendment). Along with self-justification, David Cameron talks up his government's positive face/public image. David Cameron makes his contribution as not belonging to himself (cf. Locher, 2004), which can be seen through the use of the plural pronoun 'we' in 'there won't be any delay, we'll get on with this as fast as we can…'. It can be understood that he refers to himself and the government who take the responsibility to consider this issue. This strategy can be a means of avoiding himself to be exposed to criticism if he had reported the utterance as his own point of view (cf. Locher, 2004). In this sense, spreading responsibility or 'point-of-view distancing', as Brown and Levinson (1987: 204-206) call it, serves as a face-saving device for David Cameron. As such, this section of the LO-PM exchange presents a "non-aggressive framework of interaction" (cf. Locher and Watts, 2005: 43), where the level of relational work invested seems to be politic and appropriate.

The next extract from 14 December 2016 shows another form of standard questions which seems also straightforward to answer. Such a form of question starts with a modal, asking for highly specific information (cf. Harris, 2001):

2. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker the Care Quality Commission warned as recently as October that evidence suggests we have approached a tipping point (.) so instead of passing the buck on to local government (.) shouldn't the Government take responsibility <u>itself</u> for the crisis? could the Prime Minister take this opportunity to inform the House exactly how much was cut from the social care budget in the last Parliament? (lines 49-53)

    Theresa May: We have been putting more money into social care and health ((Chamber: how much?)) we have been putting more money into social care and health as I say we recognise the pressures that exist (.) that is why we are looking at the short-term pressures that exist on social care (.) but you cannot be looked at as simply being an issue of money in the short term it is about delivery (.) it is about reform (.) it is about the social care system

working with the health system (.) that's why this issue is being addressed not just by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (.) but by the Secretary of State for Health (.) but if we are going to give people the reassurance that they need in the longer term that their social care needs will be met (.) we need to make it clear that this is not just about looking for a short-term solution (.) it is about finding a way forward that can give us a sustainable system of social care for the future (lines 55-66)

Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker the Prime Minister does not seem to be aware that £4.6 billion was cut from the social care budget in the last Parliament (.) and her talk about putting this into local government ought to be taken for what it is (.) a con (.) two per cent of council tax is clearly a nonsense (.) 95% of councils used the social care precept (.) and it raised less than 3% of the money they planned to spend on adult social care (.) billions seem to be available for tax giveaways to corporations (.) not mentioned in the autumn statement (.) and underfunding and many elderly people left isolated and in crisis because of the lack of Government funding for social care (lines 68-75)

As we can see from the question-turn, the debate is devoted to the government's cuts of social care funding (BBC News, 14 December 2016). In this turn, Jeremy Corbyn poses the question 'could the Prime Minister take this opportunity to inform the House exactly how much was cut from the social care budget in the last Parliament?'. The formula 'could the Prime Minister + verb' mitigates the imposition on the PM and it is simply understood as articulating a request in a formulaic, albeit reasonably polite form (cf. Leech, 2014: 14). Leech refers to the association between the degree of conventionalization and the lexicogrammatical form of the sentence as 'pragmaticalization'. Although this request includes a passive construction (avoiding reference to the suppressed agent, the government), it constitutes a potential FTA in itself. The request seems to be on-record which means it is conventionalised as having the force of a directive (cf. Leech, 2014: 34). The purpose of asking such a request is likely to obtain highly specific information (asking the PM about the exact amount of cut), and thereby it is a straightforward question.

The response-turn starts with the utterance 'We have been putting more money into social care and health' which is interrupted by a shout from the Chamber 'how much?'. The interruption signals Theresa May's equivocation of the question addressed by Jeremy Corbyn. This equivocation can be because Theresa May either does not have the

information to hand or she may not wish to publicise it (cf. Bull and Well, 2012: 34). Another evidence of this equivocation is shown in Jeremy Corbyn's next turn. When Theresa May fails to answer the question, Jeremy Corbyn then subsequently provides the information in order to embarrass her (*ibid*).

The examples presented above show that evasion can be a common way of answering the questions. This strategy is used 15 times in answering standard questions (see Table 10). This can be due to the conflictual nature of PMQs interaction, which suggests that the only way for the PMs to answer is for them to equivocate (Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014). Equivocation (or evasion) is defined as "non-straightforward communication and includes such speech acts as self-contradictions, inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentialisations, incomplete sentences, misunderstandings, obscure style or mannerisms of speech, etc." (Bavelas *et al.,* 1988: 137). Consequently, Opposition's questions may be avoided "since they are usually closed yes/no questions containing negative presuppositions" (Rasiah, 2010: 666) to reduce the risk of making "face damaging responses" (Bull, 2008b). This suggests that the strategy of evasion serves to avoid providing straightforward answers to uncomfortable questions, while simultaneously diverting the audience's attention to different topics away from the actual point that advance speakers' face-saving. In the following section, I consider another type of question that is identified in the analysis of the LO-PM interaction.

6.2.2 Helpful Questions

Helpful questions are questions which act as prompts to allow the PM to set out the government's position or policy (Bates *et al*., 2014). The following question acts as a 'helpful question' that seeks agreement from the PM, Theresa May. However, it serves as a persuasive device and can also function to seek agreement from the PM, as in Extract 3 from the session of 22 March 2017:

3. **Jeremy Corbyn:** […] and I got a heartfelt letter from a primary school teacher by the name of Eileen (.) Eileen is one of our many hard-working teachers who cares for her kids (.) and she wrote to me to say (.) "teachers are purchasing items such as pens (.) pencils (.) glue sticks and paper out of their own pockets (.) fundraising events have quadrupled (.) as funds are so low that parents are having to make donations to purchase books! This is

disgraceful" says Eileen (.) does the Prime Minister agree with Eileen? (lines 46-51)

Theresa May: We are seeing record levels of funding going into our schools (.) we've protected the school's budget (.) we've protected the pupil premium (.) but what matters for parents is the quality of education ((Interruption by Chamber: what about Eileen?)) [...] it is about ensuring that every child [interruption] every child (2.0) every child across this country has the opportunity of a good school place (.) that's what we have been delivering for the past seven years and it is what we will deliver into the future (.) and every single policy that's delivered better education for children has been opposed by the right hon. Gentleman (lines 53-67)

The topic of Jeremy Corbyn's turn seems to be on "education and the changing in the school funding programme, which have drawn a protest from headteachers and parents" (Sparrow, 22 May 2017: *The Guardian*). During his turn, Jeremy Corbyn quotes a teacher's (in west Sussex) letter regarding this issue by employing the mitigation strategy of acting as a mouthpiece. Quoting this letter and describing it as 'heartfelt' in 'I got a heartfelt letter from a primary school teacher by the name of Eileen' serves to display that Jeremy Corbyn is not only sharing the teacher's concern but also aligning with her. This strategy contributes to persuading the audience and drawing their attention. At the same time, acting as a mouthpiece here, softens the potential effect of FTA (criticism) that is performed against Theresa May during the turn by the question 'does the Prime Minister agree with Eileen?' at the end of the turn. Such a question leaves Theresa May open to express her opinion, update the house and set out the government's response (cf. Bates *et al.,* 2014: 263), which can be shown through the way she responds in her next turn.

At the beginning of her turn, Theresa May ignores the question when she says, 'we are seeing record levels of funding going into our schools…'. In doing so, she does not say whether she agrees or not with Eileen or the implied funding crisis. Instead, she talks up the positive face of herself and the government by justifying her government's handling of 'school's budget' and 'quality of education'. Therefore, her response shows that she evades Jeremy Corbyn's question by shifting the topic. The equivocation is signalled by an interruption, a shout from the Chamber saying, 'what about Eileen?' in an attempt to bring her back to the topic under question. Resorting to equivocation here, seems to be a strategy of face-saving as it is used to reduce the risk of making "face damaging responses"

(Bull, 2008b). Such behaviour supports Rasiah's (2010) argument that opposition's questions may be avoided "since they are usually closed yes/no questions containing negative presuppositions" (p.666). Hence, equivocating this uncomfortable topic serves Theresa May to not only avoid this dilemma by not directly addressing Jeremy Corbyn's question, whether she agrees or disagrees with Eileen and the wider critique, but also turn the audience's attention to different topics that advance her face-saving. Moreover, it allows Theresa May to deflect attention away from the FTA on to the positive impact of her as Prime Minister. In her final utterance, 'every single policy that's delivered better education for children has been opposed by the right hon. Gentleman' she explicitly attacks Jeremy Corbyn, which is one way of responding to the FTA performed in Jeremy Corbyn's question (Table 2).

Another example of helpful question is presented as a combination of a series of questions as shown in Extract 4, which is from the exchange of 8 June 2016 over the issue of 'tax evasion'. The previous response-turn is also attached to provide a wider context for interpreting these questions:

4. **David Cameron:** well first of all (.) I would argue that no Government has done more nationally to crack down on tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance (.) and I would also argue that no Government has done more internationally to bring this up the international agenda (.) I made it the centrepiece at the G8 (.) we've driven change in the OECD (.) and we are now driving change in the European Union (.) and let me confirm that my MEPs do support country-by-country reporting (.) and they have said that over and again (.) and I am happy to repeat it again today (lines 11**6**-12**2**)

   Jeremy Corbyn: I am really pleased that the Prime Minister's MEPs support this transparency (.) we are all delighted about that (.) I just hope that they get round to voting for it when the opportunity comes up (.) because that would certainly help (.) he will be aware Mr. Speaker (.) that The Labour's position is that we want to stay in the European Union to improve workers' rights (.) tackle exploitation (.) drive down tax evasion and tax avoidance (.) but we are concerned that these issues (.) are not the priorities of members of his Government and his party   […] ((raising the voice to high pitch)) does he talk to them about this at any time? and do they speak for themselves or

for him and his Government? and if they speak for themselves (.) how are they Ministers at the same time? (lines 124-135)

David Cameron: and here I am trying to be so consensual (.) I am doing my best (.) I could mention that the right hon. Member for Birmingham (.) Edgbaston (Ms Stuart) was out yesterday spinning for Nigel Farage ((DC: smiles)) but I don't want to play that game I want to stress the unity of purpose there is (.) particularly over the issue of tax evasion (.) because there is a serious point here (.) what we have in prospect in the European Union (.) in part because of British action (.) is the idea of saying that if large foreign multinationals want to <u>invest</u> in the European Union (.) they will have to report their country-by-country tax arrangements not just in Europe (.) but all over the world (.) now that could drive a <u>huge</u> change in some of these very large companies where there are great concerns (.) and I hope he and I (.) can unite and say that this would be a good thing (.) as it shows that when Britain pushes an agenda in Europe it wins (.) and it wins for our citizens (lines 137-148)

The exchange of 8 June 2016 is the second-last PMQs before the EU Referendum on June 23 (Bloom, 8 June 2016: *Mirror*). This extract starts with David Cameron's turn that constitutes an argument regarding 'tax arrangements', confirming that his MEPs support 'country-by-country reporting'. This response-turn makes Jeremy Corbyn initiate his turn with the strategy of supportive comment to show his agreement with the PM's MEPs who support 'country by country reporting' of the tax evasion of large multinational companies. The word 'Just' in 'I just hope that they get round to voting for it when the opportunity comes up' is used as a downtoning intensifier (Aijmer, 1996) to attenuate the potential threat constructed by his utterance. However, the threat is also embedded in the implicature generated that the PM's MEPs may not vote for 'it'. In doing so, the PM's MEPs are presented as not concerned about the issue of tax arrangements. The attenuating utterances used at the beginning of the turn gradually shift to escalating utterances (accompanied with the raising of the voice to high pitch) toward the end of the turn. This transition starts with 'but we are concerned that these issues, are not the priorities of members of his Government and his party…' which emphasises Jeremy Corbyn's concern.

Towards the end of the turn, Jeremy Corbyn employs a series of coordinated questions; 'does he talk to them about this at any time?', 'do they speak for themselves or for him and

his Government?' and if they speak for themselves, how are they Ministers at the same time?' associated with rising intonation. The first two questions entail direct unmitigated interrogatives, whereas the third seems to be a rhetorical question (Section, 6.2.3). Although these propositions construct an FTA against David Cameron's ministers who are campaigning to leave the European Union, they act as prompt to allow the PM to set out his position regarding tackling issues like tax evasion and tax avoidance. This justifies the categorisation of 'helpful questions'.

The response-turn shows features of mitigation that are employed in response to Jeremy Corbyn's questions. First, David Cameron justifies his position (using the first singular pronoun 'I') in association with two supportive comments, one at the beginning of the turn, 'and here I am trying to be so consensual, I am doing my best' and another at the end, 'I hope he and I can unite and say that this would be a good thing' which serve as a means of seeking agreement with Jeremy Corbyn. These supportive comments can also be one device of showing mutual concern towards the issue of the EU referendum (since both campaigned for 'Remain'), and hence achieve a face-saving purpose for both the LO and PM. Taking each other's face into consideration allows us to make the assumption that employing supportive comments displays more than just politic behaviour. This mitigation strategy here can be seen as a realisation of politeness. This suggests that the behaviour can be 'marked' positively polite and appropriate (Locher and Watts, 2005). In between these mitigation features, David Cameron uses a modalised statement with 'could' in, 'that could drive a huge change in some of these very large …' which indicates a hypothetical condition, and thus conveys a polite remark (Leech, 2014). This mitigated utterance serves to attenuate the illocutionary force (i.e. the meaning of the utterance in terms of the speaker's intention) of the utterance.

Although Extract 4 comes at the end of the exchange, it indicates an example of reciprocated mitigation between the LO and the PM, which may confirm Waddle *et al.*'s (2019) view of reciprocated politeness between the adversaries. Both leaders employ the strategy of supportive comments which conveys their mutual concern regarding a particular issue. In addition to the standard and helpful questions discussed above, there are also questions that function pragmatically as rhetorical questions which are addressed during the LO-PM exchanges, which is discussed in the next section.

6.2.3 Rhetorical Questions and Mitigation in PMQs

Rhetorical questions are defined as questions that are "confirmation-eliciting and/or action-eliciting, rather than information-eliciting in that they signal out and expose the opponent's weaknesses, often in an ironical or sarcastic tone" (Ilie, 2015: 207). In the context of PMQs, these questions appear to be designed deliberately to provoke discomfort and evasion (cf. Bates *et al.,* 2014). In addition, rhetorical questions allow questioners to convey a message to the audience that can be advantageous to themselves and challenging to their adversaries. Accordingly, they are an effective persuasive device and can be treated as an indirect speech act with interactive outcomes of utterances dressed as questions, but not intended to be taken strictly speaking as a question (accounting for eliciting information from the addressee) (Frank, 1990). Suffice it to say, these questions are an indirect way to imply more than is said, whether minimising threats to face or strengthening persuasive effect (p. 737). However, in confrontational interaction, the role of rhetorical questions seems to be to win the argument, while not jeopardising a relationship (*ibid*). They allow the speaker to make a "stronger statement, with greater implications than would be possible, if they had made straightforward assertions" (p.726).

Building on Gricean theory, Brown and Levinson (1978) explain that when asking a question that does not require an answer, the speaker flouts the sincerity condition (maxim of quality; be sincere). Choosing an interrogative form can express an opinion as "the speaker appears to let the addressee be the judge, but no overt response is expected" (Biber *et al.*, 1999: 206). It can also express a criticism to challenge the addressee (Frank 1990, Cerović 2016), as is the case in the following exchange which is excerpted from the session of 29 March 2017 regarding the issue of 'school funding':

5. **Jeremy Corbyn**: Mr. Speaker (.) the daily experience of many parents who have children in school (.) is that they receive letters asking for money (.) one parent (.) Elizabeth wrote to me to say that she has received a letter from her daughter's school asking for a <u>monthly</u> donation to top up the reduced funds that her school is receiving (.) this Government's cuts to schools are betraying a generation of our children if the Prime Minister is right (.) then the parents are wrong (.) the teachers are wrong (.) the IFS (Institute for Fiscal Studies) is wrong (.) the National Audit Office is wrong (.) the Education Policy Institute is wrong (.) and now the Public Accounts Committee which includes eight Conservative Members (.) is also wrong (.) so which

organisation does back the Prime Minister's view on education spending in our schools? (lines 73-82)

Theresa May: As I have just said to the right hon. Gentleman (.) we said that we would protect school funding and we have (.) there is a real-terms protection for the school's budget (.) we said that we would protect the money following children into schools and we have (.) the schools budget reaches £42 billion as pupil numbers rise (.) in 2019-20 (.) but I also have to say to him (.) it is about the quality of education that children are receiving (.) 1.8 million more children in good or outstanding schools than there were under the Labour Government (.) but I also say to the right hon. Gentleman (.) because time and again (.) he stands up at Prime Minister's questions and asks questions that would lead to more spending (.) let's just look at what he has said recently (.) on 11 January (.) more spending (.) on 8 February ((Conservative members: more spending)) on 22 February ((Conservative members: more spending)) on 1 and 8 March ((Conservative members: more spending)) and on 15 and 22 March ((Conservative members: more spending)) barely a PMQs goes by that he doesn't call for more public spending (.) when it comes to spending money that it doesn't have (.) Labour simply cannot help themselves (.) it is the same old Labour (.) spend today and give somebody else the bill tomorrow (.) well we won't do that to the next generation (lines 84-99)

The question-turn shows that Jeremy Corbyn accuses Theresa May of "breaking another manifesto pledge" regarding changes to school funding (Kentish, 22 March 2017: *The Independent*). However, the turn is attenuated by implementing the strategy of acting as a mouthpiece when he says, 'one parent, Elizabeth wrote to me to say that she has received …'. Then, he explicitly criticises the government when he says, 'this Government's cuts to schools are betraying a generation of our children…'. This pre-sequence utterance (i.e. the explicit criticism) contributes to identifying Jeremy Corbyn's question, 'so which organisation does back the Prime Minister's view on education spending in our schools?' as rhetorical. In addition, it appears as an indirect speech act whose primary meaning (non-literal meaning) is an assertive to the effect 'there is no organisation that backs Theresa May's view on education spending in our school' (cf. Frank, 1990). The rhetorical question here presumes that Jeremy Corbyn's intent is not to obtain an answer but is most likely a

criticism of Theresa May about the issue of 'school funding'. And this is borne out by Theresa May's reiteration regarding this issue before she starts attacking Jeremy Corbyn.

The question-turn shows that Jeremy Corbyn's question is ignored by Theresa May. Ignoring the question seems to be one way of dealing with the FTA performed by the question (Bull and Wells, 2012). Instead, she offers an explanation by using the strategy of self-justification and talks about herself and her government's positive face. This means that she uses further strategies to deal with the FTA. The strategy of self-justification was the most common strategy in responses to rhetorical questions (Table 2). It is noticeable that the plural pronoun 'we' is used several times in 'as I have just said to the right hon. Gentleman, we said that we would protect school funding and we have' to indicate that both Theresa May and the government have made actions regarding the issue of 'school funding'. She addresses Jeremy Corbyn by a formal address form, 'the right Honourable Gentleman' which is a ritualised mitigation feature to attenuate her utterance. Following this utterance, a routine mitigation pattern, 'I also have to say' (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1) is employed to hedge the performative and make the utterance seem that Theresa May is compelled (presumably against her will) to say something that might be face-threatening. Gradually, her attenuated utterances shift to an escalating utterance to attack Jeremy Corbyn. She refers to him by using the third personal pronoun 'he' in 'but I also say to the right hon. Gentleman, because time and again, he stands up at Prime Minister's questions and asks questions that would lead to more spending…' accusing him of calling for 'more public spending'. Thereafter, the mitigation feature 'let's' is used in 'let's just look at what he has said recently' to suggest another routine request to pursue her accusation against Jeremy Corbyn (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1). Consequently, in Theresa May's response, we can find evidence (counterattacking Jeremy Corbyn) that Jeremy Corbyn's question had not been taken literally, but an inference was made of it as an assertion (i.e. statements which can be either accepted or challenged) (cf. Frank, 1990). Thus, the question is identified as rhetorical. The reason we can treat Jeremy Corbyn's question as rhetorical is not only the pre-sequence utterance, but also the addressee's way of responding to the message communicated. Such a question deliberately provokes discomfort, and thereby creates a pressure towards equivocation which is followed by a counterattack towards both Jeremy Corbyn and the Labour Party.

As presented in Extract 5 the actual question in the question-turn can be formulated in a way that can be used to carry an illocutionary force which has nothing to do with

questions. In other words, it is employed for non-interrogative purposes, as Sadock (1974) states, to show indirectness, mitigation, and politeness (cited in Ching, 1982). In the extract below, which is taken from the session of 9 March 2016, Jeremy Corbyn employs a series of questions which appear to be used for non-interrogative purposes:

6. **Jeremy Corbyn:** I ask the question Mr. Speaker (.) if there is more money available to be spent on children's services (.) why are there another half a million children living in poverty in Britain (.) because of the policies of this Government? if we really <u>do</u> have the strong economy that he claims (.) then why did the Chancellor warn last week (.) I quote (.) "we may need to make further reductions"? who will those reductions fall on (.) the disabled (.) pensioners (.) young people (.) women? Is he going to rule out attacking those groups? (lines 41-47)

David Cameron: he will see the Budget next week (.) when my right hon. Friend the Chancellor (.) who has an excellent record in steering this nation's economy (.) stands up to give it (.) but the right hon. Gentleman just made some remarks about child poverty (.) let me tell him what has actually happened since 2010 (.) there are 680,000 fewer workless households (.) think about what that means (.) that is 680,000 households where someone is bringing home a wage (.) putting food on the table (.) and under us paying less taxes (.) there are 40,000 fewer households where no member has ever worked (.) and there are 480,000 fewer children living in workless households (.) that is real change for those children (.) that is about tackling child poverty by having a growing economy (.) growing real wages (.) falling taxes (.) increased childcare (.) all things never delivered by Labour (lines 49-59)

The question-turn implies an accusation of the government for cutting corporation tax while child poverty rates are increasing (Fedor, 9 March 2016: *City A.M*). This turn shows that Jeremy Corbyn is not really asking questions, but rather employing three non-interrogative questions regarding the issue of 'children's poverty'. The first is a positive 'why' question (Section 6.2.3: i) 'why are there another half a million children living in poverty in Britain…?'. This question, which is preceded by a conditional 'if' looks as an interrogative statement in form, but it appears as assertion or declaration in meaning (Frank, 1990). Therefore, two possible reasons can be behind making the positive 'why'

question apt for expressing muted criticism here. One reason is that the fault is 'the government's policies [that] make many children live in poverty in Britain'. This fault is backgrounded by a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation, conveying a bald statement 'there are another half a million children living in poverty in Britain, because of the policies of this Government'. A second reason is that David Cameron is given the opportunity to explain his government's policies towards this issue. Therefore, the assumption that David Cameron who "committed the crime" (arguably, this case looks similar to courtroom interaction (cf. Martinovski, 2006)) is taken for granted, and the demand for explanation "why" can itself be face-threatening (cf. Leech, 2014: 194).

Immediately after this question, another positive 'why' question is formulated in the same way, but associated with the strategy of non-public quotation: 'if we really do have the strong economy that he claims, then why did the Chancellor warn last week, I quote, we may need to make further reductions?' In the first part of the question (the conditional clause) the verb 'do' is stressed, which presupposes 'we do not really have the strong economy as he claims'. So, the pre-sequence utterance identifies the following positive 'why' question as rhetorical. Wording both 'why' questions in this way serves to mitigate the FTA which is "embedded in the presuppositional content of the questions" (Bull and Wells, 2012: 38). Similarly, another two questions are addressed: 'who will those reductions fall on, the disabled, pensioners, young people, women?' and 'is he going to rule out attacking those groups?'. These questions also seem to express indirect criticisms rather than to elicit information. They appear to make an assertion to the effect, 'those reductions will fall on, the disabled, pensioners, young people, women' and 'he should rule out attacking those groups'. Accordingly, pre-sequence utterances contribute to the questions being rhetorical, which can be one means of challenging (disputing) David Cameron's claim, in this case of the strong economy.

To deal with the FTA performed in Jeremy Corbyn's questions, the response-turn starts with David Cameron's self-justification of the action that has been taken by his government along with talking up the positive face of the chancellor by praising him for his achievement regarding the 'nation's economy'. Then, 'let me tell him' is used as a routinised mitigation feature (cf. Aijmer, 1996) to pursue the strategy of talking up the positive face of his government. He does so by listing the government's achievements and supporting that with figures. The strategy of talking up positive face is accompanied with a presupposition that the government has more achievements regarding 'child poverty' than the previous

Labour government. The turn is ended by 'all things never delivered by Labour' which sounds like a clear attack on Labour.

Negative interrogatives (questions that start with isn't it, doesn't it, etc.) are also identified as rhetorical in the question-turns. Such questions can also be used as assertives (Leech, 2014) to "challenge the addressee to accept the content of the question, while the addressee is inclined to reject it" (Locher, 2004: 133). In the following example Jeremy Corbyn employs a couple of negative questions whose effect is shown in the way David Cameron responds. The exchange is from the session of 2 March 2016, regarding the issues of 'teacher shortage' and 'agency working system':

7. **Jeremy Corbyn:** The Prime Minister (.) Mr. Speaker seems to be in a bit of denial here ((Chamber: shout)) Ofsted and the National Audit Office all confirmed that there is a shortage and a crisis of teachers (.) ensuring that there are enough excellent teachers in our schools is obviously fundamental to the life chances of children (.) when 70% of head teachers warned that they're now having to use agency staff to staff their classrooms (.) isn't it time that the Government intervened and looked at the real cost of this (.) which is the damage to children's education but also the £1.3 billion spent last year on agency teachers? we have this agency working situation in the National Health Service and also in education (.) aren't we moving into an era that we could term "agency Britain"? (lines 96-104)

David Cameron: I think he has to look at the facts (.) rather than talking down the people who are working so hard to teach children in our schools (.) the facts are these (.) our teachers are better qualified than ever (.) a record 96.6% of teachers in state-funded schools now having a degree or higher qualification (.) those are the facts (.) and I'll argue that going into teaching (.) Teach First is the most popular destination for Oxbridge graduates (.) something that never happened under a Labour Government (.) if you want to encourage people to go into teaching (.) you've got to know that you have a good school system with more academies (.) more free schools (.) higher qualifications (.) making sure that we have rigour and discipline in our classrooms (.) all of which has improved (.) all of that is possible only if you have a strong and growing economy to fund the schools that our children need (lines 106-116)

Jeremy Corbyn starts his turn by accusing the PM of being in 'denial' about a shortage in teachers in British schools (Stone, 2 March 2016: *The Independent*.). However, this accusation is downplayed by two downtoners 'seem' and 'a bit' (Leech, 2014). Following that, he addresses two negative interrogatives which reflect the fact that Jeremy Corbyn indirectly disagrees with the PM. The first question is 'isn't it time that the Government intervened and looked at the real cost of this…?' which indicates a presupposition that 'the government has never intervened and looked at the real cost of teacher shortage' (cf. Harris, 2001). Thus, the criticism seems to be embedded in the presuppositional content of the question (Bull and Wells, 2012). The second negative question is 'aren't we moving into an era that we could term "agency Britain"?' which makes an assertion that is more or less equivalent to 'we are moving into an era that we could term 'agency Britain'' (cf. Frank 1990, Leech 2014). This question invites an implicature that the government's inaction is detrimental to not only children's education, but also the NHS. This can be demonstrated when referring to the fact that using agency staff in both sectors would lead to a larger crisis, that is, 'agency Britain'. Accordingly, both questions seem to be rhetorical with respect to the pre-sequence utterances (i.e. muted criticism) which indicates that their purpose is not to elicit information from the PM, but rather to construct implicit criticisms. Therefore, the illocutionary force of mitigation (performing an implicit criticism) here sounds like unmarked and serves to refrain Jeremy Corbyn from unparliamentary language. Since such a behaviour remains within the boundaries of the acceptable norms and expectations of the House of Common (Harris, 2001), it serves to display politic/appropriate behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005).

The perlocutionary effect of these rhetorical questions in the response-turn results in a muted criticism performed by David Cameron. This criticism can be understood as a counterattack to Jeremy Corbyn's criticism. The response-turn starts with a 'I think' as a hedging in 'I think he has to look at the facts, rather than talking down the people…'. The hedging here appears to be a means of attenuating the criticism. This way of responding is likely to refute (the strategy of "rebut", see Bull and Wells, 2012) the FTA performed in the rhetorical questions addressed in the question-turn. This strategy is followed by 'self-justification' and 'talking up positive face'. Both strategies are used to further deal with the FTA. However, the strategy of 'talking up his positive face' is accompanied by an explicit attack to the previous Labour government when he says, 'something that never happened under a Labour Government'. Towards the end of the turn, the topic seems to have shifted from the responsibility of school funding to a 'strong and growing economy.'

Therefore, the negative form of rhetorical questions serves to both strengthen the assertion and downgrade the criticism. Therefore, they "do not apparently breach either the rules of the debate or the discourse expectations of the Members of the House" (Harris, 2001: 459). Thus, mitigation which is embedded in this form of questions appears to be one means of indicating unmarked and politic/appropriate behaviour in the conflictual talk of PMQs. This demonstrates the relation between mitigation, facework and relational work in the confrontational interaction of the community of practice in the House of Commons. The way rhetorical questions are addressed indicates the intention to mitigate face-threatening that may have already been committed by virtue of the LO's previous contributions. Their mitigating effect does not leave the question open to a polite reading, and it is clearly not taken as such in the interaction (cf. Locher and Watts, 2005: 21). The political behaviour for conflictual interaction between the LO and the PM allows for superficial mitigation and challenging behaviour. It is understood as impolite but is likely to be interpreted by the members of the House as appropriate, non-polite and politic behaviour (see Chapter 3: Table 1). Further examples of rhetorical questions that are worded with 'why' are discussed in the following two sections.

'Why' Questions: Patterns and Purposes

'Why' questions are one form of open-ended questions which are defined by Ilie (2015: 203) as questions that are "expected to allow for a wider range of possible answers", such as explaining reasons or causes. Consequently, such questions can have face-threatening effects, especially the ones that refer to matters concerning the addressee (Ilie, 2015). Question-turns of the LO-PM exchanges show Jeremy Corbyn's preference to use 'why' questions for non-interrogative purposes. These questions are particularly apt for expressing muted criticisms (Leech, 2014: 194). The "fault" is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation: a bald statement is more accusatory (*ibid*). The analysis shows that 'why' questions are addressed in two forms: positive (as shown in Extract 6: Section 6.2.3) and negative 'why' questions. Both forms are discussed below.

i. *Positive 'why' Questions*

A positive why-question assumes that there is or has been a "sin of commission" (Leech, 2014: 194). The sin of commission, which is represented as an FTA, is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made directly to the addressee. This can be shown in the following extract from the session of 22 February 2017:

8. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) in 2010 (.) there was the highest ever level of satisfaction with the national health service (.) delivered by a Labour Government (.) the British Medical Association tells us Mr. Speaker [interruption] the British Medical Association (.) its doctors (.) that 15,000 beds have been cut in the last six years the equivalent of 24 hospitals (.) and as a result we have longer waiting times at A & E (.) record delayed charges (.) and more people on waiting lists (.) the Prime Minister claims the NHS is getting the money it needs (.) so why is it that one in six of A&E units in England are set for closure or downgrading? (lines 16-23)

      Theresa May: I will tell the right hon. Gentleman what is happening and what has happened since 2010 in A&E (.) we see 1,500 more emergency care doctors that includes 600 more A&E consultants (.) and we got 2,400 more paramedics (.) we have more people being seen in A&E every single week under this Government (.) he talks about what the NHS needs (.) what the NHS needs is more doctors (.) we are giving it more doctors (.) what it needs is more funding (.) we are giving it more funding (.) what it doesn't need is a bankrupt economy (.) which is exactly what Labour would give it (lines 25-32)

As by-election campaigning enters final day (Cowburn, 22 February 2017: *The Independent*), this extract is part of a debate regarding the government's cuts of NHS funding. Towards the end of the question-turn, Jeremy Corbyn uses a positive agentless (having no personal reference) 'why' question, 'why is it that one in six of A&E units in England are set for closure or downgrading?**'**. This question can be understood as a tactic of understated criticism (cf. Leech, 2014). One reason that makes 'why' question as a means of expressing muted criticism is that the fault, which is 'setting one in six of A&E units in England for closure and downgrading', is backgrounded as a presupposition, rather than being made into a direct accusation. In contrast, a bald statement like 'the government who set one in six of A&E units in England for closure and downgrading' or 'the government shouldn't have set one in six of A&E units in England for closure and downgrading' would convey an explicit accusation (cf. Leech, 2014). A second reason might be giving Theresa May the opportunity to explain herself. The 'why' question is preceded by Jeremy Corbyn's highlighting former Labour government's achievements regarding the NHS and citing figures from the British Medical Association which is seen to be used as a

device to support his claim. These figures are associated with the use of the passive voice 'beds have been cut'. The passive voice here serves as a mitigation feature to soften the effect of criticism. This can be evident in the utterance '15,000 beds have been cut in the last six years the equivalent of 24 hospitals' as there is no explicit reference to the agent, although it is obvious in this context that the supressed agent is the government who cut these beds.

The response-turn shows no direct answer to Jeremy Corbyn's question, but rather starts with the utterance 'I will tell the right hon. Gentleman what is happening and what has happened since 2010 in A&E'. This utterance gives an impression that Theresa May is answering the question, while she is not doing so. Instead, she responds by 'talking up positive face' of her government in the sector of the NHS and providing figures to support her justification. Towards the end of the turn, she shifts the focus to Jeremy Corbyn (cf. Sealey and Bates, 2016) by attacking Labour when she says, 'what it doesn't need is a bankrupt economy, which is exactly what Labour would give it'. The way Theresa May responds reveals that the consequence of the question wording (i.e. the positive agentless 'why' question) gives her an easier way out, and that can be a tactic of saving her face. So, her turn constitutes first her answer which is shifted at the end to attack Labour.

ii.   Negative 'Why' Questions

A negative why-question assumes that there is a "sin of omission" which recommends future action and has been extensively pragmaticalised for the function of suggesting and advising. However, it can also retain an accusatory meaning and often elicits a self-justification in reply (Leech, 2014: 194). The following extract, which is from the session of 1 February 2017, includes an example of a negative 'why' question:

9. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) the Prime Minister said (.) "the United States is responsible for the United States' policy on refugees" (.) but surely it is the responsibility of all of us to defend the 1951 refugee convention which commits this country (.) the United States and 142 other states to accept refugees without regard to their "race, religion or country of origin" (.) President Trump has breached that convention (.) why didn't she speak out? (lines: 56- 61).

   Theresa May: First of all (.) I have made absolutely clear what the Government's view on this policy is (.) secondly (.) as I have just said this

Government has a proud record and this country has a proud record on how we welcome refugees (.) in recent years (.) we have introduced a very particular scheme to ensure that particularly vulnerable refugees in Syria can be brought to this country (.) and something like 10,000 Syrian refugees have come to this country since the conflict began (.) we are also the second biggest bilateral donor (.) helping and supporting refugees in the region (.) that is what we are doing (.) I have said that the US policy is wrong (.) we will take a different view (.) and we will continue to welcome refugees to this country (lines: 63-71)

In response to Trump's executive order banning people from seven mainly Muslim countries (BBC News, 1 February 2017), the question-turn is prefaced by the strategy of non-public quotation which refers to what Theresa May has said earlier regarding 'Trump's policy on refugees.' Although Jeremy Corbyn's question 'why didn't she speak out?' is short, it conveys an escalation of the previous question concerning this policy whose answer seems not satisfactory. The negative 'why' question here, assumes a "sin of omission" which is most likely employed to retain an accusatory element of meaning. One possible interpretation of this question is: there is no reason why Theresa May should not speak out against this policy. Consequently, this accusation helps to elicit a self-justification in Theresa May's response-turn (cf. Leech, 2014: 194).

Theresa May's response is initiated with 'First of all, I have made absolutely clear what the Government's view on this policy is…' which seems as a self-justification strategy to deal with the FTA constructed in the negative 'why' question. Through this strategy, Theresa May explains her government's positioning regarding the policy on refugees. She makes no attempt to directly answer the question but rather responds by talking up the positive face of the government. Talking up her government's proud record on welcoming refugees reveals her disagreement with the United States' immigration ban policy. Both strategies help in an attempt to restore the credibility of her government which in turn contributes to saving her own face.

As discussed above, the question 'why didn't she' is face-threatening and addressee oriented. However, it is not necessarily the same case with the construction of impersonal 'why not' question, where personal reference to the addressee is omitted (Leech, 2014), as in Extract 10 below from an exchange between Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron on 16 March 2016. During this session, Jeremy Corbyn asks David Cameron four questions

regarding his government's work to tackle air pollution in the United Kingdom. The session "took place just prior to the Chancellor's Budget 2016 announcement, which included a tax freeze in petrol and diesel fuel, as well as for heavy goods vehicle" (Air Quality News, 16 March 2016).

10. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) we all welcome the Clean Air Act 1956 but things have moved on a bit since then ((Chamber: laughter)) the Government the Government (.) the Government are now threatened with being taken to court for their failure to comply with international law on air pollution (.) he is proposing to spend tens (.) possibly hundreds (.) of thousands of pounds of public money defending the indefensible (.) why not instead (.) invest that money (.) in cleaner air and better air quality for everyone in this country? (lines 38-44)

   David Cameron: We are investing money in clean air in our country (.) for instance (.) we are phasing out the use of coal-fired power stations (.) far in advance of what other European countries are doing (.) blazing a trail in terms of more renewable energy (.) the clean nuclear energy that we will be investing in (.) all of those things will make a difference (.) but let me say again (.) you can only do this if you have a strong economy able to pay for these things (lines 46-51)

The question-turn starts with a sarcastic remark, 'Mr. Speaker, we all welcome the Clean Air Act 1956, but things have moved on a bit since then' which invites laughter from the Chamber. This remark contributes to drawing attention to the government's action which is now unpopular (Murphy, 2014). Although the sarcastic remark includes 'a bit' which serves to downplay the threat, it can have an effect in degrading David Cameron's public image by making fun of his role and responsibilities. Jeremy Corbyn pursues in using more mitigation features such as the passive voice 'the Government are now threatened with being taken to court…'. In the next utterance, the adverb 'possibly' serves to downplay the negative effect of the item they modify, that is an estimated amount of money, 'possibly hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money defending the indefensible'.

The mitigated utterances are followed by the 'why not' question: 'why not instead, invest that money, in cleaner air and better air quality for everyone in this country?' which is posed at the end of the turn. Such a form of question seems to present a polite way of

suggesting or requesting through indirection (Sadock 1974, cited in Ching 1982). It could imply that Jeremy Corbyn has David Cameron's benefit in mind (cf. Aijmer, 1996: 176-177) or even being a device for recommending future action. It also serves as a means of "defocalising" (*ibid*), an impersonal device for it can be compared with the full form, 'why doesn't he (or the government) instead invest money…'. When omitting the personal reference to the addressee, David Cameron, mitigation is revealed to attenuate the face-threatening impact of the criticism (cf. Leech, 2014: 195). The question is accompanied with a rising intonation which can be a means of showing Jeremy Corbyn's concern towards the issue of 'air pollution'. In addition, two comparative adverbs 'cleaner' and 'better' are included in this question, which result in flouting the maxim of quantity. In this particular case, an implicature is generated that the government's conduct is unsatisfactory (cf. Leech, 2014: 193).

The suggestive illocutionary force of asking 'why not' question seems influential, but David Cameron does not appear to take this up as offensive. Rather, he responds in a normal way, which could be a sign of face-saving strategy while justifying the action that has been taken by his government towards this issue. The response-turn starts with 'we are investing money in clean air in our country…' which can be understood as both self-justification and talking up his face and the government's positive face (using the plural pronoun 'we') strategies. Towards the end of the turn, David Cameron says 'but let me say again, you can only do this if you have a strong economy able to pay for these things' which indicates a shift in the responsibility of 'air pollution' to a 'strong economy.' The phrase 'let me say' works as a routine device (Aijmer, 1996) for expressing an offer which is as explained in sections 3.2 and 5.6 belongs to Searle's (1969) commissive category of speech acts, whereby the speaker (David Cameron) proposes to say something for the benefit of the addressee (Jeremy Corbyn and the Chamber) (Leech, 2014: 180). to attenuate the shift of the topic of the benefits of a strong economy. Referring to the strong economy could be one way of attenuating any sense of the government's responsibility towards their incompetence, inaction, or slow pace of action. Having discussed the role of rhetorical questions, and more specifically 'why' questions in expressing muted criticisms and accusations of the PMs, the following section will present the relationship between rhetorical questions and sarcasm in the LO-PM interaction.

Rhetorical Questions and Sarcasm

Rhetorical questions can be one way of making an FTA perform like a sarcastic remark (Frank, 1990). The following extract shows that the rhetorical question used by Jeremy Corbyn serves as a means of displaying sarcasm. This extract is taken from the session of 18 January 2017, at which Jeremy Corbyn devotes his six question to Theresa May regarding her plan for Brexit (Sparrow, 18 January 2017: *The Guardian*):

11. **Jeremy Corbyn:** Mr. Speaker (.) she made the threat [interruption] Mr. Speaker (.) she was the one who made the threat about slashing corporation tax (.) if we reduce corporation tax to the lowest common denominator this country loses £120 billion in revenue (.) how then do we fund public services as a result of that? last year the Prime Minister said leaving the single market would make trade deals "considerably harder" and "while we could certainly negotiate our own trade agreements (.) there would be no guarantee that they would be on terms as good as those we now enjoy" (.) but yesterday the Prime Minister only offered us vague guarantees (.) can I ask her (.) does she now disagree with herself? ((Chamber: laughter)) (lines 34-43)

    Theresa May: The right hon. Gentleman might also have noticed that when I spoke in the remain campaign (.) I said that but if we voted to leave the European Union (.) the sky wouldn't fall in and look at what has happened actually to our economic situation since we voted to leave the European Union (.) but I say he talks about (.) he talks about the future of this economy (.) I want us to be an outward-looking nation trading around the world (.) bringing prosperity and jobs here into the United Kingdom the one thing that would be bad for the economy is the answers that the right hon. Gentleman has (.) he wants a cap on wages (.) no control on immigration and to borrow an extra £500 billion that would not lead to prosperity (.) that would lead to no jobs (.) no wages and no skills (lines 45-54)

The question-turn starts with 'Mr. Speaker, she was the one who made the threat about slashing corporation tax' which indicates an accusation against Theresa May of making a threat about 'slashing corporation tax'. Then, he employs a non-public quotation strategy by using Theresa May's words regarding 'the single market' against her to support his claim, before posing his question at the end of the turn, 'can I ask her, does she now

disagree with herself?'. The pattern 'can I' seems as a request in the form of permission (routinised) which has a mitigating effect (Aijmer, 1996: 161). This question is delivered in a way that represents a joke at Theresa May's expense that is received by laughter from the Chamber. The laughter indicates that the question is clearly not information seeking, and thus can be identified as rhetorical. It is likely to have the illocutionary force of an assertion that 'Theresa May is inconsistent in her views' (cf. Han, 2002). As such, the rhetorical question in this extract seems to be limited to the performance of sarcasm to indirectly convey Jeremy Corby's dissatisfaction with Theresa May's behaviour, and beyond that results in inviting laughter from the Chamber.

The response-turn is initiated by the formal and honorific title 'the right hon. Gentleman', which is often combined by intentional FTAs (cf. Harris, 2001). Arguably, it serves to mitigate the FTA, thereby keeping the discourse within the bounds of acceptable parliamentary language. Theresa May employs a metaphor 'the sky wouldn't fall in' which could simply be a reaction to the face threat involved in the perceived sarcasm. It could also be used as a means of justifying her position towards the issue of Brexit. After that, she says, 'I want us to be an outward-looking nation trading around the world...' which indicates that she is talking up her positive face to deal with the FTA constructed in Jeremy Corbyn's question. The turn ends with an explicit attack on Jeremy Corbyn by shifting the responsibility for negatively effecting the economy onto the answers that he has regarding the issues of 'wages' and 'immigration'.

In light of the above, putting a question in a slightly different form for the sake of emphasis makes for a stronger impact on the hearer(s). This strategy would most likely be unnecessary if the question was addressed to elicit information (Frank, 1990). Rhetorical questions have also been formulated in the form of declarative sentences. These types of interrogatives are employed by not only the LO, but also by the PMs in their response-turns. In the following section, a close examination of patterns of this interrogative form is carried out to identify their forms and functions in relation to mitigation and relational work in sequences of PMQs interaction.

Mitigated Indirect Requests in the Form of Declarative Sentences
Apart from the types of questions that are discussed above, the analysis also shows some patterns of mitigated indirect requests. These patterns of requests are based on assertions (Chapter 4, Section 4.2.1). They include a number of constructions, such as 'he can', 'he/she could', 'perhaps (maybe) he/she could', 'if he could' and 'he/she might' which are used to

indicate indirect advice, suggestion or request. The data show that the pattern 'he can' is only used by David Cameron. The meaning of 'can' seems closer to suggestion or request than to possibility, as shown in the following example from the session of 2 March 2016:

12. Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker the problem is (.) that class sizes are growing (.) the problem is (.) that there is a crisis of teacher shortages as well (.) and I have been talking (.) as I am sure (.) the Prime Minister and others have to many teachers (.) I got a question from one (.) who I quote from Tom (.) "I have been teaching for 10 years (.) and am currently head of design and technology at a successful secondary school (.) with increasing numbers of teachers leaving the profession (.) will the government now accept (.) that there is a crisis of recruitment and (.) also of retention of teachers in this crucial profession?" (lines 77-84)

David Cameron: I have just given him the figures (.) there are 13,000 more teachers in our schools than when I became Prime Minister (.) but if he worries about teacher recruitment (.) perhaps he can explain this (.) how is he going to help (.) his party proposes to put up the basic rate of tax (.) starting in Scotland (.) that's going to mean that classroom teachers (.) nursery teachers and secondary teachers all pay more tax (.) what we are doing is helping teachers by saying (.) "you can earn £11,000 before you pay any income tax at all" (.) I don't think that recruiting teachers is simply about money (.) it is also about having a good school system (.) which we have in our country (.) but it certainly will not help if we listen to Labour and put up people's taxes (lines 86-94)

In response to Jeremy Corbyn's question regarding the need to tackle the issue of 'teacher shortages', David Cameron precedes the WH question, 'how is he going to help?' by the conditional utterance 'if he worries about teacher recruitment, perhaps he can explain this'. The formula 'perhaps he can explain' almost takes it for granted that Jeremy Corbyn will do the proposed action (i.e. explaining). This activates Grice's Maxim of Relation (relevance) to identify the communicative role that Jeremy Corbyn is to explain. However, David Cameron does not oblige Jeremy Corbyn to make an answer in the next turn, "or even no reply is tolerable" (Leech, 2014: 152) because this question can be understood as rhetorical. Furthermore, it generates an implicature that 'Jeremy Corbyn

cannot explain how he is going to help'. However, the indirect request in the form of declarative sentence here contributes as mitigation that precedes a potential FTA when he says, 'his party proposes to put up the basic rate of tax…' in an attempt to criticise Jeremy Corbyn.

In contrast, the hypothetical equivalent 'could' in the pattern 'he/she could' conveys more tentativeness and can also introduce a suggestion. This pattern is often used in the question-turns, as shown in the following extract from the session of 8 March 2017 regarding the issue of 'school funding':

13. Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker (.) the Prime Minister was also asked a question just a moment ago about the number of new school places needed by 2020 (.) perhaps she could explain why we have a crisis in school places and class sizes are soaring (.) thanks to her Government so what is the answer on the number of new school places needed Prime Minister? (lines 68-72)

Theresa May: This Government has a policy that is about not only increasing the number of school places but doing more than that (.) I want to increase the number of good school places (.) so that every child has an opportunity to go to a good school (.) that is what the money we are putting into education is about (.) it includes money for new free schools those will be faith schools (.) university schools (.) comprehensives (.) grammar schools (.) maths schools (.) there will be a diversity because what I want is a good school place for every child and parents to have a choice (.) what the right hon. Gentleman wants is parents to take what they are given good or bad (lines 74-81)

In Jeremy Corbyn's short question-turn, the construction 'perhaps she could explain' is used to mitigate the criticism in the following 'why' question, 'why we have a crisis in school places and class sizes are soaring', which builds a presupposition 'we have a crisis'. This pattern serves to attenuate the criticism performed by Jeremy Corbyn against Theresa May regarding the issue of schools. The initial position of the hedge 'perhaps' in both Extract 12 and Extract 13 above helps to characterise the declarative sentences with politeness (tentativeness) and formality (Aijmer, 1996). Extract 14 from the same exchange of session 8 March 2017 presents another pattern of mitigated indirect request, that is 'if he could just', which is employed by Theresa May:

14. Jeremy Corbyn: Mr. Speaker (.) my question was about the arrangement between the Government and Surrey County Council (.) a recording has now emerged (.) saying that the leader of Surrey County Council David Hodge said that there was a "gentleman's agreement" between him and the Government which meant that the council would not have to go ahead with a referendum (.) my question is (.) what deal was done with Surrey County Council? (.) because there is an acute social care crisis affecting every council (.) £4.6 billion of cuts made to social care since 2010 (.) can the Prime Minister tell every other council in England what gentleman's agreement is available for them? (lines 27-34)

Theresa May: can I say to the right hon. Gentleman today of all days (.) if he could just be a little patient and wait half an hour for the Budget ((Chamber: ahh)) he will actually find out what social care funding is available to all councils (.) if he is asking me whether there was a special deal for Surrey that was not available to other councils (.) the answer is <u>no</u> (.) if he is looking to uncover a conspiracy (.) I suggest he just looks behind him (lines 36-40)

Following a leaked recording of a council leader saying that he struck a deal with the government before scrapping a 15% council tax hike (BBC News, 8 March 2017), the question-turn involves Jeremy Corbyn's accusation of Theresa May for denying that Surry County council was given what he calls a 'gentleman agreement'. Theresa May starts her turn using the formula 'if he could just be a little patient', which appears tentative and formal (cf. Leech, 2014). 'If' as a marker of request, has the pragmatic force of "a polite concession towards the addressee, who is not expected to refuse the speaker's request" (Perkin, 1983: 124). This formula also includes the downtoners, 'just' and 'a little' which serve to soften the directive force of the speech act. This combination has the effect of further downgrading the impact of the request on the addressee, Jeremy Corbyn.

As we can see, in the same session (8 March 2017), both leaders, Jeremy Corbyn and Theresa May employ almost similar mitigation patterns ('perhaps she could explain' and 'if he could just be a little patient'), though in a different sequence in the exchange. This is another example that may confirm Waddle *et al.*'s (2019) view of reciprocated politeness between the adversaries.

As discussed above, these formulas seem to be characteristic of tentative and formal phrases which are appropriate in PMQs exchanges between the LO and the PM. Therefore, tentative and formal requests are needed when political adversaries communicate with each other to manage facework and politic/appropriate behaviour to remain within the boundaries of the institutional norms of politeness. However, the purpose of the overall interaction is openly to air problems and invite different positions with respect to them. Consequently, the interaction is oriented to a conflict frame in which we can expect through the contributions of the questioner and the respondent criticisms, accusations, ridiculing and challenging. In the context of PMQs, this kind of behaviour is politic that all the participants in the House of Commons expect. This behaviour allows the members to attack one another, which entails the notion of face-threatening (cf. Locher and Watts, 2005: 20).

6.3 Summary

This chapter has presented a variety of question types that are employed by the LO. In particular, it has indicated how the types: standard, helpful and rhetorical questions are formulated within the question-turns to perform indirect FTA to the PM, and how these questions impact the way the PMs respond to them. Although on the basis of their grammar (i.e. form) the questions appear to be polite, they are likely perceived as not polite and hence face threatening. However, they seem to be expected, accepted, and unmarked, and thereby can be considered as appropriate to the institutional rules of interaction. In other words, these types of question do not seem to be used to simply seek information, but rather they have the force of imperatives and declaratives that may display challenges to the PMs. This means that FTAs are embedded in the propositional content of these questions, a case which invites using strategies to deal with these threats in the response-turns. Strategies such as evasion, self-justification, talking up positive face, rebutting and attacking Jeremy Corbyn, Labour Party or previous Labour government, or all of them in combination are employed to counterattack and deal with FTAs that are constructed in the LO's questions. Nevertheless, the strategies used in question-response interaction indicate the three leaders' attempts to keep within the boundaries of acceptable parliamentary language. This finding supports Bull and Wells' (2012) argument that direct accusations and criticisms result in severe sanctions (the MP might be expelled from the Chamber) and are regarded as a form of "unparliamentary language". This reflects another reading of conflictual situations within PMQs interaction in which face-threat

mitigation is understood as nonpolite (neither polite nor impolite), a situation in which forms of politic behaviour dominate instances of questions and their responses.

One of the most striking finding to have emerged is that the most used type of mitigated questions is rhetorical questions which are used as a means of eliciting confirmation and action, rather than eliciting information, a case that provokes discomfort and evasion. This means that these questions are advantageous to the LO and challenging to the PM. However, this chapter has made clear that rhetorical questions are not only used as a means of minimising face-threatening, but also a means of strengthening the persuasive effect. Therefore, these indirect speech acts with interactive outcomes of utterances dressed as questions are used to win the arguments even by the PMs. This is likely due to their attempt to resort to employing mitigation to refrain from unparliamentary language. As such, the question-response sequences show that the leaders seem to be using a variety of mitigation features to adapt their relational work to what is considered appropriate behaviour to the institutional norms of conduct in the House of Commons.

The final chapter will draw together the main findings of this work and the contributions of the study. It will also outline the limitations, implications, and suggestions for future research.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

This study has investigated the role of mitigation in British parliamentary discourse, more specifically PMQs interaction, where MPs must follow parliamentary conventions of conduct. PMQs represents an adversarial context where facework is of central concern and speakers' public image is at stake. As a result, one might expect impoliteness to be prevalent. However, in fact we found mitigation to be often used to typically display politic rather than polite behaviour. Mitigation has been explored through a dataset of 40 exchanges between the LO and the PM, collected from the official website of the British Parliament, over a period of sixteen months (January 2016-April 2017) that ended before the general election of 2017. The study has used a framework for analysing mitigation that combines the discursive approach to politeness with some insights from traditional approaches to politeness, which have helped to foreground the communicative and relational functions of mitigation in the adversarial interaction of PMQs. The study has drawn on Locher and Watts' (2005) model of relational work and Leech's (2014) approach to politeness to investigate types of linguistic strategies that serve to display mitigation and how these strategies vary among the three leaders (Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron and Theresa May) (Chapter 4), as well as their role in enacting leadership style and identity (Chapter 5), and the effect of mitigated questions on the ways the PMs respond (Chapter 6).

The interaction between the LO and the PM has been likened to a form of 'verbal pugilism' (Bull and Wells, 2012: 46). Whilst this can be true for some exchanges, it does not apply to all exchanges in these data. In line with Murphy's (2014) finding, politeness in the sense of Brown and Levinson (1987) is a pragmatic tool through which the leaders manage to maintain relationships during interaction. Given that this interaction is monitored by the institutional rights and obligations of the British Parliament, the MPs are expected to perform FTAs indirectly using mitigation features and strategies to make their utterances acceptable to parliamentary language. Therefore, mitigation plays an essential role in parliamentary interaction in keeping the conflict within appropriate limits. Furthermore, investigating mitigation not only offers valuable evidence of the participants' negotiating the communicative goals of interaction, but also provides a clear insight into how the leaders enact their leadership style and identity. I justified this on the basis that PMQs is a

community of practice that has its own rules and expectations of conduct that MPs must conform to during interaction.

In this final chapter, the major findings of the present study are revisited and discussed, demonstrating how the aims and objectives of the research have been met. It also outlines the research contributions, limitations, theoretical and methodological implications, and recommendations and future directions for the research.

7.2 Towards a Combination of Analytic Approaches to Interactional Data

As a post-modern discursive analysis of interpersonal interaction, the relational work framework is applicable to these data although it is usefully complemented by considering insights from traditional approaches to politeness, too. This is because it is not easy to analyse the politicians' intentions and evaluations of the strategies used without looking at the interplay between the form of words and what they achieve in interaction as well (Grainger, 2013). Consequently, claiming whether the mitigated behaviour is unmarked politic or positively marked polite runs the risk of being a subjective endeavour, if not motivated by any independent criteria. This finding confirms Locher and Watts' (2005: 12) acknowledgement that there can be "no objectively identifiable boundaries" between the categories of relational work (i.e. overpolite, nonpolite, positively polite, and impolite behaviour) if politeness and relevant categories are discursively negotiated. The weakness of the framework of relational work has been addressed by Grainger (2013) in her critique of Locher and Watts' (2005) analysis, which suggests that they rely on "paraphrasing and evaluating the participants' utterances" which "is not evidenced in the interaction itself" (p. 34). From this perspective, advocating the application of some of the concepts from "non-discursive pragmatics", such as Austin and Searle's speech act theory and Grice's implicature (Grainger, 2013: 27) enables me as the analyst to identify how meaning of mitigation is constructed and negotiated by the participants in question-response sequences of PMQs interaction.

Here, the post-modern approach of Locher and Watts' (2005) has been combined with Leech's (2014) framework of politeness, which has been justified by the need to look for linguistic evidence (e.g. lexical and grammatical realisations) for mitigation. In his book *The Pragmatics of Politeness,* Leech (2014) provides a list of pragmalinguistic resources that entail mitigation, such as passive voice, hedged performative, defocalisation, downtoners, 'why' questions (positive and negative), and modal verbs. He offers a framework for analysing these resources in interaction, bringing in traditional sources for pragmatic

theorising, i.e. Austin's (1962), Searle's (1969), and Grice's (1975) accounts of the pragmatics of politeness. Accordingly, my analysis has demonstrated the contributions of these traditional sources in interpreting mitigation in PMQs interaction. In other words, considering these sources serves to bridge the gap between what is said (literal meaning) and what is meant (contextual meaning) during an interaction.

Grice's (1975) concept of Cooperative Principle (CP) with its constituent maxims (Quality, Quantity, Relation, and Manner) contributes to define the meaning of mitigated utterances which is in part subject to negotiation between the LO and PM, and derive a pragmatic meaning by inference. The inferential process is called by Grice as 'conversational implicatures'. While the interaction unfolds, Grice's CP of politeness is flouted, which leads to the construction of irony, sarcasm, metaphor, and rhetorical questions where the overt meaning and underlying meaning are quite different. I also agree with Leech's (2014: 311) observation that the CP is oriented towards both the speaker and the addressee as well as the linguistic (and extralinguistic) context such that it leads the addressee to infer what the speaker meant but did not say.

Furthermore, the insights of Searle's (1969) speech acts and indirect speech acts (1975) also serve to interpret the meaning of mitigation in PMQs interaction. The most used categories of speech acts were 'assertives' (declarative sentences), the purpose of which is "to commit the speaker […] to the truth of the proposition" (Seale, 1979: 12) , 'directives' (requests), which are an "attempt […] by the speaker to get the hearer to do something" (P. 13), and 'commissives' (offers) whose illocutionary point is "to commit the speaker […] to some future course of action" (Searle, 1979: 14). Searle defines a question as a speech act with felicity conditions that (a) the speaker does not know the answer, (b) the speaker wants this information, and (c) the speech act counts as an attempt to elicit this information. Searle makes a distinction between "real questions" and other types of questions, where conditions (a) and (b) do not obtain, and where the speaker believes himself to know the answer and wants to find out if the addressee knows the answer (Leech, 2014: 60).

For example, what seems to be common in the LO-PM exchanges is that a question, such as 'can the PM tell the House…?' may involve an indirect directive (mitigating the imposition) when the speaker seems to pretend that the desired action is possible. The indirect directive may flout the maxim of quality, which is a mitigating strategy that appears to give the addressee an "out". The implicature here is that the LO is politely

"pretending" that the PM may or may not be able to perform the action (of telling) (cf. Leech, 2014: 318). In this way, the Searlo-Gricean account shows how indirect speech acts can be interpreted through inference and explain, for example, why the questions addressed by Jeremy Corbyn to the PMs have a variety of illocutionary forces, for example indirect requests for actions or information and indirect directives (implying criticisms, accusations, or ridiculing).

Thus, including concepts from Austin, Searle, and Grice with respect to sequence and structure of interaction helps to provide objective empirical tools for the analysis of mitigation that reach different conclusions about the way mitigation functions in PMQs interaction. In the discourse of PMQs, where FTAs are sanctioned and rewarded in accordance with expectations of members of the House of Commons, mitigation strategies are associated with FTAs, however, these strategies serves to display these FTAs in a polite packaging that appears to be appropriate to parliamentary language. In addition to the attenuating function, mitigation strategies contribute to maintaining facework in which the LO and the PMs engage to score points and achieve their goals while the interaction unfolds.

7.2.1 Mitigation in PMQs Interaction: Politic or Polite?

Watts (2003) makes a distinction between 'politic' and 'polite' behaviour. He defines politic behaviour as the "linguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction, i.e. as non-salient" (Watts, 2003: 19). Polite or impolite behaviour, on the other hand, is defined as the "linguistic behaviour that is perceived to be beyond what is expectable, i.e. salient behaviour" (*ibid*). Politic behaviour in Watts' (2003) term applies to what some would call "routine politeness" that does not strike one as out of the ordinary (Leech, 2014: 217). However, Watts' distinction between 'politic' and 'polite' behaviour might be arbitrary as it depends on the analyst's intuitions about what is politic (Terkourafi, 2005: 252).

Therefore, Leech (2014) relates the distinction between 'politic' and 'polite' to the interface between "pragmalinguistic politeness" and "sociopragmatic politeness" (Figure 6). Pragmalinguistics is oriented to linguistic realisations of politeness, represented on a "unidirectional scale registering increasing values from an assumed zero point", which constitutes "zero politeness" (containing no indicators of politeness, e.g. bald imperatives) (Leech, 2014: 217). Sociopragmatics, on the other hand, is oriented to the social or cultural

determinants of politeness, represented on a bidirectional scale, where polite and impolite values are on either side of an assumed zero point. The assumed zero point in this scale constitutes an appropriate or normal degree of politeness as determined by the social context of the interaction (*Ibid*). The relation between the linguistically oriented facet (pragmalinguistic) and the socially oriented facet (sociopragmatic) of politeness corresponds to what Leech refers to as context-free and context-sensitive or form and function (*ibid*). Thus, in a sociopragmatic sense, 'politic' behaviour resides at the zero-point of "nonpoliteness" (a property of utterances that have neither polite nor impolite values) (Leech, 2014: 218).
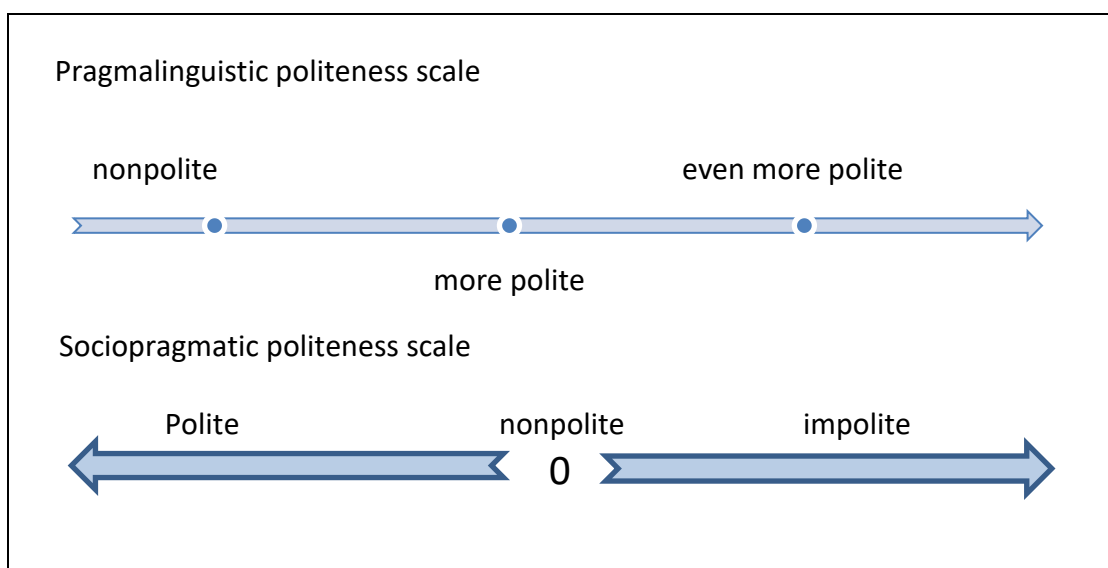
Figure 6 Distinction between Pragmalinguistic and Sociopragmatic Politeness Scales based on Leech (2014: 217)

During PMQs exchanges, politic behaviour is displayed when the LO and the PM simply follow the conventions of the interaction by employing routine politeness and other discursive/stylistic strategies of mitigation. In contrast, 'polite' behaviour in the sense of Brown and Levinson (1987), constitutes a small part of the leaders' relational work, represented by a "positively marked" behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005: 12). This is likely due to the adversarial nature of PMQs interaction, through which utterances that involve FTAs are formulated in a polite packaging to appear acceptable to the institutional rules of conduct.

Accordingly, the way in which the meaning of mitigation is constructed during PMQs interaction has been affected by the ritual nature of the British Parliament of the House of

Commons, including the institutional rules of conduct which are imposed on the MPs. The analysis of question-response dynamics of PMQs showed that most of the utterances used can be described as (im)polite, although, they are in fact enactments of unmarked politic and appropriate behaviour (cf. Watts, 2003). From a pragmalinguistic perspective, most mitigated constructions that could be assumed to encode politeness (by default) were, from a sociopragmatic perspective, found to be a convention of formulaic patterns, which are used to comply with the institutional rules of parliamentary language. This finding supports Watts' (1992) argument that particular linguistic forms, like address forms, ritualised expressions, indirect speech acts, which have been considered by Brown and Levinson (1987) as examples of linguistic politeness, are counted as socio-culturally politic behaviour (Watts, 1992: 51).

Therefore, the indirect forms of address in PMQs interaction (e.g. the (Right) Honourable Member, the Honourable Gentleman, the Honourable Friend) can be categorised as politic behaviour, because their use is dictated by the institutional conventions of the House of Commons. Consequently, they have become routinised behaviour, which is "perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction" (Watts, 2003: 19). In contrast, supportive facework (expressing mutual concern for both the speaker and the addressee) in the LO-PM exchanges, which is represented by the strategy of non-ritualised supportive comments, indicates positively polite behaviour. Although this strategy is evident in almost all exchanges, it has also been found in some situations to be ritualised (usually at the beginning of the exchange, e.g. paying tributes or condolences). The ritualised supportive comments are employed as part of the discourse conventions, and thereby enact politic and appropriate behaviour.

Given the strong correlation between degrees of pragmalinguistic and degrees of sociopragmatic politeness, there are exceptional cases where the correlation fails, as in sarcastic (or ironic) remarks (Leech, 2014: 18). Sarcasm is constructed by flouting Grice's (1975) maxims of CP as mentioned in Section 7.2. The interpretation is made through the contrast between the overt meaning which is polite and the implied meaning which is seen as nonpolite. For example, in an exchange between Jeremy Corbyn and David Cameron regarding the issue of 'Panama Papers tax revelations' (Extract 1, Section 5.3.1), Jeremy Corbyn said 'there seems to be a sort of a bit of disconnect here', which implies a criticism against David Cameron and his government. In a pragmalinguistic sense, this sarcastic utterance is given polite interpretation by default as it includes hedging, downtoners

(seems, a sort, a bit) and defocalisation (having no direct reference to David Cameron or his government). However, in a sociopragmatic sense, the occurrence of these polite markers may trigger a hostile, ironic interpretation. The implication could be that there is a controversy between the Conservatives' words and actions, and Jeremy Corbyn is expressing his disagreement. In response to this sarcastic comment, David Cameron's turn included a reciprocated use of sarcasm to ridicule Jeremy Corbyn's tax return. The nonpolite interpretation of sarcasm arises because the default polite interpretation (pragmalinguistic politeness) is clearly incompatible with the social context (sociopragmatic politeness) of the interaction, and thereby the utterance displays politic rather than polite behaviour.

Thus, to interpret the meaning of mitigation as a strategy in the interaction, the pragmalinguistic facet of politeness needs to be complemented by the sociopragmatic facet which serves to relate mitigation strategies to the social circumstances in which they occur. Given that these strategies are influenced by the ritual norms of the community of practice of PMQs, and the institutionally defined rights and obligations of conduct between the MPs (cf. Leech, 2014: 106), mitigation has become conventionalised, and hence displays politic, unmarked and appropriate meaning rather than (im)polite marked meaning. In other words, mitigation is employed during PMQs exchanges to simulate politeness rather than speaker being genuinely polite (Watts, 2003: 3).

7.3 Revisiting Research Questions of the Thesis

The main aim of the study was to investigate the linguistic features that entail mitigation and how these features are employed by political leaders in the confrontational interaction of PMQs. I have argued that mitigation strategies play a role in how leadership identities are (re)presented, enacted, and maintained by using mitigation strategies. Using a pragmatic qualitative approach, this study has found that mitigation serves multiple functions with respect to political goals and purposes. The qualitative approach of this study was necessary to interpret the context in which mitigation strategies are employed.
The overarching question for the thesis was: *how do political leaders employ mitigation in the ongoing interaction of PMQs?* This question was further divided into three sub-questions:

1. What are the linguistic features that entail mitigation in parliamentary communication? (Chapter 4)

2. How can leadership style and identity be enacted by using mitigation strategies and relational work? (Chapter 5)

3. How can mitigated questions be interpreted as relational work in the ongoing PMQs interaction? (Chapter 6)

The analysis has revealed that mitigation, as one strategy of politeness, can represent an indirect means of speaking, which shapes a party leader's pragmatic and linguistic repertoire (Murphy, 2014: 28). The discursive functions that arise from the use of mitigation strategies can be oriented not only to protect the addressee's face, but also to save the speaker's face particularly during adversarial interaction. These functions contribute to maintain the leaders' behaviour within the boundaries of the institutional norms of conduct in the House of Commons. Thus, mitigation is associated with a speaker's face-preserving efforts, which seems to be formulated with the appropriate degree of politeness to challenge the opponent's face on most occasions. This can be attributed to the competitive and confrontational nature of PMQs. Given that previous research has mainly conceptualised mitigation as a strategy of avoiding or reducing the potential effects of FTAs, this study has found it to be an important means of achieving the communicative (self-presentational: appearing polite and considerate to the institutional rules of conduct in the House of Commons) and relational (maintaining relationships with other MPs in PMQs interaction as a Community of Practice) goals of PMQs interaction. Further discussion of the findings is presented in the following three sections, which consider the extent to which this study has responded to the three research questions.

7.3.1 Findings Relating to Research Question 1

Chapter 4 has demonstrated the linguistic features that entail mitigation in PMQs interaction. The analysis of PMQs debates has confirmed previous research on parliamentary discourse by showing that these debates are characterised by FTAs (e.g. Harris, 2001; de Ayala, 2001; Bull & Wells, 2012). While engaging in conflictual interaction, mitigation is employed to indirectly perform FTAs to the addressee with respect to a variety of local and global issues. This results in using a variety of mitigation patterns and strategies during the LO-PM interaction. These patterns and strategies reflect the influential side of mitigation in potentially persuading the audience and the general public of the speaker's ability to represent the country as PM.

Chapter 4 demonstrates a taxonomy of mitigation features that are grounded in the data. These features are classified into two categories: lexicogrammatical (routine and formulaic patterns), and discursive/stylistic (non-routinised), as well as their various subcategories (Figure 1, Section 4.2). The taxonomy represents a potentially useful tool for investigating mitigation in question-response sequences. The category of lexicogrammatical features is represented by 'pragmalinguistic resources' (Leech, 2014) and 'formulaic language' (Aijmer, 1996). This category captures the systematic patterns of linguistic behaviour that entail politeness. These patterns have a potential effect of mitigation when different types of FTAs are performed. They include 'hedged performatives', 'modal auxiliaries', 'indirect requests', 'negative interrogatives', 'downtones', 'defocalisation', 'passive voice' and 'address form'. It is necessary to highlight that these features have become routinised most likely due to their repetitive use to comply with the constraints of the contextual norms of parliamentary language. However, lexicogrammatical features are also used in combination with each other to add another layer of mitigation (albeit conventionalised) to the argument. The non-routinised category of mitigation is the discursive/stylistic features, which are represented by 'acting as a mouthpiece', supportive comments', 'non-public quotations', 'humorous discourse' 'euphemism' and 'metaphor'.

The feature of 'acting as a mouthpiece' is only used by the LO, Jeremy Corbyn. It means talking on behalf of the public, sharing their problems, and aligning with the public's concerns. Thus, this feature plays a role in provoking empathy from the PM and serves to maintain a connection with the followers and persuade others of his standpoint. Jeremy Corbyn addresses public's problems primarily on the basis of their emails, and sometimes on discussions that occur in face-to-face meetings with members of the public. I have presented evidence that the feature of acting as a mouthpiece does not concur with the goal described by Murphy (2014), namely a means of sharing other's wishes, which are not necessarily the speaker's desire. In contrast, in these data, this feature serves as a means of not only softening the threat to the PM's face, but also supporting Jeremy Corbyn's claim and persuading the PM to "make an undertaking" (Murphy, 2014: 16) to take action towards certain issues.

The strategy of 'supportive comments' indicates a form of approval, admiration, compliment, praise and congratulation. These comments serve to deliver topics safely and positively during interaction and that helps to convey face concerns to the adversary.

However, there are situations in which these comments appear to be ritualised, such as congratulating, paying tribute or offering condolences, typically occurring in the first exchange of the session. What is distinctive about this feature is that it serves as a transition technique to attenuate the attack (or counterattack) that might move into an escalating attack towards the end of the turn. In other words, it can reduce the threat in the next proposition of the same turn.

The strategy of 'humorous discourse' serves to maintain solidarity, promote public engagement, lighten the speaker's concerns, downplay potential embarrassment or as a means of evasion. Furthermore, it is often manipulated to display sarcasm when using ironic remarks. Thus, it can be used as a means of indirectly ridiculing and degrading the opponent or the opponent's responsibility. It is worth mentioning that this strategy is more often used by David Cameron, who appears to use it as a means of appealing to the audience to capture their interest. Seemingly, David Cameron's responses are more entertaining than Theresa May's responses.

The strategy of 'non-public quotations' means referring to others' words, usually from authoritative sources, such as the government or other MPs. This strategy serves as a means of avoiding or reducing the responsibility of indirectly constructing FTAs without explicitly saying them. Simultaneously, it makes the claim more evidential and that is important for conveying objectivity, reliability, and credibility (Van Dijk, 2006: 736). I called this strategy 'non-public' to distinguish it from 'public' quotations that are mainly used by Jeremy Corbyn in the strategy of 'acting as a mouthpiece'.

The analysis has presented examples of euphemistic and metaphoric devices. Euphemism means replacing a direct representation of a referent with an indirect alternative one (Crespo-Fernández, 2014). Metaphor means conceiving of one thing in terms of another to evoke emotions and reinforce particular meaning (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Both euphemism and metaphor serve to avoid direct referencing to the addressee or sensitive topics during the conflictual interaction between the LO and the PM. This highlights that both features are used to establish safe areas of argumentation while talking about conflictual topics to minimise the accountability of the speaker by leaving the meaning to be inferred by the hearer (Brown and Levinson, 1987) as institutionally acceptable and thus appropriate.

The data under examination corresponds principally to debates related, for example, to the NHS, housing, education, and tax issues. Although the topics seem to be controversial, mitigation features serve to soften the force of the utterance. In addition, they play a role in preserving the speakers' public image to the wider audience and suit their argumentative purposes. However, the analysis has shown that more than one feature may occur in the same utterance. This co-occurrence serves to reinforce or modify one another and would add a further layer to mitigation. However, the discursive/stylistic strategies can be employed by the LO and the PM to indirectly challenge one another (cf. Tsakona, 2009; Bull and Wells, 2012; Fetzer, 2015). Chapter 4 also illustrates the frequency of both types of mitigation categories (see figures 2,3,4,5, Section 4.3) to demonstrate the breakdown of their occurrences in the dataset. The figures show that the three leaders seemingly follow the same technique but use a different delivery. Having revisited the key findings relating to research question 1, the section that follows moves on to consider the findings relating to research question 2.

7.3.2 Findings Relating to Research Question 2

Chapter 5 has demonstrated how the leadership style and identity can be enacted by using mitigation strategies with respect to appropriate behaviour. The analysis of this chapter has shown that mitigation features are used to display leadership by integrating both relational (establishing a positive atmosphere) and transactional (task oriented) aspects of performance. Thus, mitigation features are used in the confrontational interaction of PMQs, whereby a competition of exercising power is based on controlling these features to achieve communicative purposes and conform to the institutional norms of interaction or exploit them for their own advantage (Shaw, 2011: 302). The process of exercising power may lie in the fact that each speaker attempt to make the opponent admit to the problem addressed and to trigger a discussion on that problem in question, while allowing the speaker to remain in the esteem of the audience.

To maintain effective communication during interaction, the leaders may enact two types of leadership style: 'relational' and 'authoritarian'. Given that the standard measures of an effective leader can be embedded in authoritarian style, the leaders also adopt a relational style as a means of expressing themselves and interacting in ways that instantiate different points while the interaction unfolds. The study has revealed that in the masculine community of practice of PMQs, mitigation can be incorporated within the 'relational' interactional style of leadership (indirect way of giving directives) rather than

the 'authoritarian' style of leadership (direct way of giving directives). This is surprising as the norms of PMQs interaction has been referred to be masculine because men have invented them, and hence the norms of men's discourse styles are institutionalised as the better and the only way of speaking with authority (Lakoff, 1990: 288; Shaw, 2000: 204; Lovenduski, 2012: 323). My study has found that the three leaders can display relational ways of style which seem normal, acceptable, and unmarked in PMQs interaction. In addition, such a type of style serves as a means of managing facework to orient to face concerns or construct implicit face threats to the addressee and, of keeping within the limits of institutional rules of conduct.

The leaders also enact humour during the interaction as part of their leadership style. Humour, as a discursive mitigation strategy, represents a potentially useful tool to not only build rapport and show an orientation to face concerns, but also provide an institutionally acceptable packaging to attenuate the negative impact of inevitable face-threatening behaviours, while simultaneously promoting leadership objectives. Humour is used to express supportive and contestive aspects of interaction. Supportive humour means building on and expanding previous humorous propositions and it is used to maintain participants' relationship, show face concerns, and mitigate face threatening to the addressee. Contestive humour, on the other hand, are utterances which humorously contest the previous speaker's proposition and it is used to challenge the opponent's claim, disagree with his/her point, or construct a criticism. Thus, in its propositional orientation (supportive vs. contestive), humour may serve as a useful resource in leadership style during PMQs interaction.

Given that the communicative situation in PMQs is public, the leaders know that they have a lot to lose in the eyes of the audience if they do not present themselves well. Therefore, mitigation features and patterns serve as a means of presenting the leaders' best advantage and portraying a positive image of the self. Maintaining a good impression in others' minds (i.e., the audience and the public) contributes to strengthening a bond with voters and potential supporters, and hence to "attract publicity" (Ilie, 2015: 4). Due to the competitive nature of the PMQs interaction, mitigation cannot only be face-saving or enhancing for the addressee, but also for speaker. Although direct accusation, criticism, insulting, and ridiculing are not allowed in the House of Commons, FTAs can still be performed indirectly. They are often embedded in the contents of the utterances that

"build in presupposition or construct implicatures that can be face-threatening to the addressee" (Bull and Wells, 2012: 34).

Maintaining influence on followers can also be achieved by displaying positioning and enacting good leadership qualities. Positioning means situating the self and/or the others during the interaction. It is achieved either by the pronominal choice or the mitigation feature of negative interrogatives. The negative interrogatives serve to display an objection in a form of a question to make it less direct, and hence, mitigate the face-threatening aspects of the utterance. Doing facework is closely related to doing leadership through which the leaders demonstrate good leadership qualities of being competent (i.e., principled) and responsive (i.e., caring). A principled leader means doing what is right and sticking to it, while a caring leader means listening to people and showing responsiveness. For example, the feature of 'acting as a mouthpiece' contributes in depicting Jeremy Corbyn as a caring leader. Narrating problems from members of the public and aligning with them allows him to play the role of the "character" (Reyes, 2011: 3), when he brings others' voices as testimonies attesting certain problems. The word "character" is defined as the recontextualisation of others' words into the speaker's own discourse to support and justify his/her claim (*ibid*). Therefore, this feature contributes to drawing a favourable image of the self and hence, to construct a positive impression about the speaker while negotiating his claim.

The findings discussed above have confirmed that mitigation strategies form an important part of the type of discourse that is found in PMQs, which ensures combining the requirements of parliamentary language and adversarial interaction. As such, mitigation can be employed not only as a means of doing facework, but also as a means of constructing the desired image of leadership. It is apparent that conflict in PMQs interaction is strongly related to the negotiation of face which appears to be crucial for all three leaders. The primary aim of this negotiation might be the premiership, but only one of the leaders can make it in the end. As a result, mitigation strategies come into play in negotiating face and leadership style as they serve to disguise the potential offensive effect of the political messages. Therefore, they offer an opportunity for the leaders to enact their leadership in a subtle manner that can be interpreted as reflecting of institutional norms of relational work as negotiated in the PMQs interaction.

7.3.3 Findings Relating to Research Question 3

Chapter 6 has presented the types of questions that are addressed by the LO, Jeremy Corbyn to the PMs, David Cameron and Theresa May, and the effect of mitigated questions on the way the PMs respond to these questions. These types are classified into 'standard', 'helpful' and 'rhetorical' questions, which have different functions. Standard questions aim to trigger straightforward answers. Helpful questions seek agreement from the PM. Rhetorical questions appear to be designed deliberately to provoke discomfort and evasion. These types of questions took different forms: Yes/No, WH questions, negative interrogatives, and indirect request in the form of declarative sentences. The question-turns reveal that Jeremy Corbyn usually preface the actual questions by a context of his argumentation to make sure that what he is referring to is clear.

The most frequent type is rhetorical questions. However, this type serves to elicit the PM's confirmation and action, rather than information. This finding asserts Ilie's (2015) view that rhetorical questions can be employed to "expose the opponent's weaknesses, often in an ironical or sarcastic tone" (p. 207). This suggests the fact that such a type of question can build on presupposition or construct implicature, which can be face-threatening to the PM (Bull and Well, 2012: 34). This is evident in the LO-PM exchanges, whereby the LO seems to project himself as a skilful and effective leader at the PM's expense. Therefore, the questions are advantageous, as they contribute to save or enhance the questioner's face and challenge the adversary, the PM's face. In other words, most of the questions, which are addressed either as confirmation-eliciting, action-eliciting, or information-eliciting questions, count as illocutionary acts that are used to challenge and confront the PM with implicit criticisms and accusations.

The effect of these question thus results in inviting the PMs to employ strategies to deal with the perceived threat in their response-turns (Bull and Wells, 2012). These strategies are 'self-justification', 'talking up the positive face', 'attacking', 'evasion' and 'rebutting' which are used as a face-saving strategy by the respondent. The most used strategy is 'self-justification' whereby the PM offers reasons, explanations and excuses for the action that he/she or his/her government have taken. The analysis reveals that self-justification is often used at the beginning of the response-turns. The strategy of 'talking up the positive face of the self' (or the government) is whereby the PM outlines the achievements that have recently been made as a means of defence against the threat performed in the question. The strategy of 'attacking' is used to aggressively counterattack

the questioner, that is Jeremy Corbyn (or Labour Party), or the previous Labour government. This strategy is usually employed at the beginning of the turn in response to unmitigated questions (or less mitigated questions). It may also be used at the end of the turn in response to mitigated questions. The strategy of 'evasion' is used as a means of avoiding straightforward responses because "the PM may neither have the information to hand nor wish to publicise it" (Bull and Wells, 2012: 34). The PMs' response-turns have demonstrated that avoiding straightforward communication provides the speaker with the opportunity to save their face. Thus, this strategy is found to be one means of face management through which the speaker may not only equivocate uncomfortable questions, but also divert the audience's attention to different topics away from the original point (Bavelas *et al.,* 1988; Bull, 2008b; Rasiah, 2010). Finally, the strategy of 'rebutting' is used to refute the FTA performed in the question. At times, these strategies may occur in the same response-turn. This fits Bull and Wells' (2012: 40) observation that these strategies may not necessarily be alternatives; they may be used singly or in any combination to not only counter the threat constructed to the PM, but also challenge the LO.

Chapter 6 has also reflected the reciprocal and nonreciprocal use of mitigation in question and response turns. This finding supports Murphy's (2014) argument "the behaviour of the questioner is reflected by the responder" (p. 27). It is common that mitigated questions invite mitigated responses, which may fit with Waddle *et al.'s* (2018: 19) observation of "reciprocated politeness" between the adversaries. Unmitigated questions, on the other hand, may invite an attack to the questioner which often occur at the beginning of the turn. However, there are situations where the type of response does not match with the type of question. For example, a mitigated question may result in an attack towards the questioner, whereas unmitigated question may result in providing a mitigated response. For the first case, the question seems to be recognised as a serious challenge to the respondent, whereas for the second case, the respondent may not take it up as face-threatening, or simply ignore it and, instead a focus is likely to be on using response strategies as a means of the PMs' face-saving.

Although the grammatical construction of the mitigated types of question appears polite, they in fact imply impolite behaviour (i.e. performing implicit FTAs). However, with respect to the conflictual context of PMQs, this behaviour can be deemed, I suggest, as nonpolite, politic and appropriate. This finding supports Locher and Watts' (2005: 17) view

that such a behaviour can be considered as 'unmarked', which means socially recognised and unconsciously expected in the situation. Thus, it goes unnoticed when it occurs in a default situation, since this behaviour is the norm. This interpretation is evident through the ways the PMs respond to the LO's question. Nevertheless, mitigated questions also serve to achieve a pragmatic goal of not only softening the force of FTAs to the addressee, but also being persuasive, especially when they are preceded by the strategies of acting as a mouthpiece and supportive comments, or even humorous discourse.

Overall, these types of question are employed as a means of requesting information, making suggestion, performing criticism, sarcasm and challenging the addressee. Consequently, the way these questions are addressed in PMQs interaction might be distinct from other forms of interaction, such as courtroom discourse. This confirms Ilie's (2015: 4-5) view that unlike the questioning strategies in the courtroom interaction, which are meant to elicit particular, expected answers, and to exclude unsuitable ones, parliamentary questioning strategies are meant to challenge and embarrass the respondent into making uncomfortable, damaging , or self-revealing declarations. However, there is no sign of overpolite or impolite behaviour in the dataset that might be defined as inappropriate. This can be due to the MPs' attempt to adhere to the parliamentary rules of conduct.

7.4 Contributions of Research

Contributions of this study are to wider research on talk and interaction, and more specifically, mitigation and facework. The study of mitigation in parliamentary discourse is deemed likely to contribute new findings to the discipline of politeness. It provides a new account of how mitigation is employed in adversarial interaction of PMQs discourse and how the meaning of mitigation emerges from the interplay of the participants' utterances in question-response turns.

Combining insights from traditional approaches with insights from post-modern approaches to pragmatics provides a useful way to examine how meaning is constructed and negotiated during the interaction (Grainger, 2013). In addition, embracing accounts of non-discursive pragmatics such as Austin's and Searle's speech acts and Grice's implicature provides a toolkit for examining the meaning of mitigation with respect to contextual and sequential aspects of PMQs discourse. Austin's notion of 'perlocutionary act' has demonstrated the effect of mitigated utterances on the addressee's responses, which result in a reciprocated and non-reciprocated use of mitigation. The most likely explanation for this observation is that "it is, ultimately, up to the hearer to determine whether or not

an unwelcome effect has been softened" (Fraser, 1980: 349). Searle's insights provide an understanding to the role of questioning in PMQs interaction. Most questions addressed by the LO contain an implicit force of a directive in addition to the explicit force of the question, which can construct a challenge, and is thereby face-threatening to the PM. Grice's concept of 'implicatures' serves to generate pragmatic inferences drawing on the boundary between what the participants say and what they imply to display, for example, sarcasm or irony.

Unlike the studies in the extant research on politeness and parliamentary discourse, whereby the investigation into mitigation was not the primary focus, this study has comprehensively investigated mitigation strategies and found their impact on the PMQs as a Community of Practice. Here, mitigation is identified as one distinctive feature of the MPs' linguistic repertoire. However, this does not fit with Harris' (2001: 469) conclusion that "mitigating linguistic strategies which Brown and Levinson associate with threats to positive face are largely absent". Harris has attributed this to the deliberate construction of FTAs which "co-occur with negative face strategies that are associated with deference" (p. 269). Instead, I have argued that mitigation features do exist, and this is evident in question-response turns of the LO-PM interaction.

While previous work has identified categories of mitigation (Aijmer, 1996; Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014; Leech, 2014), no study has attempted to provide all possible linguistic forms that entail mitigation in question-response dynamic of PMQs. Therefore, this study provides a taxonomy of mitigation categories including a variety of lexicogrammatical (pragmalinguistic and formulaic) (Aijmer, 1996; Leech, 2014) and discursive/stylistic features ((Harris, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014) that entail mitigation in this discourse (see Figure 1, Section 4.2). This taxonomy can be used as a useful resource for future studies in different types of interaction in parliamentary or political discourse.

In analysing the discursive function of mitigation, we have to pay attention to the linguistic and social aspects of the interaction, or what these are termed by Leech (2014): pragmalinguistic and sociopragmatic facets of politeness. The distinction between (im)politeness and politic behaviour can best be understood by considering both facets of politeness. For example, indirect requests or forms of address can be seen as intrinsically (i.e. in a pragmalinguistic sense) polite forms of language. However, the way they are articulated (i.e. aggressively) during confrontational situations of PMQs interaction, can be

interpreted, in a sociopragmatic sense, as impolite behaviour, and thereby face-threatening to the opponent. However, apparently these features are expected, accepted, and unmarked (i.e. going unnoticed) during the interaction, and hence understood as nonpolite (i.e. simply following convention), politic and appropriate behaviour. Therefore, mitigation strategies are found to be an effective means of displaying positively polite and nonpolite politic appropriate behaviour in PMQs interaction to achieve communicative goals, construct positive public image (face) and conform to the institutional rules of conduct in the House of Commons.

7.5 Limitations of the Study

Turning to the limitations of the study, I should stress that the present inquiry into mitigation has been concerned primarily with British PMQs interaction. Due to time restrictions, this study did not consider a comparative cross-cultural study to demonstrate differences and similarities between, for example, Iraqi and British parliamentary interaction. It is likely that many of same devices are used for similar purposes, though of course taking account of a different context.

The second limitation is that, I did not consider identity construction from a gender perspective (i.e. male vs female leaders). This was due to the preliminary analysis, which did not provide any general insights into gender differences in employing mitigation strategies in ongoing PMQs interaction. This can be due to the fact that the three leaders, Jeremy Corbyn, David Cameron and Theresa May's characters worked within the LO and PM's stereotype (or repertoire). Thus, the gender factor did not appear to play a role in the interaction and there was not enough evidence to strongly support any claim about the influence of gender on mitigation choice during LO-PM exchanges of PMQs.

Although incorporating both nonverbal and paralinguistic features with linguistic features can serve to interpret the effect of mitigation on the addressee, nonverbal and paralinguistic features have not been thoroughly discussed in this thesis. This is because the chief aim was to explore the linguistic features of mitigation. While it is possible that an exploration of nonverbal and paralinguistic features would have further enriched my study of mitigation, I decided to keep the focus on lexical, grammatical and stylistic features, as this allowed a more focused investigation to be carried out. However, selectivity in this process came into play when determining what nonverbal and paralinguistic features to include in the analysis, such as interruption, smiles, laughter, hand gesture and intonation. Although these features are vital components of signalling the force associated with

mitigation, they are naturally not available in the normal written form presented by Hansard. Thus, I considered some of the relevant features that contribute to interpret the meaning of language in use. However, the dataset does not incorporate prosodic transcription including intonation and other paralinguistic features of spoken English. This is due to the study limitation and because the camera angle does not always display the whole scene of the interaction. For example, at times, it did not show from which side of the House the audience were laughing, jeering, or cheering. In the following section, I discuss the implications of the study's findings and consider how they may contribute to future research on mitigation and facework.

7.6 Implications of the Study

The findings of this research have yielded new and important conclusions relevant to pragmatic research. They have also demonstrated the essential role of mitigation in the conflictual interaction of PMQs of the British parliament. This study concurs with previous research confirming that, despite the institutional constraints of parliamentary language, the discourse of PMQs includes intentional and explicit FTAs (e.g. Harris, 2001; de Ayala, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2012; Murphy, 2014). Although this study was conducted in the public context of the British parliament, some of its conclusions can be generalised to other institutional, or even, everyday interaction.

This thesis has attempted to extend the theoretical arguments that mitigation can be employed not only for the purpose of displaying politeness, but rather to achieve further discursive functions. The qualitative perspective to pragmatics that I have adopted in this study has the advantage of providing evidence to support the conclusion that mitigation can be more often used as unmarked and nonpolite strategy to reflect politic and appropriate behaviour than as positively marked polite behaviour in this context. This suggests the impact of the confrontational interaction and the institutional conventions on the MPs in the House of Commons to comply with parliamentary language. If an MP uses unparliamentary language (i.e., breaking the rules of politeness), the Speaker of the House will ask him/her to withdraw it, or otherwise leave the session. Another reason is that the leaders always show attempt to be evaluated positively by the audience and the general public. They aim to preserve their face, and hence, reinforce their leadership identity. A third reason is that mitigation can be used as an indirect means of performing FTAs to challenge the opponent and avoid responsibility of doing so explicitly. Therefore, these

discursive functions have foregrounded the need for employing mitigation in PMQs interaction.

Accordingly, my study has offered an understanding of how and why mitigation strategies are used in adversarial contexts of interaction. An in-depth examination of parliamentary question-response sequencing reveals important details about the role of political leadership and adversarial (and collaborative) interaction between the opposition and the government MPs, more specifically the LO and the PM. It has also provided more insights into PMQs discourse as a community of practice and the influence it has on the language use and interaction. As a result, mitigation patterns and strategies are employed to comply with the institutional norms and expectations of conduct. However, a further discursive function has emerged in the use of these patterns and strategies. They can reflect the potential effect of persuasion. For example, 'acting as a mouthpiece' and 'non-public quotation' contribute to not only supporting the argument, but also invoking empathy. In addition, the study has demonstrated the contribution of mitigation to impression management. Therefore, managing mitigation can be one aspect of communicating appropriately within interaction, and more specifically adversarial interaction.

7.7 Recommendations for Future Research

The research that has been undertaken for this thesis has highlighted the discursive functions of mitigation on which further research would be beneficial. I have proposed that mitigation cannot only be used to redress the effect of the FTAs on the addressee but can also be strategically implemented to display politic and appropriate behaviour (Locher and Watts, 2005) in conflictual interaction of PMQs discourse. From this perspective, mitigation can also be investigated in other confrontational interactions, where FTAs can indirectly be constructed to challenge the opponent. Simultaneously, the communicative goal behind using mitigation is likely to maintain the esteem and admiration of supporters. Further research could, therefore, be directed at studying how mitigation is associated with a speaker's self-presentation to manage conflict in different settings.

The wider debate of mitigation, facework and politicians' self-presentation and concerns surrounding the ideological processes underlying leadership discourse would also be worthy of study. Directions for future research could also include analysing audience interaction, which can be an important aspect for furthering our understanding of the effect of employing mitigation strategies in conflictual interaction. To ground my results in

a wider context, future research could usefully compare these findings with the PMQs sessions of leaders in later elections. A further study can also be conducted cross-culturally by comparing mitigation patterns of British PMQs with that of non-British PMQs (e.g. Iraqi Parliament). This could reveal whether there are any culture-specific interactional features relevant to the role of mitigation (cf. Ilie, 2004) (link with cross-cultural differences in politeness/face threat).

Another possible topic of future research would be to investigate nonverbal and paralinguistic communication of PMQs discourse, which has not been considered sufficiently in this study. As such, nonverbal cues should not be underestimated in mitigation research and future studies would be well advised to consider these vital channels of communication. With this in mind, future research will be capable of uncovering, for example, the discursive functions of different types of smile, hand gesture, facial expressions and tone of voice, especially that are associated with mitigation. These features may formulate part of one's self-presentation and linguistic repertoire.

These possibilities could build on the work of this thesis to investigate and interpret mitigation in parliamentary discourse and other confrontational interactions. In other words, more studies are needed to further explore the various functions of mitigation in adversarial contexts with respect to the broader areas of pragmatics, relational work, and human interaction.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Sampling of PMQs Sessions and Video Time Duration

Table (1) Sampling of PMQs sessions

	Jeremy Corbyn- David Cameron		Jeremy Corbyn-Theresa May	
Sample no.	Date of session	Sample no.	Date of session	
1	6 January 2016	21	19 October 2016	
2	20 January 2016	22	26 October 2016	
3	27 January 2016	23	2 November 2016	
4	3 February 2016	24	16 November 2016	
5	10 February 2016	25	23 November 2016	
6	24 February 2016	26	30 November 2016	
7	2 March 2016	27	14 December 2016	
8	9 March 2016	28	11 January 2017	
9	16 March 2016	29	18 January 2017	
10	23 March 2016	30	25 January 2017	
11	13 April 2016	31	1 February 2017	
12	20 April 2016	32	8 February 2017	
13	27 April 2016	33	22 February 2017	
14	4 May 2016	34	1 March 2017	
15	11 May 2016	35	8 March 2017	
16	8 June 2016	36	15 March 2017	
17	15 June 2016	37	22 March 2017	
18	29 June 2016	38	29 March 2017	
19	6 July 2016	39	19 April 2017	
20	13 July 2016	40	26 April 2017	

Table (2) duration of videos of JC & DC's debate

Date of session	Start time (mm: ss)	End time	Duration
6 Jan 2016	01:12	11:30	10:18
20 Jan 2016	02:26	12:12	09:36
27 Jan 2016	02:28	12:44	10:16
3 Feb 2016	02:52	13:08	10:16
10 Feb 2016	02:28	14:40	12:12
24 Feb 2016	02:28	14:44	12:16
2 March 2016	02:10	11:00	08:50
9 March 2016	02:17	11:48	09:31
16 March 2016	02:14	08:22	06:08
23 March 2016	02:20	15:38	13:18
13 April 2016	01:24	12:36	11.12
20 April 2016	02:15	11:20	09:05
27 April 2016	02:18	13:10	10:42
4 May 2016	02:41	16:00	13:19

11 May 2016	02:12	13:55	11:43
8 June 2016	01:55	12:35	10:40
15 June 2016	02:17	13:00	10:43
29 June 2016	04:15	14:23	10:08
6 July 2016	01:20	11:12	09:42
13 July 2016	04:30	17:10	12:40
			Total: 03:32:35

Table (2) duration of videos of JC & TM's debate

Date of session	Start time	End time	Duration
19 Oct 2016	03:05	15:29	12:24
26 Oct 2016	01:34	12:45	11.11
2 Nov 2016	01:54	12:58	11:04
16 Nov 2016	01:43	11:28	09:45
23 Nov 2016	01:59	12:42	10:43
30 Nov 2016	02:20	12:30	10:10
14 Dec 2016	02:40	15:03	12:23
11 Jan 2017	02:30	14:26	11:56
18 Jan 2017	02:17	11:54	09:37
25 Jan 2017	03:11	13:55	10:44
1 Feb 2017	02:05	10:44	08:39
8 Feb 2017	03:18	15:25	12:07
22 Feb 2017	02:45	13:47	11:02
1 March 2017	02:14	15:26	13:12
8 March 2017	01:48	11:00	09:12
15 March 2017	02:25	12:31	10:06
22 March 2017	03:30	14:45	11: 15
29 March 2017	04:00	07:55	03:55
19 April 2017	02:08	12:33	10:25
26 April 2017	03:36	19:27	15:51
			Total: 02:20:41

Appendix 2: List of Video-Recordings Links

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/prime-ministers-questions-6-january-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/january/prime-ministers-questions-20-january-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/january/prime-ministers-questions-27-january-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/february/prime-ministers-questions-3-february-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/february/prime-ministers-questions-10-february-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/february/prime-ministers-questions-24-february-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/march/prime-ministers-questions-2-march-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/march/prime-ministers-questions-9-march-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/march/prime-ministers-questions-16-march-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/march/prime-ministers-questions-23-march-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/april/prime-ministers-questions-13-april-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/april/prime-ministers-questions-20-april-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/april/prime-ministers-questions-27-april-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/may/prime-ministers-questions-4-may-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/may/prime-ministers-questions-11-may-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/june/prime-ministers-questions-8-june-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/june/prime-ministers-questions-15-june-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/june/prime-ministers-questions-29-june-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/july/prime-ministers-questions-6-july-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/july/prime-ministers-questions-13-july-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/october/prime-ministers-questions-19-october-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/october/prime-ministers-questions-26-october-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/november/prime-ministers-questions-2-november-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/november/prime-ministers-questions-16-november-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/november/prime-ministers-questions-23-november-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/november/prime-ministers-questions-30-november-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2016/december/prime-minsiters-questions-14-december-2016/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/january/prime-ministers-questions-11-january-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/january/prime-ministers-questions-18-january-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/january/prime-ministers-questions-25-january-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/february/prime-ministers-questions-1-february-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/february/prime-ministers-questions-8-february-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/february/prime-ministers-questions-22-february-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/february/prime-ministers-questions-1-march-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/march/prime-ministers-questions-8-march-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/march/prime-ministers-questions-15-march-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/march/prime-ministers-questions-22-march-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/march/prime-ministers-questions-29-march-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/april/prime-ministers-questions-19-april-2017/

https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2017/april/prime-ministers-questions-26-april-2017/