THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POLITICAL COMMUNICATION

Politicians Under the Microscope

Peter Bull and Maurice Waddle

The Psychology of Political Communication

Contemporary politics is mass-communication politics. Politicians are not only seen and heard, they are seen and heard in close-up through television appearances, speeches, interviews, and on social media. In this book, the authors analyse the ways in which politicians communicate with each other, the media, and the electorate; they also discuss the implications of contemporary political discourse on the democratic process as a whole.

Politicians in interviews are typically castigated for their evasiveness. However, microanalytic research shows that there is more to political discourse than this apparent ambiguity. This book reveals how equivocation, interruptions, and personal antagonism can offer valuable insights into a politician's communicative style. The authors review their empirical research not only on political interviews but also on speeches, parliamentary debates, and political journalism. Further insights include how political speakers interact with their audiences, how party leaders engage in adversarial discourse at Prime Minister's Questions, and how the spoken messages of politicians can be affected by modern journalistic editing techniques. Thereby, this research generates greater awareness of communicative practices in a diverse range of political contexts.

While the interviews and parliamentary debates analysed pertain to UK politics, the speeches also draw on the USA, and European and Far Eastern nations. This engaging book is a fascinating resource for students and academics in psychology, politics, communication, and other related disciplines such as sociology and linguistics. The research is also extremely relevant to policy makers and practitioners in politics and political journalism.

Peter Bull, PhD, FBPsS (Fellow of the British Psychological Society), is Honorary Professor in Psychology at the Universities of York and Salford, UK, and Visiting Professor in Political Communication at the University of Antwerp, Belgium. His principal interest is the detailed microanalysis of interpersonal communication; in particular, political discourse and nonverbal communication.

Maurice Waddle, PhD, lectures in psychology at the University of York, UK. His research focuses on the interpersonal communication of politicians, including their interactions with audiences, interviewers, and parliamentary opponents. He is particularly interested in the phenomenon of personalisation (i.e., *playing the man, not the ball*) in politics.

The Psychology of Political Communication

Politicians Under the Microscope

Peter Bull
Maurice Waddle

Contents

7   Political journalism   130

PART III

8   Summary and conclusions   155

Preface

In *Communication under the Microscope: The Theory and Practice of Microanalysis*, Bull (2002) set out to trace the development of microanalysis – a distinctive and novel approach to the analysis of interpersonal communication. Its key feature was a belief in the value of studying social interaction through the detailed analysis of video- and audio-recordings. In this research monograph, the focus is on the microanalysis of political communication. A series of original empirical studies by the authors and colleagues is presented.

Often, political speeches are regarded as no more than *claptrap*, while politicians in interviews are typically castigated for their evasiveness in replying to questions. However, microanalytic research shows that there is much more to political discourse than this apparent *claptrap* and *ambiguity*. Throughout this book, detailed attention is given to how politicians seek to present themselves in the best possible light, to how and why they may avoid answering questions, and to how the analysis of equivocation, interruptions, and personal antagonism can give valuable insights into a politician's communicative style. Consideration is also given to how the interview skills of both interviewers and politicians can be evaluated. In addition, a series of studies are presented on how and why audience responses occur in political speeches.

This book is organised across three main sections. Part I deals with relevant concepts and methods; it includes an overview of microanalysis, an outline of the main theoretical approaches, and a detailed account of some key methodological procedures. In Part II, we report empirical analyses of political discourse in three different contexts: speeches, televised interviews, and Prime Minister's Questions. However, it is also important to consider what is said *to* and *about* politicians; hence, the focus of the fourth empirical chapter is on political journalism. Finally, in Part III, there is an overall summary of the research findings with consideration of potential future directions and wider implications.

The main body of research reported herein is UK-based, particularly in the domains of televised interviews and parliamentary debates. For political speeches, we include a much broader range of research in terms of nationality in order to compare the behaviour of both speakers and audiences from a cross-cultural perspective.

To avoid repetition – and hopefully to enhance reader experience – the following is a list of some important career details of the many British politicians who feature in the research reported in this book.

Ashdown, Paddy: Liberal Democrats Leader 1988–1999

Balls, Ed: (Labour) Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families 2007–2010; Shadow Chancellor of Exchequer 2011–2015

Bercow, John: Speaker of the House of Commons 2009–2019

Blackford, Ian: Scottish National Party Leader in the House of Commons 2017–2022

Blair, Tony: (Labour) Leader of the Opposition 1994–1997; Prime Minister 1997–2007

Blears, Hazel: Labour Party Chairman 2006–2007; Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government 2007–2009

Boothroyd, Betty: Speaker of the House of Commons 1992–2000

Brown, Gordon: (Labour) Chancellor of Exchequer 1997–2007; Prime Minister 2007–2010

Callaghan, James: (Labour) Prime Minister 1976–1979; Leader of the Opposition 1979–1980

Cameron, David: (Conservative) Leader of the Opposition 2005–2010; Prime Minister 2010–2016

Carswell, Douglas: Conservative Member of Parliament (MP) 2005–2014; UK Independence Party MP 2014–2017

Churchill, Winston: (Conservative) Prime Minister 1940–1945 and 1951–1955

Clegg, Nick: Liberal Democrats Leader 2007–2015; Deputy Prime Minister 2010–2015

Corbyn, Jeremy: (Labour) Leader of the Opposition 2015–2020

Farage, Nigel: UK Independence Party Leader 2006–2009, 2010–2016; Brexit Party Leader 2019–2021; Member of the European Parliament 1999–2020

Farron, Tim: Liberal Democrats Leader 2015–2017

Fellows, Marion: Scottish National Party MP 2015–present

Follett, Barbara: Labour MP 1997–2010

Griffin, Nick: British National Party Chairman/President 1999–2014; Member of the European Parliament 2009–2014

Hague, William: (Conservative) Leader of the Opposition 1997–2001; Foreign Secretary 2010–2014

Hoey, Kate: Labour MP 1989–2019; Minister for Sport 1999–2011

Howard, Michael: (Conservative) Home Secretary 1993–1997; Leader of the Opposition 2003–2006

Hoyle, Lindsay: Speaker of the House of Commons 2019–present

Johnson, Boris: (Conservative) Mayor of London 2008–2016; Foreign Secretary 2016–2018; Prime Minister 2019–2022

Kennedy, Charles: Liberal Democrats Leader 1999–2006

Kinnock, Neil: (Labour) Leader of the Opposition 1983–1992

Lamont, Norman: (Conservative) Chancellor of Exchequer 1990–1993

Livingstone, Ken: Labour MP 1987–2001; Mayor of London 2000–2008

Macmillan, Harold: (Conservative) Prime Minister 1957–1963

Major, John: (Conservative) Chancellor of Exchequer 1989–1990; Prime Minister 1990–1997; Leader of the Opposition May-June 1997

Mandelson, Peter: (Labour) Secretary of State for Business 2008–2010; First Secretary of State 2009–2010

Martin, Michael: Speaker of the House of Commons 2000–2009

May, Theresa: (Conservative) Home Secretary 2010–2016; Prime Minister 2016–2019

Miliband, Ed: (Labour) Leader of the Opposition 2010–2015

Nuttall, Paul: UK Independence Party Leader 2016–2017

Peel, Robert: (Conservative) Prime Minister 1834–1835 and 1841–1846

Prentice, Gordon: Labour MP 1992–2010

Prescott, John: (Labour) Deputy Prime Minister 1997–2007

Starmer, Keir: (Labour) Leader of the Opposition 2020–present

Thatcher, Margaret: (Conservative) Leader of the Opposition 1975–1979; Prime Minister 1979–1990

Truss, Liz: (Conservative) Foreign Secretary 2021–2022; Prime Minister September-October 2022

Viggers, Peter: Conservative MP 1974–2010

Walpole, Robert: (Whig) Prime Minister 1721–1742

Wilson, Harold: (Labour) Prime Minister 1964–1970 and 1974–1976

Winnick, David: Labour MP 1966–1970, 1979–2017

Acknowledgements

There are many people who have contributed to the studies reported in this book. The authors would particularly like to gratefully acknowledge the following people (listed alphabetically!), with whom as co-authors we had the pleasure of working in the featured research:

Jan R. Böhnke, Hyangmi Choi, Judy Elliott, Ofer Feldman, Anita Fetzer, Ewan Goode, Katie Hawn, Stine Iversen, Daniel Kádár, Ken Kinoshita, Sarah Ledoux, Kate Mayer, Karolis Miskinis, Ralph Negrine, Merel Noordhuizen, Victoria O'Gorman, Derrol Palmer, Darren Reed, Elizabeth Schertler, Anne-Marie Simon-Vandenbergen, Will Strawson, Libby Walker, Gemma Warren, Pam Wells.

The authors would also like to thank Collette Waddle for her comments on the manuscript.

Part I
Concepts and methods

1   Microanalysis[1]

At the outset, it should be noted that microanalysis is not merely a methodology; it also represents a particular way of thinking about many forms of interpersonal communication. The detailed analysis of audio- and video-recordings has undoubtedly brought about interesting discoveries which otherwise would likely have gone unnoticed. However, the development of microanalysis was not a straightforward consequence of advances in the means of recording sound and vision – such technologies have been at our disposal for well over a century. For example, pioneers of cinematography Muybridge and Marey both used recording technology to closely study movement in humans and in animals (Marey, 1895; Muybridge, 1899, 1901). The extensive use of recording technology for detailed and reliable communication analysis did not become established until the second half of the 20th century – and its development has brought about a fundamental shift in how we examine and what we have learnt about human communication (Kendon, 1982).

In the analysis of communication, the fine details of social interaction are of the utmost importance – and the communicative significance of such details is by no means self-evident (Bull, 2002). They are often considered trivial, typically dismissed as being irrelevant, or of no consequence, and it is thought that the overall view – the bigger picture – is all that matters. However, in terms of microanalysis, a fundamental premise is that all details have the potential to be strongly significant, irrespective of how trivial they appear – no details are dismissed as irrelevant, disorderly, or accidental (Heritage, 1989). Communication research shows that, via the careful study of these basic components of social interaction, we can greatly enhance our understanding of interpersonal communication.

Indeed, the impact of the video-recorder on the social sciences has been compared to that of the microscope on the biological sciences. Microscopy was pioneered in the 17th century by the natural philosopher Robert Hooke. His book *Micrographia* – first published in 1665 (see Donaldson, 2010) – was arguably the first scientific best-seller, famous especially for its spectacular copperplate engravings of insects, such as the flea and the gnat; indeed, his engraving of the louse opened out to four times the size of the book itself. Described by the celebrated diarist Samuel Pepys as "the most ingenious book that I ever

read in my life" (Clarke, 2011), Hooke's graphic and dramatic enlargements of his microscopic observations opened up a previously invisible world to public scrutiny. Similarly, the video-recorder has provided modern communication researchers with the means to study social interaction in ways that were not possible prior to the advent of this technology – not through enlargement but through permanent audio-visual recordings that can be subjected to repeated analyses. Thus, interpersonal communication itself has become an accessible, valued, and widespread object of study.

Influences on microanalysis

Notably, microanalysis is not the preserve of any one single academic discipline. Such research has been conducted across a wide range of academic disciplines; in particular, social psychology, sociology, linguistics, psychiatry, anthropology, zoology, and, of course, communication. Furthermore, many different contributory approaches can be distinguished, reflecting the input from this diversity of disciplines. These differing approaches, together with an outline of key contributors, are briefly summarised in the following discussion.

Conversation analysis

Conversation analysis (CA) has become the predominant sociological approach to the analysis of communication. Many of its basic assumptions date back to a series of key lectures delivered by sociologist Harvey Sacks in 1964 and 1965 (Sacks, 1992). Of particular importance was his proposal that talk (and the ways people make use of language) is an activity that can be studied in its own right. Further important proposals included that everyday talk is sequentially, systematically, and socially organised – and that all details of interaction, however trivial, should be considered of potential importance (Heritage, 1989).

An important feature of the CA approach is the way in which conversation is transcribed. The aim of the transcript is "to get as much of the actual sound as possible into our transcripts, while still making them accessible to linguistically unsophisticated readers" (Sacks, Schegloff, & Jefferson, 1974, p. 734). To facilitate this, standard spelling is commonly disregarded. For example, "back in a minute" may be detailed as "back inna minnit", and "lighting a fire in Perry's cellar" as "lightin' a fiyuh in Perry's celluh". Many of its conventions have also been developed to represent various structural and sequential elements of utterances (e.g., *opening-* and *closing-brackets* represent, respectively, the points at which overlapping talk begins and ends, and a *hyphen* indicates an abrupt stop to an utterance or the interruption by another speaker). Detailed ways have even been devised to represent various forms of laughter. In one instance, the laughter is shown as "ihh hh heh heh huh" but in another as "hhhh HA HA HA HA" (Jefferson, 1984). Thus, in CA, transcription has become an established and vital component of the research. The proposal is that, via such scrupulous

attention to detail, any interaction may be analysed repeatedly – and by multiple researchers – thereby enabling accurate and insightful interpretations.

It should be noted that the methodology of the research reported in this book is not that of CA. However, the studies reviewed in Chapter 4, which focus on how political speakers use various forms of rhetoric to invite applause, draw heavily on research conducted in the CA tradition (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986).

Erving Goffman

Goffman was arguably the most influential sociologist of the 20th century. His research and writings were primarily focused on social interaction. Of course, many others have also made substantial contributions in this area but there are several features of his approach worthy of particular attention. Goffman was an early advocate of the necessity to study everyday social interaction in its own right (Burns, 1992). Another of his notable contributions was to take what can be considered commonplace observations and to reconceptualise them within a novel framework. Although Goffman's influence has been profound and wide-ranging, in terms of the approach herein (microanalysis), we should clarify that his work was not dependent on audio- or video-recordings. His was chiefly from his own observations of social interaction and various sources of material, including advertisements and etiquette books. His important contributions were predominantly theoretical; his conceptual-framework proposals have provided the basis for countless social interaction studies ever since.

A theory of Goffman's relates to how people present themselves in everyday circumstances, how they might support or contend claims made by others, and how they deal with challenges they receive (Goffman, 1959, 1961, 1971). A pertinent illustration of his influence is exemplified in the impact of his early article, titled *On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction* (1955). Therein, he detailed proposals about the importance in social interaction of *face* – and of what he labelled *face-work* (i.e., the strategies that people often use to avoid their face being threatened and those associated with attempts to repair face when it may have been damaged). It has been claimed that the intellectual basis of virtually all subsequent face/facework research is attributable to that seminal article by Goffman (Tracy, 1990). Perhaps the most notable, consequential research is that of linguists Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson, who proposed a comprehensive theory of face (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), which has become known as *politeness theory* – described in detail in Chapter 2.

Although the specific focus of Goffman was not in the area of politics, his ideas have particular relevance in the analysis of political discourse. For example, according to Goffman (1959) self-presentation is an important aspect of ordinary everyday conversation; but, in the political arena, the presentation of self is crucial (Johansson, 2008). Thus, the political self might be seen as a construct that contains persuasive effects – a kind of political commodity that

is offered to the audience in the hope of winning votes. In this book, it is argued that the concepts of face and facework are highly relevant to the overall understanding of political discourse (Chapter 2) and, in particular, to how and why politicians equivocate in response to many questions (Chapter 5). Indeed, these concepts are similarly relevant to the analysis of parliamentary questions (Chapter 6) and the analysis of political journalism (Chapter 7).

Speech act theory

A highly important influence on microanalysis from linguistic philosophy is that of speech act theory. At the William James lectures in 1955 at Harvard University, the renowned philosopher of language John Langshaw Austin presented his original ideas in this area. His related works – entitled *How to do things with words* (Austin & Urmson, 1962) – were published posthumously. The theory's primary tenet is that language, as well as a means of presenting information, can also be a form of action; namely, any utterance can both *state* something and *do* something – effectively, having both *meaning* and *force*. In addition, as a consequence of meaning and force, an utterance may also have an *effect*.

In the context of politics, the particular significance of speech act theory is that, if talk is a form of action, then political talk itself is also a form of action. Often dismissed as no more than mere rhetoric, political talk is a way of getting things done; for example, negotiating, forming alliances, avoiding industrial strikes, or seeking support for the implementation of particular policies. It is also the very meat of diplomacy and interpersonal relations and, most important of all, an alternative to armed conflict. "Jaw, jaw is better than war, war" was an expression famously voiced by former British Prime Minister (PM) Harold Macmillan in 1958, echoing the words of even more famous PM Winston Churchill, who, a few years earlier, said that "meeting jaw to jaw is better than war".

Speech act theory was seen as a radical shift from views in the philosophy of language at that time. Until then, language research focused primarily on its formal and abstract properties – in ways akin to the areas of mathematics and logic. However, the focus of speech act theory was on language in the form of a tool – a way to perform various actions, a way to do something. However, the theory was essentially a philosophical one, and generally not applied to the study of naturally occurring, everyday social interaction. That said, its influence has continued, thanks to the contributions of alternative intellectual traditions, perhaps most notably those of Discourse Analysis (DA) – covered briefly in the following discussion – and of CA. These approaches aim, empirically, to study how social actions (e.g., giving orders, making requests, persuasion, and accusation) are achieved through language.

Discourse analysis

DA is an approach which shares a number of common features with CA and speech act theory. The term *discourse* is wide-ranging, covering any type of

spoken interaction – both informal and formal – and any kind of written text. So, discourse analysis can be applied to all such modes of communication.

Multiple types of DA have been developed, covering a broad range of academic disciplines. Van Dijk (1997) identified at least three distinctive approaches. One form of approach focuses on structural elements of talk or text, where analyses of abstract characteristics are common; for example, the placement of news headlines, the narrative of a story, or an orator's use of rhetorical techniques. Alternatively, the analysis of discourse relates to social actions; indeed, the focus on the function or action of language is a primary concern of DA. A third form of analysis is based on the presupposition of appropriate knowledge in the users of language. For a spoken sentence or written text to be understood and accurately interpreted presupposes that people share a vast repository of social and cultural beliefs on which to base their interpretations; thus, a concern of that approach is the analysis of cognition.

A notable exemplar in terms of DA is the work of Potter and Wetherell (e.g., 1987). Of primary concern is language as a form of action – that is, people's use of language as a means to achieve various social functions. From their perspective, people use language appropriate to its particular function, and thereby it will vary in accordance with a specific purpose. Consider the case of, for example, a young adult describing a new romantic partner in a conversation. Such a conversation may be with a close friend or with a parent. It is strongly conceivable that these two conversational versions are likely to differ in the personal characteristics of the new partner that are emphasised. Though both may be entirely accurate, they just serve dissimilar functions. The proposal is that people's use of language relates to the version of the social world being constructed – and that *all* language use, even when used for basic description, can be considered constructive.

The great majority of research reported in the following chapters of this book, although not of the DA approach, is certainly a form of discourse analysis. A detailed account of the methodologies on which the research herein is based is given in Chapter 3 on techniques of analysis.

Ethology

A notable characteristic feature of CA and DA is that the basis of both is their analysis of communicative situations as they occur naturally. This also applies to ethology, a further approach which emerged from a distinctly different academic tradition, that of zoology. Ethology's original development was in relation to the study of the behaviour of animals in their natural environment, via field experiments and naturalistic observation. The assumption within ethological research is that, in general, animal behaviour is inherited; and the ethologist's aim is to interpret behaviour in relation to its evolutionary function.

Techniques of ethology have also been applied to the behavioural analysis of people (so-called *human ethology*). Interestingly, Goffman himself, in his book *Relations in public* (1971), chose to adopt the title *human ethologist*. However, arguably the most celebrated human ethologist is Desmond Morris, who, in

his books *Manwatching* (1977) and *Bodywatching* (1985), extended ethological analyses to a wide range of human behaviour.

Social psychology: the skill of communication

A highly significant influence on microanalysis was the proposal that communication may be considered a form of skill, utilising processes comparable to motor skills, such as playing a game of tennis or driving a motor vehicle. Given that our understanding about many motor skills is extensive, it has been proposed that such knowledge can be used to further our understanding of social interaction. This *social skills model* (Argyle & Kendon, 1967) has important practical applications. From the notion that social interaction itself a skill, it follows that people should be able to learn to be more effective in their interactions, just as performance for any other skill may be enhanced. Such a proposition has been formalised in what was termed *social skills training*. This is now more widely known as *communication skills training* (CST) and features in a broad range of communicative contexts (e.g., Hargie, 2006c).

The social skills model is covered in greater detail in the next chapter. The proposal that communication can be considered a form of skill underlies all the research reported in this book. Thus, techniques used by politicians to invite applause, or to equivocate in response to awkward questions, or to be effective in debates, can all be regarded as forms of skill. The same can be said of questions posed to politicians by political interviewers or political journalists.

Central features of microanalysis

From the foregoing subsections, it can be seen that the development of microanalysis was influenced by a broad range of intellectual traditions. Between some of these traditions, there are many key differences, including differences of emphasis and, in some cases, wholesale disagreements (see Bull, 2002, pp. 5–19). However, there are many notable, fundamental similarities in approach. A number of basic themes can be identified which represent distinctive ways of thinking about communication that are consistent with what can be termed the *microanalytic approach* (Bull, 2002). These themes are described in the following discussion, and their relevance to the analysis of political communication is considered.

1. Communication itself is the focus of research

An important feature of microanalysis is that communication, as an activity in its own right, becomes the focus of study. Thus, talk – rather than being just a medium for the study of other social processes (e.g., compliance, conformity, or interpersonal attraction) – can itself be studied. Nowhere can this proposal be more important than in the sphere of politics. As argued in the foregoing discussion in relation to speech act theory, talking politics is not just talking

about politics, it is a means of doing politics. Thus, from this perspective, political discourse can be studied as a distinctive pursuit in its own right, not just as a means for studying other political processes, such as persuasion, electioneering, or leadership.

2. All features of communication are potentially significant

In CA, as well as transcribing what is said, researchers seek to represent all vocal elements in meticulous detail. The underlying assumption is that any feature of the interaction has potential significance, and thereby is worthy of thorough investigation. So, for example, speech rate, pauses, intonation, vocal stress, the choice of one word rather than another may all be of importance. Another key feature of microanalysis has been the focus on nonverbal communication. This can include various forms of body movement, such as posture, gesture, gaze, facial expression, and interpersonal distance. [N.B. The term *nonverbal* is also sometimes used to refer to vocal aspects of speech, including intonation, pitch, loudness, and speech rate.]

   A particularly good analogy is with the game of poker, where the word *tell* refers to signals unintentionally produced by players endeavouring to conceal information about hidden cards or covert strategies (Collett, 2003). One of the ways in which poker players can learn to improve their game is by recognising the associations between their opponents' actions, the cards they are holding, and the moves they are likely to make. In this respect, any behaviour (e.g., sighing, humming, the tapping of fingers, fiddling with spectacles, repeated card checking, etc.) has the potential to be highly significant.

   Indeed, there are many occasions when a politician might also strive to conceal their true thoughts and feelings. For example, a government minister may, in private, be sternly critical of some actions or behaviour of a government colleague. However, in their publicly broadcasted account, they are likely to make great efforts to defend their colleague and doggedly adhere to a prearranged version of events.

   Collett (2003) goes on to identify a number of political tells. Historically, many campaigning politicians have been observed kissing babies, and the general assumption is that their aim is for the electorate to consider them as being caring and nurturing. Collett proposes an alternative explanation: that baby-kissing is a form of self-defence. He notes that, when a dominant baboon chases one lower in stature, the retreating baboon may grab hold of a young baboon and use the infant like a shield (Chance, 1962). This has the immediate effect of inhibiting aggression in the dominant baboon, arguably because, like humans, they have evolved to be protective of the young of their species. So, when a politician holds a baby for a photo opportunity, he is not showing his nurturing qualities; he is subconsciously using the baby to potentially curtail any animosity people may have for him. In effect, he is saying, "Look, I'm holding a baby! Don't try to hit me! You might accidentally injure the baby!" (Collett, 2003, p. 107).

3. Communication has a structure

Even though interaction may appear disorderly or occasionally random, to assume it is unstructured can be far from the truth. Indeed, one of the key aims of a microanalyst is to ascertain whether an underlying structure can be identified. Numerous forms of structure are possible. For example, an interaction may be sequential in form (i.e., certain conversational elements may follow a somewhat regular pattern). Political interviews typically follow such a structure: interviewers pose questions to which politicians are expected to respond. Interaction may also be arranged hierarchically; so, conversational or behavioural features may be arranged into higher-order units, such as topics of conversation. Thus, the interviewer may pose several questions on one particular topic before moving on to a different political issue.

   Interaction may be organised in terms of social rules or conventions. Even if interactants are not able to explicitly articulate them, these rules may be shown to influence their behaviour. In the case of a broadcast interview, there is certainly an expectation that the politician should answer the interviewer's questions. Refusal to answer is comparatively rare, and when politicians do decline to answer, they will typically provide some kind of self-justification for doing so (Ekström, 2009). They are, however, much more likely to utilise some form of equivocation; for example, by answering a slightly different question. In an early analysis of 33 broadcast political interviews (Bull, 1994), the politicians answered only 46% of questions. Of course, broadcast interviews are not like courts of law; politicians are not under oath and they cannot be compelled to give answers; but they may lose face if they fail to do so and be criticised for any apparent evasiveness.

   Of particular interest is what happens to the structure of the interview when the politician equivocates. Does the interviewer draw attention to the equivocation and pose the same question again? Famously, the British political interviewer Jeremy Paxman asked the conservative former Home Secretary Michael Howard the same question 12 times – 14 times if the first two questions, worded somewhat differently, are included (BBC *Newsnight*, 13 May 1997). Despite Paxman's persistence, the question went unanswered. From this perspective, interviews might be characterised not by a two-part structure (questions and responses) but by a three-part structure (questions, responses, and follow-ups). Under such circumstances, the *follow-up* is how the interviewer reacts to the politician's evasive response: whether they challenge the equivocation or move on to a different question (Bull, 2015).

4. Conversation may be considered a form of action

The proposal from speech act theory (see the foregoing discussion) of language as a form of action has been extensively influential. It forms the basis of a broad range of research on the analysis of human communication. A principal concern is that language itself, in addition to its clear purpose as a means to

disseminate information, can actually function as an activity in its own right. Perhaps nowhere is this more pertinent – and worthy of scrutiny – than in the world of politics.

Indeed, political commentators make such judgements all the time. For example, if a prominent member of a political party makes a major speech, it may be widely interpreted as some kind of leadership bid. A case in point is that of Conservative politician Boris Johnson, who was considered by many to harbour desires for party leadership long before he actually became PM in 2019. Accordingly, whatever Johnson said was routinely construed in the context of this ambition. At times, it seemed virtually impossible for him to say anything without it being interpreted as a leadership challenge. In a wider context, any political discourse may be scrutinised for the nature of the underlying activity, particularly with respect to its deeper and wider political significance.

5. Communication and evolutionary theory

The notion that communication can be understood in terms of evolution is fundamental to the ethological approach, as previously described. In other areas of academia, it has not been so prominent a consideration. Approaches such as CA, DA, and speech act theory typically have no such concern. Nor, at first sight, does it seem to have much relevance to the analysis of political discourse. However, with the increasing recognition of the significance of a politician's body language (e.g., Collett, 2003), evolutionary theory is of considerable relevance. Its original influence stems from a book published in 1872 by Charles Darwin – *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* – in which he applied his evolutionary theory (1859) to the analysis of facial expression. Specifically, he proposed that the basic facial expressions of emotion are innate, and that they evolved in association with the actions and behaviour necessary for life and survival. Notably, if facial expressions are innate, they may be difficult both to voluntarily inhibit and to successfully simulate; hence, they are a potential important source of information about emotion. From this perspective, nonverbal cues may be a rich source of information concerning deception – in terms of morphology, timing, symmetry, and cohesion (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 2006).

Morphology (i.e., shape, form, or structure) in this case relates to the actual appearance of facial expressions; for example, spontaneous smiles may differ in their appearance from posed smiles. Smiling involves two muscles: the *zygomatic major* (which raise the corners of the mouth) and the *orbicularis oculi* (which raise the cheeks and produce the lines near the eyes known as crow's feet). Contracting the *orbicularis oculi* voluntarily is difficult; hence, the failure to contract this muscle may give clues that a smile is not spontaneous but is posed (i.e., potentially fake).

The timing of nonverbal cues is important with regard to what are termed *microexpressions* and *subtle expressions* (e.g., see Ekman & Friesen, 1969;

Ekman & O'Sullivan, 1991; Warren, Schertler, & Bull, 2009). Microexpressions are extremely brief expressions lasting only a fraction of a second before they are suppressed. Subtle expressions are fragments of emotional expression, occurring typically during attempts to suppress or mask certain emotions, which only partially activate the normal musculature. So, for example, consider someone who is extremely surprised when being informed of an unexpected event but who wishes to conceal their surprise. On hearing of this event, they may start to raise their eyebrows and begin to let their mouth fall open, but they then make efforts for both of these movements to be quickly inhibited. Hence, they may very briefly display the expression of surprise or show only a small part of the full expression. In many cases, their attempts to conceal may go unnoticed. However, an observer with certain interpersonal skills may detect such suppressed expressions and thereby would be understandably sceptical should the person claim to be unsurprised. Research has shown that the ability to detect deception correlates significantly with skill at detecting both microexpressions (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 2006) and subtle expressions (Warren et al., 2009).

In terms of symmetry, consider an imaginary line drawn down the centre of a person's face – from the middle of the forehead, down the nose, over the lips, to the centre of the chin. In a symmetrical expression, the appearance of the face on one side of this imaginary centre line closely matches the other. In an asymmetrical expression, an emotion may be more strongly expressed on one side of the face than it is on the other side. Posed expressions tend to be more asymmetrical than spontaneous expressions. Hence, symmetry – or asymmetry in this case – may be a reliable indicator of deception (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 2006).

Cohesion refers to consistency between various *visible forms* of body movement or posture, or between those bodily forms and *what* is being said. So, a lack of cohesion – namely, inconsistency between different forms of body movement, or between speech and nonverbal behaviour – may be another clue to deception (Ekman & O'Sullivan, 2006). For example, it is not enough for a politician to say that they are passionate about the cause they espouse, they need to sound and look passionate; otherwise, their rhetoric may be less than convincing and not so persuasive.

Evolutionary theory may seem a far cry from the analysis of political discourse but it does have notable implications for the detection of deception – and of course, spotting whether politicians are lying is a matter of considerable public interest.

6. Communication in its natural context

Common to almost all of the foregoing approaches is the notion that communication and social interactions are best studied as they occur naturally. An exception to this is experimental social psychology, which, as a means of

studying communication, occasionally relies on laboratory experimentation. However, in recent decades, social psychology has also shown a trend towards the inclusion of more naturalistic analysis.

Historically, the study of communication – from the classical Grecian origins of rhetoric through to 20th century information measurement – has been primarily concerned with how it should be (e.g., its clarity, its efficiency, or its persuasiveness) (Bavelas, Black, Chovil, & Mullett, 1990). A key feature of microanalysis is the focus on naturally-occurring communication – with the intention to record, observe, examine, and describe any social interaction of interest in meticulous detail (Weakland, 1967). This focus, once seen as extraordinary, has become widely accepted, yet in a historical context it was both significant and novel.

So, for example, in the context of political discourse, research has been focused on many different features of language use, such as metaphor (e.g., Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), verb forms (e.g., Fetzer, 2008), questions (e.g., Sivenkova, 2008), pronouns (e.g., Bull & Fetzer, 2006), interruptions (e.g., Beattie, 1982; Bull & Mayer, 1988), personalisation (e.g., Waddle & Bull, 2016), and narrative stories (e.g., Fetzer, 2010). The particular linguistic features analysed in this book are rhetorical devices in speeches (Chapter 4), equivocation (Chapter 5), and adversarial exchanges (Chapter 6).

In studying political discourse, situational context is of particular importance. The material analysed herein is drawn from four specific political situational contexts: speeches, broadcast interviews, parliamentary debates, and news broadcasts. Furthermore, it is apparent that each of these represents a different form of discourse; namely, politicians addressing an audience, politicians being questioned by professional broadcast journalists, politicians questioning each another, and the reporting of the actions or words (or associated opinion) of politicians by news organisations. Speeches provide politicians with the greatest control over discourse: an opportunity to set out their stall. Conversely, in news broadcasts, they have the least control; they are arguably at the mercy of political journalists, who can (and often do) – sometimes unmercifully – edit their responses. In some such cases (e.g., Eriksson, 2011 – see Chapter 7), editing practices may create dialogues which differ considerably and occasionally misleadingly from the original.

In terms of control, broadcast interviews and parliamentary debates sit somewhere in between – the standard format of both being question-response sequences. In broadcast interviews, the questions come from interviewers, who, as journalists, are expected to be impartial. Notably, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) has a commitment to the achievement of impartiality in its news reporting and across the full range of its output (BBC, 2022a). Conversely, in parliamentary debates (e.g., PMQs) politicians respond to questions from other politicians – and they can be as partial as they like. Thus, government MPs tend to question the PM in a supportive way, whereas opposition MPs mostly pose challenging and critical questions.

7. Communication is a skill

The notion that communication can be considered a form of skill has been enormously influential. As such, it is arguably one of social psychology's most prominent and important contributions to our understanding of communication. Indeed, its influence has been so notable that the term *communication skills* has become somewhat commonplace in society more generally.

This notion is particularly important in relation to the contextual analysis of political discourse, as previously discussed. This is because communicative skill varies according to context. Thus, the skills required for a major political speech will not be the same as those required for responding to awkward questions from interviewers or other politicians. For example, a leading politician may be a renowned master of the set-piece, tub-thumping political speech – with a keen ability to generate a rousing response from any supportive audience. However, when faced with a tough grilling from an experienced, well-researched professional interviewer (e.g., see the previously presented Paxman-Howard example), an entirely different set of skills is necessary. Here, the politician may need a presence of mind and sharp verbal dexterity to avoid, or at least minimise, the potential for face damage to themselves or indeed their party.

8. Communication skills can be taught

The foregoing proposal that communication is comparable to a form of skill suggests that, like most other skills, people can improve through a variety of learning programmes. Furthermore, this notion that communication can thus be enhanced has become highly influential and widely accepted in broader culture. Indeed, training in communication skills is now a key feature across a wide variety of occupational and personal contexts.

There is now a substantive research literature on CST (e.g., Hargie, 2006c), although, to our knowledge, there are no such publications in general circulation concerning CST specifically for politicians. That said, there are numerous anecdotal examples, which are discussed in greater detail in Chapter 2.

9. The study of macro issues

Of potential benefit to society in general is the fact that important major social issues – such as racial prejudice, sexism, or indeed, national politics – can be analysed via microanalytic methods. For example, Goodman and Burke (2010) explore the existence or otherwise of racism in discourse opposed to asylum seeking. In another study, Gibson and Booth (2018) analyse discourse during the 2015 General Election campaign of the right-wing United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP), including its then leader, Nigel Farage. Their analysis investigated how UKIP's immigration policy proposals functioned to counter accusations of xenophobia or racism.

Of course, the macro issue of national politics – primarily, how UK politicians do politics through their social interactions – is the main theme of this book, and is elaborated substantially over the following chapters.

Note

1 Large parts of this chapter are based on **Bull (2002)**.

2   Theoretical approaches

Within the broad framework of microanalysis, two theoretical approaches have had particular influence on many of the studies reported in this book. These are the social skills model (Argyle & Kendon, 1967) and theories of face and facework (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goffman, 1955). Notably, neither of these approaches was devised originally for the analysis of political discourse but both have proved to be strongly relevant to the context of politics (Bull & Feldman, 2012). In this chapter, both theories are described in some depth, and their relevance to political discourse is considered.

The social skills model

According to this highly influential model of social interaction, communication can be regarded as a skill. Argyle and Kendon (1967) argued that our knowledge of the processes involved in motor skills (e.g., playing a game of tennis or driving a motor vehicle) could equally apply to how we understand social interaction. In their original social skills model, six processes were proposed common both to motor skills and to performance in social interaction: distinctive goals, selective cue perception, central translation processes, motor responses, feedback and corrective action, and response timing. These processes and their relevance to political communication are detailed in what follows. Since then, this model has been subjected to substantial revisions and updates (e.g., Hargie, 1997, 2006a, 2006b; Hargie & Marshall, 1986).

The predominant take from Argyle and Kendon's (1967) model is that, if social interaction is indeed a skill, then it is entirely possible that people can learn to enhance their performance, just as they can be taught how to perform better in any other skill. The formalisation of this proposal – originally termed social skills training – has since become better known as communication skills training (CST) (e.g., Hargie, 2006c). CST programmes are now considered essential across many social contexts and a broad range of professional domains. Notably, the model as originally proposed was not focused specifically on politics or politicians. However, in this chapter it will be argued that the social skills

model is highly relevant both to the analysis of political communication and to the practice of politics.

It should be noted that the foregoing narrowing of focus – from social to communication skills – represents a shift from the original social skills model (Argyle & Kendon, 1967), which was concerned with other aspects of social interaction besides interpersonal communication. However, in this chapter, the significance of both social and communication skills will be considered in the context of contemporary politics. Each of the original six proposed processes appear in the following discussion, together with subsequent modifications and their relevance to the analysis of political communication.

Distinctive goals

In motor skills, distinctive goals are apparent, for example, in the process of driving a motor vehicle. The superordinate goal of successfully reaching one's intended destination is likely to involve subordinate goals (e.g., joining a major road at a congested junction, following the route of an unexpected diversion, and staying within the legal speed limit). In the same way, it is apparent that social performance will also include distinctive goals. So, for example, in a job interview, the interviewer's superordinate goal is likely to be the selection of the applicant who best fits the requirements of the job. This will necessitate some subordinate goals, like asking questions to gain the required information, and possibly to appropriately challenge the applicant for the purposes of assessment. Alternatively, in a medical consultation, the doctor's goal is to arrive at an accurate diagnosis in order to recommend appropriate treatment, which, similarly, will involve creating and maintaining a satisfactory relationship with the patient and asking appropriate questions.

One criticism of the concept of goals is that it may not be applicable to all social situations. For example, it is questionable whether the behaviour of people having an informal chat over a cup of coffee is in any sense goal-directed. However, in a political context, the concept of distinctive goals seems particularly apposite. For example, during any general election campaign, the success of any serious political party will very likely depend on the presentation to the electorate of a coherent set of policies. Indeed, any politician who is considered lacking in clarity of purpose is likely to be viewed unfavourably.

Furthermore, given that, by definition, social interaction involves other people, it is important to take into account not only the goals of one person but those of everyone involved, including how they act – and react – to each other (Hargie, 2006a). In these terms, social behaviour tends to be far more complex than motor performance. In a political context, the goals of multiple interactants are particularly important, given that political opponents and rivals will often have competing and conflicting goals. Notably, the extent to which politicians succeed in realising their goals can be seen as a critical indicator of their political skill.

The selective perception of cues

A key process in the successful performance of many skills is the selective perception of cues. This is because not all available information has equal value. A skilled performer, in attempting to achieve their objective, will conceivably pay close attention to particular types of information whilst ignoring that which is not relevant to the task at hand. Indeed, a key component of skilled performance may well be to acquire the knowledge of what input can be disregarded. Consider the case of skilled orators, who have learned to accurately gauge the audience's ongoing attention and interest, and thereby adjust features of their performance accordingly. Contrast this with a conversational bore, who, when speaking at length, appears oblivious to the responses of others.

It is understood that, during social interaction, a number of perceptual process are operational (e.g., Hargie, 2006a). So, we perceive the responses of the people with whom we are currently communicating. We are also able to perceive our own responses; that is, we hear the words we say and are conscious of our own nonverbal behaviour. Furthermore, we may also be aware of the perceptual process itself; this is known as metaperception. In making judgments about how others perceive us, we may also attempt to gauge how they think we are perceiving them. During social interaction, such judgements can also influence our behaviour.

Without doubt, it is of key importance for politicians to adequately read people and situations, because this will inform their behaviour towards others. Misperceptions can have unfortunate consequences. For example, during a speech in June 2000 at the UK Women's Institute (WI) annual conference, the then Prime Minister (PM) Tony Blair received slow hand-clapping from sections of the audience. As his speech came to a close, many of the audience members remained unresponsive and made no contribution to the customary applause. The WI is traditionally a non-political organisation, and some members were critical of Blair for making a speech considered overly political. For this particular occasion, the PM's speech was arguably inappropriate – he had seemingly misperceived and misconstrued the situation. Due to his apparent misjudgement, the media coverage of his performance was less than complimentary (e.g., Carvel, 2000).

Clearly, it is important for politicians to be good at perceiving others and, as public figures, they should be keenly aware of how people perceive them. In the foregoing example, Blair was judged unfavourably by the audience, seemingly as a result of his own misperception of the situation. In a study focused on the 2001 UK General Election (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart, & Whiteley, 2004), ratings of political leaders were identified as one of the best predictors of how people voted. Factor analysis revealed two distinct but interrelated dimensions; namely, *competence* (involving ratings of "principled", "decisive", and "keeps promises") and *responsiveness* (involving "listens to reason", "caring", and "not arrogant"). An earlier analysis of leader ratings from the General Election of 1987 (Stewart & Clarke, 1992) had identified the same two factors. In light of

such findings, Clarke et al. (2004) suggest that both competence and responsiveness are enduring factors in how the UK public view their political leaders. Thus, politicians should aim to be seen as both competent and responsive, as appearing to fall short on either of these dimensions may damage their electoral prospects. In the latter part of this chapter, an analysis is presented of how politicians seek to realise competence and responsiveness in their speeches (Fetzer & Bull, 2012).

Central translation processes

In these processes, the term *translation* refers to the ways in which certain signals are interpreted in relation to particular actions. So, *central translation processes* determine how to deal with incoming information. A key feature of skills acquisition involves the development of such translations and, once mastered, they can be of great personal benefit. It is noticeable that during the development of new translations there can be a lot of hesitancy and halting. So, for example, a novice public speaker may be thrown by an awkward question from a member of the audience, whereas, over time, an experienced speaker will develop strategies for making appropriate responses.

   The term translation processes has been criticised as too restrictive; a proposed alternative was that of *mediating factors* (Hargie, 2006a). This relates to an individual's internal states, activities, or processes, which mediate between perceived feedback, the pursued goal, and their actual responses. In the previous chapter, the concepts of self-presentation (e.g., Goffman, 1959/1990; Johansson, 2008) and face and facework (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goffman, 1955) were introduced. All of these processes may be seen as mediating factors, which play an important role in the context of political communication in that they affect how politicians present themselves and how they are perceived by members of the public. Notably, in any participative democracy, such perceptions are extremely important because they can affect how the electorate vote. As argued in the foregoing subsection, politicians who have an awareness of those perceptions and who endeavour to skilfully manage the impressions or perceptions of others are more likely to achieve electoral success. From this perspective, skill in impression management is highly important for any politician. This is discussed at much greater length through the concepts of face and facework later in this chapter.

Motor responses

This term *motor responses* is associated with behaviours occasionally performed as a consequence of central translation processes. For example, when a person is learning to drive a car, at first, they will almost certainly find clutch control difficult but, with practice, the action will become somewhat automatic. This is also the case with social behaviour: whilst learning a particular behaviour, it may seem unnatural and awkward but, through repeated practice, it can become

natural – even habitual. In some cases, it can become too automatic. The mono-tonic recitation of a museum guide who has repeated their guided tour informa-tion on countless occasions is a classic example of such automatised behaviour. Similarly, Lashley (1951, p. 117) recalls the experience of a lecturer colleague, who "had reached a stage where he could arise before an audience, turn his mouth loose, and go to sleep". Conceivably, members of his audience fell asleep too!

In the case of a politician, it is not enough to be skilled at perception or in translating perceptions into suitable behavioural strategies. It is also impor-tant that the behaviour is performed in an effective and convincing way. For example, we see in Chapter 4 how political speakers invite applause and other affiliative reactions from their audiences. Researchers (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a, Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) have identified a number of rhetorical tech-niques through which they achieve this. However, it is clear that delivery is also important. Delivery can refer to nonverbal aspects of speech, not only body movement but also vocalisations, such as stress, speech rate, and loudness. To make a rhetorical device effective, it requires the appropriate delivery; oth-erwise, the audience may misread it and applaud at an inappropriate moment or possibly not even applaud at all; hence, the importance of an effective and convincing performance.

Feedback and corrective action

This process relates to the ways in which an individual may modify their own behaviour in light of how they perceive the reactions of others. The term *feedback* derives from cybernetics: somewhat akin to how feedback from a ther-mostat regulates the output from a central heating system is the importance of feedback in a social context (Argyle & Kendon, 1967). For example, a teacher who sees confusion in the faces of students may reiterate a point more slowly and in a different way, or a salesperson may alter their approach if they sense that their ongoing pitch is not having the desired impact. Nonverbal cues are an important source of feedback in effective communication (Argyle & Ken-don, 1967). Consider, for example, how, during conversation, a talking person observes the other's face to gauge understanding, agreement, or interest. These are forms of nonverbal feedback which can determine how, or indeed whether, the speaker continues.

In the context of politics, feedback can take a variety of forms. It can be both explicit and verbal. For example, high-level political activity is subject to intense and extensive coverage across the *media* (*print*, *broadcast*, and now *social*). Politicians – typically with the help of their advisors – continuously monitor the activities of each other, including evaluating and criticising performance. Also available to politicians is feedback from the electorate. This comes from written correspondence and personal interactions, and through opinion polls, focus groups, social media, and, ultimately, the ballot box.

Feedback may also be implicit and nonverbal. For example, audience responses at public meetings can be seen as a form of feedback. Through applause,

audiences may explicitly endorse particular policies or sentiments expressed by the speaker. Through a standing ovation, they may show their regard for a particular politician; they may also send implicit messages through the quality of their applause (Bull & Wells, 2001). Interruptive applause (thereby preventing the speaker reaching the end of a sentence) can indicate audience enthusiasm, while delayed applause (where there is noticeable silence between the end of a sentence and the start of the applause) can indicate quite the reverse.

Indeed, the amount of feedback available to politicians can be so great that a crucial skill is understanding how to respond appropriately, thereby avoiding the twin dangers of either overreacting or underreacting. Elections are the most important source of feedback to democratically elected politicians, yet, as institutions, political parties can remain remarkably resistant to change. It can often take successive electoral defeats before political parties can summon the collective will to bring about the required changes for them to return to winning ways. For example, following a heavy electoral defeat in 1997, the UK Conservative Party stood for election in both 2001 and 2005 with much the same political agenda, resulting in continued defeat (Wheatcroft, 2005). It was only with their relaunch following David Cameron's election as the new party leader in 2005 that the Conservatives made a significant impact on the opinion polls and returned to electoral success. They went on to gain power through the coalition government formed in May 2010 and were re-elected as a majority government in May 2015.

Good timing and rhythm

Similar to competitive sports, good timing and rhythm are key features of skilled communication. For example, during a one-to-one interaction, without correctly anticipating when to respond, the conversation will likely be spasmodic and ineffective. Taking turns is typically how conversations are structured, although turn-taking in larger groups can sometimes be problematic, when opportunities to speak can be somewhat limited. In a group discussion, choosing the most opportune moment to make a point is one scenario which highlights the social skill of good timing.

In the context of broadcast political interviews, how the interviewer and the politician take speaking turns can be highly significant, particularly if the politician seeks to monopolise the conversation by long, extended responses which do not even address the interviewer's question. In such circumstances, interviewers may need to interrupt, and a battle for the conversational floor may be central to any ongoing dialogue. For example, during a televised encounter with PM Margaret Thatcher, the renowned interviewer Robin Day interjected "We're not having a party political broadcast here, we're having an interview which must depend on me asking some questions occasionally" (Bull, 2003, p. 95).

Across the course of Thatcher's premiership (1979–1990), a series of studies were conducted of interruptions in interviews with the then PM. According to

one analysis of an interview during the 1979 General Election campaign, Thatcher was frequently interrupted by her interviewer because she – unintentionally – displayed *turn-yielding cues* (Beattie, 1982). These are signals indicating that a person is finishing their utterance and effectively handing over the turn to another (Duncan, 1972; Duncan & Fiske, 1977). For example, the speaker's voice may drop in pitch or they may stop hand-gesturing, which can be understood by the listener as indicating completion of the speaker's utterance. However, it was claimed that, contrary to normal conversational practice, Thatcher displayed such signals but then continued to speak, hence misleading her interviewer, who then interrupted. From this viewpoint, the frequent interruptions and poor synchronisation in Thatcher interviews occurred as a result of her own lack of basic conversational skills (Beattie, 1982).

This interpretation was disputed by the results of another analysis based on eight broadcast interviews from the 1987 General Election campaign with both Thatcher and Labour Leader of the Opposition (LO) Neil Kinnock (Bull & Mayer, 1988). There, the pattern of interruptions received by both Thatcher and Kinnock correlated positively and at a highly statistically significant level. Thus, objectively, they were treated in a highly similar way. However, there was one important difference: Thatcher complained a great deal about being interrupted, giving the somewhat incorrect impression that she was being treated unreasonably by the interviewers. Thus, it was not her poor conversational skills but her complaints about being interrupted that made the timing of speaking turns such a salient issue in these interviews. This impression was compounded by Thatcher's apparent inclination to personalise and to take certain questions and perceived criticism as accusatory. Also, she would occasionally address interviewers *formally* in her responses (e.g., "Mr Dimbleby"), as if being judgemental of their conduct. In this way, she appeared to occasionally wrong-foot her interviewers, putting them on the defensive. Arguably, this was indicative of a notable mastery by Thatcher of the art of one-upmanship in political debate. From this perspective, the timing of responses may be seen as an accomplished skill – a means whereby a politician gains control in an interview setting.

In a political context, the concept of timing can also be understood much more broadly. For example, in the British political system, the House of Commons has been elected for a five-year term since the Parliament Act of 1911 (previously, it was for seven years). However, until the passing of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act of 2011 (which stipulated that parliamentary elections must be held every five years), the PM had the right to call an election before the full five-year term had ended. Despite, the passing of that Act, it proved relatively easy for Conservative PM Theresa May to dispense with it and call an election in 2017, just two years after the 2015 Election.

Notably, the timing of this decision is all-important. A well-known example of a politician's erroneous timing in these terms was when Labour PM James Callaghan decided not to call a general election in September 1978. According to opinion polls at that time, Labour were very likely to win the election

(Clark, 2007). By delaying until the following year, Callaghan went on to lose to Thatcher's Conservative party, thereby paving the way for 18 years of Conservative government. Callaghan's timing was undoubtedly unfavourable for himself and his own party. Indeed, according to Clark, it was so politically significant that it "changed the world" – "Labour's defeat in 1979 really was a watershed: marking the end of the collectivist, mixed economy consensus and its replacement with privatising, pro-big business neo-liberalism [. . .][1] It's a sobering thought that had Jim Callaghan simply done what everyone expected him to do on that fateful [occasion in September 1978], *Thatcherism* is a word the world would never have heard of".

A comparable situation arose nearly 30 years later, when Gordon Brown succeeded Tony Blair as PM (27 June 2007). In the autumn of that year, there was intense media speculation as to whether Brown would call a general election, which only ended when he explicitly ruled it out (6 October 2007). Given that Brown was subsequently defeated in the 2010 Election, it will always remain open to speculation whether he might have won in the autumn of 2007 and whether Labour might have governed for a further five years. Certainly, the opinion polls were never so favourable to Brown again. Furthermore, his apparent indecision over whether to call that 2007 Election would likely have been detrimental to his reputation in leadership terms.

Conversely, in the aforementioned event of 2017, PM May decided not to delay. Her decision to call an early general election was in response to opinion polls showing a clear lead for her party over Labour, and thereby the hope of winning a larger majority. However, the outcomes of the two main parties' respective campaigns did not go according to the PM's plans. Compared to May's engagement with primarily partisan audiences, her opponent (Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn) engaged in more widespread public engagement (Crines, 2017). The election resulted not in an increased Conservative majority but in a hung Parliament, with the Conservatives merely the largest party but without overall control. This was yet another example of poor timing but, in this instance, it was not through delay but through the decision to call an election three years ahead of schedule.

Person–situation context

In addition to these foregoing six processes identified in Argyle and Kendon's (1967) original social skills model, the situation in which any social interaction takes place is also important in understanding social skills. This is referred to as the *person-situation context* (Hargie, 1997). Features which can greatly affect any interaction include the physical environment, the social roles of those involved, and any rules that apply to the situation. Personal factors (e.g., gender, age, or physical appearance) will also be influential in how people behave in any social interaction.

In this book, studies of political discourse are reported from four different contexts, each representing different genres of communication: speeches,

broadcast interviews, parliamentary debates, and news reporting. Clearly, each of these represents a different form of political discourse. In what follows, we define each one to highlight some key features related to person-situation context.

Historically, speech-making (i.e., when a politician addresses an audience) has been regarded as monologic. However, the studies reported in Chapter 4 show how political speeches can be considered dialogic, having parallels with how people take turns in conversation. This is because politicians do not deliver their speeches to silent audiences. Members of the audience may applaud, they may laugh or cheer, they may chant, or they may even boo. Furthermore, there are particular rhetorical techniques whereby politicians may invite such responses from their audiences (even booing); these are discussed in detail in Chapter 4. The effective use of such techniques, and thereby the control and management of live audiences, may be seen as one aspect of skilled oratory.

Broadcast interviews in the great majority of cases involve a single interviewer and a single politician, although in so-called *panel interviews* there may be two or more politicians present (Greatbatch, 1992). Characteristically, interviews have an expected format: the interviewer asks the questions, to which the politician will provide a response. Political interviews, at least in the Anglo-American style, are characteristically adversarial – and are expected to be so. At the same time, interviewers are constrained by the expectation that they should be impartial and maintain a stance of neutrality. Hence, interviewer discourse can be seen as a kind of balancing act between impartiality and adversarialism (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). So, in general, interviewers are required to be challenging in their questioning of politicians but to acquit themselves in the encounters without bias. One important aspect of interviewer skill is their success in performing this balancing act. In Chapter 7, detailed consideration is given to interviewer performance in the wider context of political journalism.

For the politicians, skill in responding to questions needs to be considered not only in terms of the situational context but also in terms of the linguistic context of the question. According to a theory proposed by Bavelas et al. (1990), people are inclined to equivocate when asked a question to which all possible replies have the potential for negative consequences but where, nonetheless, a response is still expected. Politicians are notorious for not answering questions, and this is often attributed to some slippery, devious aspect of their personalities. But, in line with that theory, it is the linguistic context of the question that can create pressures towards equivocation. The theory and related evidence are reported in depth in Chapter 5 on political equivocation.

In Chapter 6, we closely examine parliamentary questions – in the specific context of the high-profile event known as Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs). Like broadcast interviews, the expected format is question-response sequences. However, an important difference is that the people who ask the questions are not professional interviewers but other politicians. Crucially,

unlike the situational expectation for impartiality placed on interviewers, the politicians in this context are under no such obligation. They can – and do – exercise extreme political bias in how they operate in these debates. Furthermore, in terms the rules applicable to this particular context, MPs have the protection of what is known as *parliamentary privilege*. This allows freedom of speech within parliament, without the fear of litigation for slander.

However, MPs are not free to say whatever they like. There is an expectation to conform to longstanding traditions and conventions and refrain from what is considered *unparliamentary language*. Namely, they should avoid insults or abuse, suggesting other members have false motives, or calling them a liar; nor should they misrepresent another Member of Parliament (MP). Debates in the House are chaired by the senior parliamentary official known as *The Speaker*, who can ask any member to withdraw such language. Historically, Speakers have taken issue with a range of offensive terms including coward, blackguard, traitor, swine, rat, guttersnipe, stoolpigeon, hooligan, and git (House of Commons Information Office, 2010b). An MP who fails to respond accordingly to the Speaker's objection may be required to withdraw from the parliamentary session (a process referred to as *naming*).

A further limiting factor in PMQs is that MPs are permitted to ask only one question. The main exception is the Leader of the Opposition, who currently has a quota of six questions; mostly, these six question–response (Q-R) exchanges come one after the other near the start of proceedings. This format enables the LO to follow up with further questioning (at least to the first five responses) on any equivocation by the PM. Currently, the leader of the third largest party in parliament (the Scottish National Party [SNP]) has a quota of two questions, so may follow up on the first. This benefit is not available to any other MP. Thus, skill in questioning in PMQs has to be understood not only within the constraints of acceptable parliamentary discourse but also within the normative constraints of PMQs.

Overall, contextual factors are important, because they affect the kind of discourse that takes place. Furthermore, a politician who is skilled at one particular form of discourse may be less skilled at another. From this perspective, a politician's communicative skills cannot be evaluated independent of context. At the same time, versatility can be regarded as an important skill – an ability to communicate effectively across a wide range of political genres. These include not only speeches, broadcast interviews, and parliamentary debates but also TV debates, radio phone-ins (where politicians are often required to respond to questions submitted via email or social media), and press conferences. Indeed, politicians face scrutiny in increasing ways. For example, from April 2020 and during the Covid-19 pandemic, daily briefings were hosted from Downing Street, where the PM (or another government minister) took questions from both journalists and members of the public. Exchanges occurred digitally (video and/or audio), via the reading of emailed correspondence, and latterly in-person – and, noticeably, the rules (e.g., whether follow-ups were accepted) were subject to occasional change.

Communication skills training (CST)

The literature on CST has become extensive (e.g., Hargie, 2006c). However, to date, we are not aware of any published research on a systematic programme of CST for politicians. That said, there is a wealth of anecdotal examples. Famously, shortly after becoming PM, Margaret Thatcher was coached to lower her tone of voice, as her advisers considered that she sounded too shrill. From recordings of her speeches – both pre- and post-training – it was claimed her pitch reduced by 46 hertz (this represented a reduction close to half the average pitch difference between females and males) (Atkinson, 1984a, p. 113). Labour leader Neil Kinnock – one of Thatcher's main political rivals – engaged the services of image consultant Barbara Follett, who became well-known in the Labour Party for her pioneering work in self-presentation and media training. Kinnock was coached on a punchier style for TV and parliamentary debates. Follett (who became a Labour MP in 1997) was employed for a makeover of the Labour leader and his shadow cabinet for the 1992 General Election. Kinnock went on to coin the term *Folletting* (The Independent, 1998).

In principle, there is no reason why politicians should not receive explicit CST, for example, in learning more effective rhetorical techniques for inviting applause or in responding to those questions from interviewers that create pressures towards equivocation. Indeed, in addition to the undoubted preparation that takes place for each PMQs, there is scope for tailored CST in both asking and responding to questions in this particularly challenging context.

Notably, during the 2010 General Election campaign, a relatively novel form of broadcast political discourse was introduced in the form of televised debates with party leaders and a studio audience comprising members of the public. Each of the parties involved (the three largest at that time: Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat) conducted its own rehearsals for these events, including using other experienced political figures to play the role of the opponents in the debates (Bertram, 2019). In the General Election of 2015, it was reported that for Labour leader Ed Miliband's practice debates, Alastair Campbell (who had worked as Director of Communications for Tony Blair) played the role of their main opponent – PM David Cameron (Walters & Carlin, 2015). Such rehearsals can be understood as a specific form of CST for that novel brand of political communication – one which has since become an established feature during political campaigns in the UK.

Occasionally, certain recommendations in terms of presentation skills can be somewhat imprudent. It seems that Labour PM Gordon Brown had been advised to smile more, which he duly did in a 2009 *YouTube* video where he was talking about the issue of MPs' expenses. The smile appeared so forced and unnatural that the video became notorious. Former Labour Deputy Prime Minister John Prescott subsequently described Brown's smile as the "worst bloody smile in the world" (Summers, 2009). The PM's seemingly posed smile was also subjected to mockery on the satirical BBC current affairs programme *Have I Got News For You*. Furthermore, one print journalist speculated on

the words of a professional smile consultant: "Now, Gordon, darling, lift the corners of your mouth. Let's see those incisors! No dribbling, mind!" (Hoggart, 2009). Such adverse publicity highlights the need for a more considered approach to the application of particular forms of CST.

Of course, in practice, politicians will undoubtedly also learn communicative skills on the job. For example, politicians may well learn effective audience-arousing rhetorical techniques through recognising when their words bring about the desired applause. Also, during the course of repeated interviews, they may become more likely to spot contentious presuppositions in questions or to steer clear of unnecessary replies to hypothetical questions. In debates with their opponents, they may become more adept in adversarial techniques or in how to deal with those of their opponents. Thus, skills in political communication may be learned not just through formal training procedures but also through everyday political interaction.

Conclusions

In contemporary politics, politicians with good communication skills are at a distinct advantage. Politicians face increasing and ever-closer scrutiny through the intensely observed politics of modern times. To be a capable performer on the stage of a conference, in parliament, and on television is undoubtedly a political asset. Arguably, the social skills model is a useful framework from which to analyse the communication skills of any politicians. Moreover, it serves to specify the nature of those skills; for example, the perception of others, awareness of how we ourselves are perceived, facework, and impression management. In addition, the model is potentially applicable to the analysis of political action. For example, good timing in making decisions and the appropriate use of feedback are important political skills that go well beyond good communication. Nevertheless, politicians are not only required to make correct decisions; they also need to communicate those decisions effectively (i.e., to persuade their parties and the electorate of the value of their proposed policies). Thus, political communication and political action are strongly interdependent.

In this chapter, the social skills model has been extended far beyond its original formulation (Argyle & Kendon, 1967). It is proposed that the model in its revised form provides a framework for future research into political behaviour and a means whereby the performance of politicians can be both conceptualised and evaluated. In the mediated world of contemporary politics, good communication skills are of central importance. Politicians ignore them at their peril.

Face and facework

In everyday talk, we may hear non-literal phrases such as *saving face*, *maintaining face*, or *losing face*. Occasionally, we may hear people refer figuratively to

something being *in your face* or even *a slap in the face*. Although these figures of speech are typically used metaphorically, in literal terms what is it that is being referred to as saved, maintained, lost, or slapped?

Face – a word derived originally from Chinese – generally relates to an individual's reputation, honour, or prestige. Somewhat less commonly, it can also apply to a group of people. According to the Oxford English Dictionary, the English community in China used the term face to refer to devices whereby local Chinese would avoid incurring or inflicting disgrace. The eminent sociologist Erving Goffman first introduced the term in relation to social theory in his highly influential article *On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements of social interaction* (1955). Goffman proposes that we all engage in patterns of interaction whereby we express views of ourselves and of situations – and face is our intended positive social value. Furthermore, during the course of social interaction, we perform facework consistent with face. Goffman's pioneering work inspired Brown and Levinson's (1978, 1987) also highly influential theory of politeness, which forms the basis for an extensive body of contemporary research.

There is now a wealth of evidence underlining the importance of face in the analysis of political discourse (e.g., Bousfield & Locher, 2008; Bull & Fetzer, 2010; Chilton, 1990, 2004; Locher, 2004; Wodak, 1989). In this chapter, both politeness theory and Goffman's concept of face and facework are reviewed and their implications for the analysis of political discourse considered. Then, by way of illustration, we present an analysis of the role of face and facework in political speeches (Fetzer & Bull, 2012).

Politeness theory

Face is important across all cultures – and, in accordance with politeness theory, face can be lost, maintained, or enhanced. Brown and Levinson distinguish between what are termed *positive face* and *negative face*. They define positive face as "the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others" and negative face as "the want of every *competent adult member* that his actions be unimpeded by others" (1987, p. 62). Thus, for example, showing someone personal disrespect can threaten their positive face; whereas doing something which restricts their freedom of action can be a threat to their negative face. Furthermore, in the achievement of goals in social interaction, the maintenance of face is considered a principal constraint. Brown and Levinson state that "some acts are intrinsically threatening to face and thus require *softening*" (1978, p. 24); thereby, people may perform communicative actions (e.g., complaints or commands) in ways which minimise threats to both aspects of face.

As positive face is effectively the desire for reputability, it is thereby of paramount importance for any politician in a democracy. Indeed, without large-scale public approval, any such politician's position will be in jeopardy (Jucker, 1986). Furthermore, they need to be ever-vigilant – potential threats to positive

face exist in all modes of communication, including speeches, interviews, and parliamentary debates. Politicians who fail to maintain positive face can even lose the support of political allies or of their party overall. Under such circumstances, if they hold a ministerial post, they may be compelled to resign from office. In extreme cases, they may have no option other than to stand down as a Member of Parliament.

Negative face can also be of paramount importance in politics. Any carelessness in terms of the preservation of negative face can seriously impede future credibility. Politicians need to be mindful, for example, of potential threats in interviews during election campaigns. Indeed, certain questions may seemingly not pose such a threat at the time but they need to exercise caution in some cases to avoid responses which can limit their future options without serious loss of face. This potential communicative dilemma might be qualified in terms of the old adage *never say never*.

A notable example of a politician's failure to defend negative face (which went on to have very damaging consequences) occurred in 2010 in an interview with Nick Clegg (then Leader of the Liberal Democrats). Clegg, in relation to the issue of university students' fees,[2] stated "I really think tuition fees are wrong". Following the election, which resulted in no overall majority for any single political party, the Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government with the Conservatives (who were the largest party) and Clegg became Deputy PM, working alongside PM David Cameron. That government went on to introduce a near threefold increase to the tuition fees. Thereafter, Clegg faced regular criticism for what many saw as his abandonment of a very clear pledge of policy. This was hugely face-damaging both for him and the Liberal Democrat Party, undoubtedly contributing to their severe downturn in electoral performance at the subsequent General Election of 2015. They lost 49 of their 57 parliamentary seats, prompting Clegg to resign as party leader. At the 2017 General Election, he lost his seat to a Labour candidate and has not served as a Member of Parliament since.

Issues of these foregoing aspects of face – both positive and negative – are not mutually exclusive. They are of importance in all modes of political communication, and their relevance varies according to each context. A further distinction is made in Brown and Levinson's politeness theory (1978, 1987) between what are termed *on-record* and *off-record* strategies. On-record expressions are those which have "one unambiguously attributable intention with which witnesses would concur", whereas off-record expressions are those with "more than one unambiguously attributable intention" (Brown & Levinson, 1978, pp. 73–74). It may seem that the use of on-record would be the most appropriate form of language from would-be political leaders; that is, to be explicit and clear about their intentions. However, the use of, for example, on-record policy predictions can have the opposite effect and leave one open to subsequent scorn. Fetzer and Bull propose a hypothetical example; so, should a politician claim "I have the solution to all of the problems this country has encountered, and I will speak to every single citizen, listen to him or her with

great patience and try to explain all the cuts necessary to rebuild a fair and caring society" (2012, p. 131), they would be considered wholly insincere and derided by many.

An occasion when on-record strategies were in relatively common use was during the campaign for the United Kingdom European Union (EU) membership referendum (which led to the UK's departure from the EU – commonly referred to as *Brexit*). In the run-up to polling day, for an issue that was so vehemently argued, such strategies were in clear use from both sides of the argument (*Remain* and *Leave*). However, perhaps the most notable was the claim from campaigners for Vote Leave (including Boris Johnson, who would later become PM): "We send the EU £350 million a week – let's fund our NHS instead".[3] The subsequent, obvious non-realisation of the claim, as well as the hotly contested figure, has led to wide-scale derision (e.g., see Kentish, 2018).

The use by politicians of off-record strategies, by comparison, can lead to accusations of deliberate ambiguity or evasiveness. However, an off-record strategy can also have its advantages. Although it may be seen as insufficiently precise, it does avoid "the inescapable accountability [. . .] that on-record strategies entail" (Brown & Levinson, 1987, p. 73) and is far less likely to lead to accusations of insincerity.

Goffman's concept of face and facework

According to Goffman (1955), face is of importance in almost all social interactions, and facework is the means by which face threats are minimised. In everyday social encounters, facework is typically one of two forms: it may be defensive of self or it can be protective of others.

In the context of a political interview, facework can take any (or at times all) of three forms. Politicians will always aim to protect their own individual face. However, they have also a keen interest – indeed, in a party-based political system like the UK are duty-bound – to preserve and defend the face of both their political party and of significant others (i.e., key political allies). This triple obligation for politicians was proposed by Bull, Elliott, Palmer, and Walker (1996) and published under the title *Why politicians are three-faced*. The application of their model of political interview facework is discussed in detail in relation to equivocation in Chapter 5.

A further obligation for politicians in interviews is not one of face preservation but the opposite of that. A regular and, particularly in the run-up to a general election, important feature of the process is to attempt to damage the face of their political rivals. One of the processes identified by Goffman (1955, 1967) relates to a type of aggressive facework, which he labelled *making points*. Aggressive facework was not a feature of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Although rudeness was given due consideration, it was accounted for more in terms of the absence of politeness or as a failure to observe the accepted rules of polite communication. However, according to Kienpointner

(1997) – and, indeed, as this book will demonstrate across all forms of political communication – rudeness can be and often is both motivated and deliberate. The concept of aggressive facework, or what is referred to here as *face aggravation*, is discussed further in what follows.

Face aggravation: rudeness and impoliteness

As well as motivated rudeness, rudeness can also be unmotivated. Kasper (1990) proposed such a distinction under the following terms. It was suggested that unmotivated rudeness is typically based on ignorance of societal norms of polite behaviour. For example, a person in an unfamiliar culture fails to observe a customary expectation during an interaction with locals, thereby causing offence. Motivated rudeness, however, relates to a deliberate violation of communicative norms. So, the person's actual intention is for their words to be taken as rude and to cause offence. As Culpeper (1996) points out, there are some contexts where impoliteness is not a minor part but is a key feature of the interaction itself.

Without doubt, there are contexts within political discourse where rudeness can be a salient feature of the interaction. PMQs has become well known for such activity, where the motivated exchange of insults is not uncommon. Insults have been analysed as a characteristic form of face aggravation not just in parliamentary debates in the UK but also in Sweden (Ilie, 2001, 2004). Various forms of face aggravation have been analysed in PMQs (Bull & Wells, 2012; Harris, 2001), which are discussed in detail in Chapter 6. We will also review research showing the extent of personal antagonism between politicians (Waddle, Bull, & Böhnke, 2019), as well as the circumstances where such hostilities become less common (Waddle & Bull, 2020a).

In the following study (Fetzer & Bull, 2012), we present an illustrative example of the concepts of face and facework in UK politics. The setting is the annual party political conferences – in this case, an analysis of the speeches of leading politicians, including party leaders and leadership contenders. There were 15 speeches in total (eight Conservative, four Labour, and three Liberal Democrat), all of which had been broadcast on national TV. Thereby, the politicians could be seen as speaking not only to the audiences at their respective venues but also to the viewing public. Under such circumstances, it is inevitable that the leadership qualities of the speakers are compared and assessed; so, effectively, each of these speeches could be seen as a showcase for the respective politicians.

Competence and responsiveness in leadership[4]

The conceptual framework for this analysis was derived from studies of voter perceptions conducted by Stewart and Clarke (1992) and Clarke et al. (2004), as previously described. From those studies, two fundamental dimensions – competence and responsiveness – were identified as to how British political

leaders are perceived. In spite of these dimensions stemming from the ratings of leaders, they can also be interpreted as being representative of implicit assumptions of the accepted norms of national politics (i.e., how people expect effective leaders to conduct themselves). It is important to note that to clearly understand the concept of leadership requires also consideration of the related concept of *followership*. The concepts of leadership and followership apply to many contexts. In some cases, the roles can be longstanding or even permanent. However, in democratic politics, leadership is not a role of permanence but one that requires the approval of the membership or electorate in accordance with set procedures and certain time-frames. Political leaders, therefore, are required to behave and perform successfully – at least in accordance with the wishes of their electorate – in order to achieve re-election and retain their position of power. Accordingly, leaders' performance in terms of both competence and responsiveness are essential factors in retaining electoral support.

In terms of political communication, leaders undoubtedly need to *do* responsiveness and competence in their interactions. Within the context of a party conference speech, responsiveness may be shown through their clearly presented assessment of key issues and events, and competence, through the clarity and viability of their policy proposals. That said, responsiveness and competence should not be seen as mutually exclusive categories. So, in certain communicative situations, one may be more prominent than the other.

Competence and responsiveness in political discourse

The main research aim of the study by Fetzer and Bull (2012) was to investigate how political leaders go about achieving responsiveness and competence in these high-level speeches. An important consideration for the presentation of leadership via these means is the projection of appropriate personal qualities. This may be achieved in explicit terms of self-reference or by implication through the use of past experiences, which can serve to illustrate those qualities. A noticeable recent example of this was how Liz Truss – in her campaign to become leader of the Conservative party[5] – often recounted her interactions in relation to the war in Ukraine; seemingly, the purpose of this was to project qualities of leadership.

The proposals from the study included how self-reference can take the form of a term associated directly with leadership; for example, *member of government*, *leader*, or *Prime Minister*, or via the use of indexical terms (e.g., personal pronouns or other such generic terms). Fetzer and Bull point out that political speakers do not only make self-references through the use of the first-person, singular pronoun *(I)* but also by using the first-person, plural pronoun *(we)*. In this latter form, the politician can be seen as representing a social group and effectively referencing themselves in terms of leadership while demonstrating group identity and solidarity.

By such means, the performance of leadership in political speeches is characterised by the ways in which speakers make reference to themselves. A key

proposal from the study is that crucial to *doing leadership* in speeches is the appropriate use of verbal phrases. Specifically, in English, references to the self or to others is achieved via four principal forms of verb (i.e., *event, communication, intention,* and *subjectification*). Event verbs are those which can indicate an action (this may or may not have occurred). Communication verbs – for example, *tell, say,* or *hear* – are associated with the production and receipt of language. The final two verb forms are associated with cognitive processes: intention verbs include, for example, *intend* or *want*; subjectification verbs are things like *assume, believe,* or *think* and those related to emotion (e.g., *feel, like, or fear).*

In addition, each of these verbal forms can be seen in terms of its respective *agency-anchored domain* (i.e., action, intent, thoughts and emotions, or other people's narratives). Fetzer and Bull (2012) propose that, by these means, politicians may *do* responsiveness and competence of leadership in their speeches. Arguably, each of these domains can be applicable to a specific form of facework. So, in the way that the actions of someone can enhance their reputation, so too may their intentions, thoughts, or feelings. Such reputational enhancement may also be sought through reporting the words of others. Furthermore, these same domains may also be used for the purposes of face aggravation. So, just as a person's actions can be damaging to their reputation, the same can be true of their intentions, thoughts, or feelings, and likewise, in this case negatively, through the reported words of others. From such linguistic analysis, we see that the performance of facework can be achieved in political speeches – in particular, through the use of such references to self and others.

The hypotheses for the study were related to each of the two dimensions. Firstly, responsiveness would be the crux of the message primarily through the use of communication or subjectification verbs. This is based on the scenario that self-references through these are more indicative of emotional responsiveness. Secondly, competence would more likely be the crux of the message through event verbs or intention verbs, as these tend to be associated with the performance of actions or the politician's declared intentions to perform actions.

Data analysis

The results of study showed that the form of verb used most frequently in these speeches were event verbs. Subjectification verbs were second in terms of frequency of use, followed by intention verbs. Communication verbs were the least common, featuring significantly less than the other verb forms. Thus, given that event and subjectification verbs occurred with the highest degree of frequency, they seemed to be the prime candidates for performing leadership in these political speeches.

In addition to the foregoing quantitative analysis, one particular speech was selected for a detailed qualitative analysis. This was the 2004 conference speech by Tony Blair, who, at that point, had been PM for over seven years and was

making his 11th conference speech as the leader of his party. Analysis was specifically focused on self-references (i.e., the use of the first-person, singular pronoun *I*, or the first-person, plural pronoun *we*), occurring in conjunction with event, communication, intention, or subjectification verbs. In addition, particular attention was paid to context in these sections of the speech. Illustrative examples for each of the verb types are provided in what follows.

1. EVENT VERBS

These are typically used to convey the details of the politician's (or their party's) material achievements and/or their political activities. They can function to characterise the speaker as a principled and decisive leader, one who knows the best course of action and who can take control of any situation. In the following example, Blair aimed to present himself as a decisive political agent who has made and acted upon critical judgements in response to terrorism: "it's over the decisions *I have taken*, the judgements about *our* future security *I have made* since *I stood* here in this hall, about to address the TUC [Trades Union Congress] on September 11th three years ago". Here, Blair refers to his decisions (i.e., *I have taken* and *I have made*) in the perfect tense, indicating they were made at a previous time but that they are relevant to the present and the future. His use of another event verb (*I stood*) in conjunction with the place deictic expression *here* connects a single past event with the present and signifies its ongoing relevance.

When political speakers use event verbs in conjunction with first-person, plural self-references, these tend to function to present their collective selves (politician and party) as not only in harmony but as principled, decisive, and as taking action. For these reasons, political speakers can be adjudged highly competent while also implicitly conveying the dimension of responsiveness. In the following example, the event verb *introduce* is used in conjunction with a first-person, plural self-reference: "*We introduced* two and a half hours free nursery education". Here, Blair's aim is to present his government and himself in a collective sense concerning the performance of principled and decisive actions.

2. SUBJECTIFICATION VERBS

These are typically used to communicate the personal thoughts, views, and feelings of the politician. They tend to be used to convey the speaker's subjective viewpoint of an issue, rather than an entirely objective account. Subjectification verbs can function to foreground responsiveness. For example, by saying "*I entirely understand* why many disagree" (Fetzer & Bull, 2012, p. 138), the politician's self-presentation is of someone who cares – not only *understanding* but also *entirely understanding*. Thereby, politicians can portray themselves as people who listen to the needs of others. The following example comes from the speech by Blair:

> And this will be a progressive future as long as *we remember* that the reason for our struggle against injustice has always been to liberate the individual.

And the argument is not between those who do and those who do not love freedom. It is between the Conservatives who believe freedom requires only that government stand back while the fittest and most privileged prosper. And *we who understand* that freedom for the individual, for every individual, whatever their starting point in life, is best achieved through a just and a strong community.

In the aforementioned section of the speech, the subjectification verbs *remember* and *understand* are both used in conjunction with first-person, plural self-reference *we*. Here, Blair's aim appears to be to convey a collective identity by referring to "our struggle". He simultaneously presents himself in terms of leadership, with conceptualisations of "freedom for the individual", as well as his vision of a "progressive future" and a "just and strong community". These particular pronoun-subjectification verb constructions function to highlight the solidarity of party and leader, thereby clearly indicating responsiveness.

3. INTENTION VERBS

In addition to their use to declare a speaker's intentions, these verbs may foreground party political activities and can function to indicate competence in terms of political leadership. In the following example, Blair aims to present himself in terms of decisiveness and to show that he was and remains entirely clear regarding his intentions: "There was talk before this conference that *I wanted* to put aside discussion of Iraq. That was never my intention. *I want* to deal with it head on". Here, he clarifies his communicated intention by making reference to an other-assigned intention ("there was talk"). He corrects this by stating "that was never my intention". This serves to clarify his intended action. He follows that with the qualification "I want to deal with it head on", which Fetzer and Bull identify as "a time adverbial anchoring the speech act to the here-and-now" (2012, p. 140). Blair's apparent aim here is to show decisiveness and integrity and to convey competence in terms of political leadership. Furthermore, by using an on-record strategy, he formulates his intentions in an explicit and unambiguous manner, with the aim of presenting himself as a competent leader and one who is clear in his intentions and their consequences.

Compared to event verbs and subjectification verbs, the use of intention verbs was relatively infrequent – arguably because, as an on-record strategy, they may be construed as a pledge (Fetzer & Bull, 2012). In the fullness of time, this may have repercussions if the pledges are broken due to unforeseen circumstances (thereby, the potential for a threat to the politician's negative face).

4. COMMUNICATION VERBS

These can function to indicate responsiveness because they can portray the user as someone who listens and interacts with people. In this first example, Blair's words may indicate a sense of someone who willingly shares information not

just with members of his own party but also with members of the public: "Like someone *I met* at the TUC who said what have you ever done for trade unions? And *I said* well 'what about the right to union recognition?' 'Yeah, but apart from that?' [LAUGHTER] 'Well the first ever minimum wage.'" His aim here appears to be to portray himself as a caring politician who is mindful of people's opinions as part of his formulation of policies.

In this next example, he uses a first-person, plural self-reference in conjunction with the past-tense communication verb *said*: "But any party activist who wants an answer to the question about trust, go and read what *we said* we would do in 1997 and 2001". Here, his pronoun–verb construction serves to convey a clear objective account of past events. He bolsters this with a construction of factuality; namely, by referring to available documented information. His implication from this is that they have not broken their promises.

Conclusions

From their analysis, Fetzer and Bull argued that, effectively, politicians may enhance their leadership credentials through political speeches. They can present themselves favourably in terms of the key dimensions of both responsiveness and competence in part through their self-referential use of certain verb forms. They may, for example, present themselves as highly competent through the foregrounding of self-reference with event verbs (e.g., as principled, decisive, and a person of action). They may also seek to convey a sense of caring and understanding through self-references with subjectification verbs – thereby indicative of responsiveness. In terms of their analysis of 15 conference speeches, these verb constructions (event and subjectification) were the most frequent strategies used by the politicians. The least common leadership presentation strategies in these terms were the self-referential constructions with intention verbs and with communication verbs. A proposal for the relative infrequency of the latter might reflect the lack of dialogic sequences in the monologic political speeches. As for intention verbs, speakers may be less inclined to use these, as something which might be considered an on-record pledge can constitute a threat to negative face.

The performance of facework by a politician in a political speech will, of course, be subject to wide variation. This will depend greatly on the context in which the speech is delivered. So, an incumbent PM or a member of government (past or present), will have a record to defend; thereby, much of the focus may be to justify effectuated policy or extoll past performance. However, the speech of an opposition politician may be more focused on face aggravation – aimed at the government they hope to replace. Similarly, facework performed in any speech will be tailored to the audience. So, when addressing an auditorium of the party faithful, the speech may mostly function in terms of self-congratulation or opponent-derision. Conversely, a public speech during an election campaign will likely have the intention to gain the support of any undecided voters, in part through the promotion of positive face.

This study by Fetzer and Bull (2012) analysed political leaders' speeches and how they may function to "not only *do* politics but also *do leadership* and *do facework*, thereby demonstrating how charismatic, decisive and principled they are" (p. 142). Through this particular microanalysis of speech acts and of context, it was shown how these foregoing four self-referential verb constructions may be used by politicians to perform leadership in political speeches.

Overall conclusions

In the first half of this chapter, communication was discussed as a form of skill. The revised and updated version of the social skills model (Argyle & Kendon, 1967; Hargie, 1997, 2006a, 2006b; Hargie & Marshall, 1986) was discussed, in which two modifications were proposed: the inclusion of impression management as a form of social skill and the relevance of situational context in the determination of what qualifies as skilled behaviour. In the second half of this chapter, the concepts of face and facework were discussed, both of which fit well into the revised model. In a democracy like the UK, facework is patently a key skill for a politician. However, more importantly, in the pursuit of continued success, politicians should be skilled at facework across all political discourse domains. So, because leading politicians are required to interact through political speeches, broadcast interviews, and parliamentary debates, performance skills in all three can give them a distinct advantage. Similarly, a mastery of both face enhancement and face aggravation can also contribute to their success.

For politicians in modern politics, in light of the close media attention and expanding modes of digital communication, interactional skills are crucial for achieving success and remaining successful. Hence, success in politics is not only dependent on implementing policies and making the right judgement calls; it greatly depends on skilled, effective communication. Importantly, for analysts of political behaviour and for the nation as a whole, the approaches covered herein are beneficial to our understanding of politics and our politicians.

Notes

1 [. . .] – indicates that a section of the extract has been omitted.
2 Clegg, like many other politicians standing at the 2010 General Election, signed a pledge put forward by the National Union of Students (NUS). It stated, "I pledge to vote against any increase in fees in the next parliament and to pressure the government to introduce a fairer alternative" (Lowe, 2017).
3 The slogan was also emblazoned on the side of the Vote Leave campaign bus.
4 This section is based on the study by **Fetzer and Bull (2012)**.
5 This relates to the contest to replace Boris Johnson as leader of the party (hence, instantly becoming PM) during the summer of 2022.

3 Techniques of analysis

In this chapter, a review and description are provided of some of the main analytical techniques utilised in the original research reported in Part II of this book. Methods of analysis are explained briefly throughout the book to contextualise and clarify the reported findings. Here, however, we go into a high level of detail in selected areas of research. We begin with a short section on an important element for all forms of microanalysis – the preparation of transcripts. Following that is a section on speaker-audience interaction, where we explain specific forms of notation relevant to the coding of political speeches, specifically, how audience contributions are accurately represented on speech transcripts. We then go on to question-response sequences: firstly, to explain both questions and responses in terms of their identification as a basis for equivocation research; then we report in comprehensive detail the findings of a study investigating the range of face-threats in interviews (Bull et al., 1996).

By providing this level of detail in these selected areas, our aims are twofold: firstly, by way of illustration, to further enlighten readers and provide support for the application of microanalytic procedures in political discourse; secondly, to provide insight in the interests of future research. However, for those not interested in this level of methodological detail, it is possible to skip this chapter and move on directly to the four empirical chapters featured in Part II.

As with all of the study areas reported in this book, the analytical methods explained in this chapter have two main stages. To begin with, appropriately detailed transcripts are prepared; then, the relevant techniques of analysis are applied to the transcripts, typically supplemented by repeated use of video-recorded material to enhance accuracy. The first of these stages is described in what follows.

Transcription

In the early years of microanalysis, acquiring a transcript for research purposes was an entirely manual process. For example, a video of a political interview (acquired by recording a broadcasted TV programme onto a VHS cassette) would be viewed repeatedly to produce a typed, verbatim transcript. However, the development and wholesale expansion of the internet has proved invaluable

to microanalytic research in a number of ways. Apart from the now wide-ranging availability of freely accessible videos (including speeches, interviews, and PMQs), it is often the case that transcripts are also made available online. An obvious example of this is in relation to parliamentary proceedings, accessible via *Hansard* – the official written record of debates in the Houses of Lords and Commons (UK Parliament, 2022a). Another official online source can be the websites of broadcasters; for example, the BBC published online transcripts of interviews from its high-profile Sunday morning politics programme *The Andrew Marr Show* (see BBC, 2022b). Furthermore, via various search terms, transcripts may be located from less official sources, such as other news organisations.

However, it is always important, whatever the source, to confirm the accuracy of the transcript against a video of the interaction – even official sources are not necessarily verbatim accounts.[1] An example worthy of mention here is that of an interview with the then Prime Minister (PM) Theresa May, which took place during the General Election campaign of 2017. This was analysed in a study of equivocal responses by Waddle and Bull (2020c). In response to a question from the interviewer, according to the online transcript, the PM's utterance began with "No. What I want to do is to ensure [. . .]" (BBC, 2017, p. 6). Obviously, the use of the word "No" could be highly relevant to any analysis of whether the question received an explicit reply. However, via our supplementary observation of the video, it was apparent that the PM did not say *No*; rather, instead of such a clear response of negation, it was a barely audible "nuh". Thereby, although we are always grateful for the provision of free transcripts, this example shows how, in the interests of rigorous microanalysis, researchers need to exercise caution in assuming the verbatim accuracy of any such sourced transcript.

The important point here is that, however detailed the transcript, it should not be considered a substitute for viewing the actual video. If researchers work from the transcript alone, it increases the possibility of the omission of key details from the interaction. Through the supplementary use of a video, the researcher is able not only to hear the spoken words but to also observe how the words are spoken – including the speaker's associated nonverbal behaviour (e.g., facial expression, eye gaze, body posture, hand movements, etc.). All of these factors are important towards the accuracy of analysis.

Speaker–audience interaction

Historically, speech-making was seen as monologic – a form of one-way discourse from speaker to audience. However, thanks primarily to the pioneering work of Atkinson (e.g., 1984a), a clearer perspective has developed based on a two-way interaction process between speaker and audience. Specifically, political speakers may use rhetoric as implicit forms of applause invitation; and audiences, although typically limited in their interactional forms, may – or indeed may not – respond accordingly. From this perspective, political speakers are not delivering a monologue; they are engaging in an interaction that is dialogical. Research on this phenomenon is reviewed in detail in the next chapter.

One of Atkinson's most insightful propositions was that political speech-making is comparable to everyday conversation; namely, that in both forms of social interaction, the participants engage in a form of turn-taking. Of course, unlike the speaker, the forms of interaction available to audiences are typically restricted to applause, cheers, laughter, chanting, or occasionally booing. For any researcher of political speeches, it is important, in analytical terms, to have an accurate representation of these behaviours, as well as those of the speaker. However, even when verbatim speech transcripts are freely available, audience contributions are unlikely to be included. It is therefore important for researchers to follow a systematic form of notation that represents both. In the analysis that follows, we present a means of how, in the interests of reliable research, this is achieved.

Notation of audience responses

The techniques utilised in this research are based on those pioneered by Atkinson (e.g., 1984b), who used crosses (e.g., xxXXXXXXxxxx) to indicate applause. Thus, two sound-levels could be represented by upper- and lower-case letters – indicating high and low volume, respectively. Furthermore, an unbroken series of crosses is representative of widespread audience applause, whereas the occurrence of an isolated clap is shown by a cross between hyphens (-x-), and intermittent or tentative applause is indicated by a series of alternate hyphens and crosses (-x-x-x-x-x-). By these simple means, it is possible from a transcript alone to distinguish between audience responses that are rapturous and hesitant, as well as between applause that is collective or otherwise.

A further key aspect of the actions of an audience is the timing of any response. This is represented on a transcript by its positioning in relation to the words of the speaker. Such accuracy can be an extremely important part of the analysis, as it indicates whether, for example, the applause was interruptive. Consider the following extract from a speech by Labour leader Tony Blair (delivered in October 1996, prior to becoming PM):

> We will be part of the European Social Chapter as every other government Tory or Labour is in the rest of Europe. And there will be a right for any individual to join a trade union and if . . .
>
>   xxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxxxx

For the researcher, the position of the crosses directly below the word "and" indicates that the applause began at that point in time – thereby, was interruptive of the flow of the speaker. In this instance, the audience can be seen to have interrupted his speech with applause after he said "to join a trade union". Arguably, their desire to express approval at that point was an endorsement of the principle of and support for trade union representation (Bull, 2000a).

A further applause instance in the same speech shows Blair using the rhetorical device of a three-part list – although an unusual one in that all three listed

items are identical. Here, as shown by the timing of the applause, the audience were able to anticipate the completion of his applause invitation:

> Ask me my three main priorities for Government, and I tell you: educa-
> tion, education, and education.
> –x–x–xxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

So, as this alignment of crosses shows, some audience members began clapping even before Blair had completed his statement, a split second before the col-lective applause began.

Furthermore, although the focus of Atkinson's (1984a) original research was on the analysis of applause, as stated previously there are other forms of audi-ence contribution, including cheering and laughing. In two studies of Japanese political speeches, set during the General Election campaigns of 2005 (Bull & Feldman, 2011) and 2009 (Feldman & Bull, 2012), the analyses included not only applause but also laughter, cheering, and even individual shouted remarks. For the indication of laughter, a similar form of notation was utilised but, rather than crosses, multiples of the letter *H* were used. This method followed that of previous research by McIlvenny (1996). So, for example, when an audience laughed and their laughter then increased in intensity, hhhHHHHHH would be appropriately positioned within the transcript. The cheering from Japanese audiences was merely the word *cheers* (aligned to indicate its precise occur-rence). Similarly, the shouted remarks were positioned accordingly and written out in full; for example, "Go for it" and "You can do it".

One distinctive feature of Japanese audience responses is what are termed *aizuchi* (Feldman & Bull, 2012). These are responses made by listeners to signal their continued interest and attention – referred to in English as *listener responses* (e.g., Dittman & Llewellyn, 1967). In the context of political speeches, speak-ers may request *aizuchi* from their audiences through phrases such as "Don't you agree?" and "Don't you think so?" (Bull & Feldman, 2011). Common forms of *aizuchi* are "*hai*", "*ee*", or "*un*" (meaning "yes", with varying degrees of formality), or "*hontō*" (meaning "really"). In the study by Feldman and Bull (2012), *aizuchi* were transcribed in full.

The transcription system was further extended for two studies of speeches in presidential elections – one from the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), the other from France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017); both elections taking place in 2012. In the American study, two further categories of response were introduced – booing and chanting – in addition to laughter, cheering, and applause. Booing was transcribed in the same way as applause and laughter but in this case using the letter *B*. Thus, for example, when an audience booed and the booing then increased in intensity, bbbBBBBBBB would be appropriately positioned within the transcript. In addition, it was also necessary to distinguish between *disaffili-ative* booing (i.e., the audience express disapproval of the speaker by booing) and *affiliative* booing (i.e., the audience boo political opponents mentioned in the speech, thereby showing solidarity with the speaker). In these two studies,

the lettering system was extended to encompass cheering – so, for example, cccCCCCC would indicate such a response increasing in intensity. Furthermore, any identifiable, vocalised chanting was written out in full; whereas, for instances when such audience behaviour was indecipherable, the word *chanting* was positioned appropriately within the transcript. From the study of French speeches, two additional forms of audience response were included, namely, *whistling* and the blowing of one or more *vuvuzela* horns.[2] For each of these, again, the appropriate placement of the respective word indicated the precise occurrence of that response during the speech.

Different forms of audience response may also occur either independently or in combination, referred to as *composites*. So, for example, audiences may either applaud or cheer – or applause and cheering may occur simultaneously (Feldman & Bull, 2012). In the studies of the Japanese General Election of 2005 (Bull & Feldman, 2011) and the American Presidential Election of 2012 (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), composites were coded merely in terms of the form of response identified as most salient. For example, if a small amount of laughter occurred simultaneously with widespread applause, only the applause was entered on the transcript. However, in the analysis of the Japanese General Election of 2009 (Feldman & Bull, 2012), it was decided to annotate both types of response with a more sensitive form of transcription. Thus, applause with laughter and applause with cheering would be represented by a mixture of large and small crosses, paralleled with either of the characters H or C, respectively.

Composite categories may also occur in sequence; for example, applause may be followed by cheering (Feldman & Bull, 2012). Hence, as well as singular and composite responses, a third category of *sequential responses* was introduced, based on the analysis of South Korean speeches (Choi, Bull, & Reed, 2016). It was observed how audiences may display one such response (either singular or composite), then, within the same turn, move on to a different form of response (e.g., they firstly applaud and cheer, then shift to chanting). This sequential shift is represented by the → symbol; hence, this example would be transcribed as *applause + cheers → chanting*.

These refinements to the notation system have been introduced to expand and enhance the process, making it more fine-grained and all-encompassing, and thereby to give a better representation of the complexity of audience responses. From such an accurately detailed transcript of the actions of both speaker and audience, researchers can go on to identify rhetorical devices and other applause invitations which precede audience responses. These are listed in full in the next chapter (Chapter 4).

Question–response sequences

Broadcast political interviews typically take the form of question-response sequences, where the journalist or presenter poses the questions, to which the politician is expected to make a response – sometimes it is a clear answer, sometimes not. Similarly, at Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs), MPs may put

a question to the PM, to which the PM is expected to make a response. Typologies have been developed for the analysis of both questions and responses. These are summarised in the remaining part of this chapter under the following subheadings: *Identifying questions*; *Identifying answers to questions*; and *Face-threats in questions*. Although all of these typologies were developed in the context of broadcast interviews, they have also proved readily applicable to the analysis of PMQs (e.g., Bull & Strawson, 2020), which is the focus of Chapter 6.

Identifying questions[3]

What is a question? This may seem perfectly obvious to the layman but, to the analyst, it is not so self-evident. Questions are often characterised by what is termed *interrogative syntax*, either through so-called *subject/verb inversion* and/or through the use of a *question word*. So, for example, the statement "You have been to the museum" may be turned into a question through the process of inversion (i.e., placing the verb *have* before the subject *you*): "Have you been to the museum?"

Question words include *what*, *when*, *why*, *who*, and *which*. As interrogatives, the term often used is *wh-questions* – obviously because they begin with *wh* (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). Notably, however, the word *where* is not included in this list, although it can function perfectly well as a question word (Bull, 1994). Furthermore, the list does not include the word *how*, which clearly does not begin with *wh* but can also function as a question word. Thus, because the term wh-question is potentially confusing, the terms *question word* and *interrogative word questions* are preferred throughout the studies reported in this book.

Of course, it is also possible to pose questions without using interrogative syntax. For example, *declarative questions* take the same form as declarative statements but they may conclude with rising intonation to turn the statement into a question (e.g., "You've read the book I mentioned?" or "You watched the movie yesterday?"). Occasionally, declarative questions may not even be vocalised with rising intonation, yet it is clear from the linguistic context that they are questions. Conversely, interrogative syntax can also be used without requesting information – namely, *rhetorical questions*, which typically are not expected to be answered (they may even be unanswerable). For example, if a person who arrives late is greeted with the utterance "So what sort of time do you call this then?", they are not being asked to give the time but are receiving something of a reprimand. So, should a schoolboy in such a situation respond with "It's 9:15, Sir", he would be regarded not as being helpful but as impudent.

Thus, given that not all questions take interrogative syntax, nor are all utterances with interrogative syntax necessarily questions, it is clear that syntax does not provide definitive criteria for identifying questions. Bull (1994) proposed that it is not the form of an utterance that signifies a question but rather its function, namely, to request information. In this context, six principal question

types were identified: three that take the form of interrogative syntax and three that do not. Each of these is detailed in what follows.

The three types of interrogative question are identifiable in correspondence with the form of reply that is expected (Quirk et al., 1985). So, *polar* (or *Yes-No*) questions expect affirmation or negation (e.g., "Did you see John the other day?"). *Alternative* (or *disjunctive*) questions expect as a reply one of the two (or more) options referred to in the question (e.g., "Would you prefer tea or coffee?"). *Interrogative word* questions (as described previously; Bull, 1994) often expect a reply from more of an open-ended range (e.g., "What did you think of the film?" or "Why did you not come to the party?").

Three types of question that take non-interrogative forms are also identifiable from political interview research (Bull, 1994). These are *declarative* (as described previously), *moodless*, and *indirect*. Moodless questions are those that lack a finite verb (Jucker, 1986). For example, an interviewer might interject when a politician is generalising about their party's achievements with "Such as?"; or, if the interviewer wants clarification on some form of expenditure, they may say "More than £50 billion?". Because neither of these example interjections have a verb but they do seek information, they would be regarded as moodless questions. Finally, there are indirect questions, whereby a question is posed through reporting the words of other people. For example, an interviewer addressing former PM Boris Johnson might say, "Many people have asked the question why did you not resign as PM sooner, given the findings of the Sue Gray Report".[4] Here, the force of this question is not presented directly; it is posed indirectly through a subordinate clause.

This sixfold typology has formed the basis of a number studies, initially an analysis of 33 political interviews, held (and broadcast on UK television) between 1987 and 1992 (Bull, 1994). Most of the utterances coded as questions in these interviews (79%) were found to utilise interrogative syntax. Of the remaining 21%, by far the most frequently occurring type were those identified as declarative (18% of overall). Importantly, and supportive of the typology, all of the 1,045 questions identified across these 33 interviews were classified as befitting one of the foregoing six types.

An important part of this typology is that it is not only useful for the categorisation of interviewers' utterances in terms of question type, it is also highly relevant to the process of identifying whether a politician's associated response should be regarded as an answer. This is discussed in the next subsection.

Identifying answers to questions[5]

Identifying answers to questions might, to an inexperienced observer, appear to be quite a simple process. Thus, in the case of polar questions, either "Yes" or "No" would indicate an obvious answer. However, the process is not necessarily so simple. For example, if someone is asked "Do you like London?" and responds with "Only a little", although logically this would not be accompanied

by yes or no, it can be considered a straightforward answer to the question (Bolinger, 1978). Again, in the case of disjunctive questions, responding with either of two offered alternatives would seem indicative of an answer. However, again, it is not so simple, because not all choices are necessarily reducible to two alternatives. For example, if someone is asked "Would you prefer tea or coffee?" and responded "Just a glass of water would be fine", this appears perfectly acceptable as an answer, despite choosing neither tea nor coffee.

Thus, identifying answers to questions for research purposes is by no means a simple process. For this reason, the foregoing typology of questions is particularly useful because criteria for what constitutes an answer can be facilitated through prior identification of the specific type of question. Once that has been established, the researcher has a much clearer understanding of the information being requested. In relation to such identification of answers, details of responses to these different question types are covered in the following analysis. We then clarify the identification of responses which do not qualify as full replies, namely, *intermediate replies* and *non-replies*.

Responses to polar questions

If the response "Yes" or "No" is given to a polar question, this might seem to be an answer, given that such questions invite such a response. However, this requires some important qualifications. Firstly, to make a positive or negative response in these cases, it typically is not a requirement to use the words *yes* or *no*. So, for example, a clear affirmative response may be conveyed with "Of course" or "Indeed"; similarly, a clear negative response may be "Never" or "Not at all". Secondly, polar questions may also receive an answer that falls between the polarised extremes of affirmation–negation, for example, "Probably", "Possibly", or "Sometimes".

Furthermore, even a response that includes the words *yes* or *no* does not necessarily mean a question has been answered. For example, "Yes" is often used merely to acknowledge the question rather than to answer it. Such a response can be seen in the following extract from a 1987 interview between broadcaster David Dimbleby and former Labour leader Neil Kinnock:

Dimbleby: What about your attitude to trade unions, you've said you're going to give a massive return of power to trade unions if Labour comes back. Isn't that something again that people are fearful of that is going to lose you votes?
Kinnock: Yes I haven't said by the way that we're going to give a massive return of power, I've never used such a phrase in my life.

In saying "Yes", Kinnock is not answering the question; rather, he is just acknowledging it. In fact, he then attacks the question by arguing he has been misquoted ("I haven't said by the way that we're going to give a massive return of power, I've never used such a phrase in my life").

Similarly, responding with "No", rather than being an answer of negation, may be used to attack the question. Such an example was evident from another 1987 interview, in this case between broadcaster David Frost and Kinnock:

Frost: If the situation were to emerge where in fact there was no tactical voting and as a result of that, Mrs T [Margaret Thatcher] was returned with a majority or a situation in which there was some tactical voting and so she was not returned with a majority, you would rather have stayed pure and lost?

Kinnock: No no it isn't a question of purity it's a question of perception [. . .]

In this extract, Kinnock is not answering with negation to the actual question (i.e., no, he would not have preferred to have stayed pure and lost); rather, he is objecting to the use of the word *purity*.

Responses to alternative questions

In these types of question, politicians are presented with two or more options. If one of the alternatives is chosen, that can constitute an answer. An alternative third option may also be used to answer the question. But if the politician responds with neither of the offered alternatives, nor provides a viable alternative, then such a response is coded as a non-reply. This can be seen in the following extract from a further 1987 interview, in this case between broadcaster Robin Day and the then PM Thatcher:

Day: Which would you regard as a greater evil: a coalition between Thatcherism and the Alliance and others or letting in a [. . .] Kinnock minority government committed to socialism and unilateral disarmament?

Thatcher: I do not accept I do not accept that that is the alternative.

Responses to interrogative-word questions

These types of questions request detail(s) that are typically to be confirmed or require clarification. If the information requested is provided, the politician can be seen to have answered the question. Seven interrogative words (how, what, when, where, which, who, and why) are applicable to such questions (Bull, 1994; Quirk et al., 1985). The criteria for the evaluation of answers are based on customary dictionary definitions. So, typically, *how* asks by which means or to what extent, *what* requests information to specify something, *when* seeks information concerning time (or, for example, the circumstances of an occurrence), *where* asks about location or position, *which* seeks details specifying one or more options from an implied or stated set, *who* asks about what person or which people, and *why* seeks information concerning reason or purpose.

If the politician provides the requested information according to these criteria, then the response is coded as an answer. However, should the politician fail to provide said information, then the response is coded as a non-reply. Consider the following exchange from a 1992 interview between Day and the then PM John Major:

Major: Well I find it interesting that you should say that er I spent half my time being told by some people that I've suddenly become too aggressive and half my time being told by other people that I ought to be more aggressive. I rather suspect in the midst of that I've got it right.

Day: Who told you you got

Major: But the but the

Day: Who told you you got too aggressive?

Major: (laughs) Well I rather fancy that a number of people have but the important issue is really not just the question of style, it's substance, it's whether we're raising the issues that really matter to people in this election and that really matters for their futures. That's what the election's about.

So, here, the PM is asked who (specifically, what person or which people) told him that he had become too aggressive. Because Major failed to specify who that was, his response was coded as a non-reply.

Responses to questions which do not take interrogative syntax

Non-interrogative syntax questions might seem to present a problem for the kind of analysis presented previously, since they are not based on the same question structures. However, because questions identified as declarative or moodless tend to seek either agreement or disagreement by the politician, they typically function as polar questions, so responses can be assessed similarly (Harris, 1991). For example, the declarative question "You will not increase the top rate of tax?", like a polar question, seeks either negation or affirmation.

Support for this was evident in this study of televised political interviews (Bull, 1994). Of the questions, 21% took the form of non-interrogative syntax. Analysis of these showed that 92% functioned as polar questions. Furthermore, the remainder were found to function as either alternative or interrogative-word questions. Thus, the criteria for establishing answers to interrogative syntax questions could readily be applied to all the non-interrogative syntax questions identified from the overall total of 1,045 questions in those 33 interviews.

Intermediate replies

Certain responses can be identified as falling somewhere between answers and non-replies; these are referred to as *intermediate replies* (Bull, 1994) or *indirect*

answers (Harris, 1991). In the research reported in this book, three types of intermediate replies can be distinguished (Bull, 1994). Firstly, *answers by implication*, where an answer is implied but not explicitly stated. Secondly, *incomplete replies*, where a question is answered but only in part. Thirdly, *interrupted replies*, where the interviewer interrupts the response, such that it is not possible to say whether or not the question would have been answered. Each type of intermediate reply is discussed further in what follows.

ANSWERS BY IMPLICATION

In these cases, the interviewee's views are implied but never explicitly stated. A celebrated example comes from the 1995 televised interview between Diana, Princess of Wales, and Martin Bashir. When asked "Do you think Mrs Parker Bowles was a factor in the breakdown of your marriage?", the princess replied "Well there were three of us in this marriage so it was a bit crowded". Clearly, this response carried an implied affirmative answer (yes, she did regard Mrs Parker Bowles as a factor in the breakdown of her marriage) although this was not explicitly stated (Bull, 1997). Diana also accompanied her response with a wry smile, whereas a more direct or even vitriolic response might have appeared somewhat embittered. Implicit responses and their relationship to equivocation theory (Bavelas et al., 1990) are discussed in much greater detail in Chapter 5 on equivocation in political interviews.

INCOMPLETE REPLIES

These can be subdivided into three main categories: *half-answers*, *fractional replies*, and *partial replies* (Bull, 1994). Sometimes, interviewers ask two questions in the same speaking turn (termed *a double-barrelled question*). If the politician answers only one of the questions, this is termed a *half-answer*. The following extract comes from a 1987 interview between Frost and PM Thatcher:

Frost: But do you regret the leaking of that letter? Was that a black mark against the government?
Thatcher: Well I indeed said that I regretted the leaking of that letter, I said so at the time.

Thus, because the PM answered only the first question (saying she regretted the leaking of the letter) and failed to comment on whether it was a black mark against the government, this was coded as a half-answer.

Fractional replies are when a politician answers only part of what is coded a *multi-barrelled question* (Bull, 1994). The following example comes from a 1992 interview between Day and the then Leader of the Liberal Democrats, Paddy Ashdown:

Day: Many people reading that may say to themselves [. . .] what on earth is the relevance of PR [proportional representation] to better

schools, curbing inflation, unemployment, homelessness, or any of our other problems?

Ashdown: Let me take that erm absolutely, erm better schools, would we not have better schools if we'd not had this ridiculous dogmatic argument by Labour and Tories on the basis of less than 50 per cent of the vote, the one helping private schools, the other helping but underfunding public schools.

Here, Ashdown's response to the multi-barrelled question focused only on schools but did not address inflation, unemployment, or homelessness. It was therefore coded as a fractional reply.

In a partial answer, the politician answers only part of a single-barrelled question. So, for example, consider the following exchange from the 1987 interview between Dimbleby and Kinnock:

Dimbleby: Is it still your position that nobody earning under five hundred pounds a week is going to be damaged in any way financially by the return of a Labour government in terms of tax?

Kinnock: They won't be worse off in income tax that's for certain.

Dimbleby: Well that's not the full answer because income tax is only one part of the tax people pay.

As was apparent from the final turn here (the interviewer's follow-up), Dimbleby challenged Kinnock's response on the grounds that income tax (direct taxation) is only part of the tax that people pay (there is also indirect taxation on goods and services). Such a response by the politician is coded as a partial reply.

INTERRUPTED REPLIES

When a politician is interrupted by the interviewer whilst making their response, it may not be possible to say whether or not an answer was forthcoming. The following extract was observed during an interview from 1992 between Day and Kinnock:

Day: Yeah but many many voters may ask this, you see. Why is it that you wanted to scrap our nuclear weapons when the Soviet Union was our potential enemy and had them of their own, yet you now want to keep them when the Soviet Union doesn't exist and isn't a danger to us?

Kinnock: Well through those years, as I candidly acknowledge and I have since

Day: [interrupts] You made a mistake.

Here, it is apparent that Kinnock was not given the opportunity to finish his response because of Day's interjection. Thereby this was coded as an interrupted reply (Bull, 1994).

Non-replies

When the politician fails to provide any of the information requested in the interviewer's question, such a response is coded as a *non-reply* (Bull & Mayer, 1993). The term *non-reply* was introduced rather than the more pejorative term *evasion* (Harris, 1991), because there are some circumstances under which it can be considered justifiable to not answer a question. For example, questions based on inaccurate or contentious presuppositions may legitimately be challenged by the politician – and such challenges should not always be dismissed as evasive. Should the politician attempt to answer such questions, they might fall into the trap of appearing to accept a presupposition that may well be seriously open to dispute. For example, a question like "Why do you think your party is going to lose the next election?" presupposes that the politician's party will lose the next election – a presupposition that the politician would almost certainly wish to challenge.

To analyse different forms of non-reply, an *equivocation typology* was devised (Bull & Mayer, 1993), which has been subsequently revised and extended (Bull, 2003; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016). The term *equivocation* is also preferred to that of evasion, since it is intended to be non-judgemental concerning whether the failure to provide requested information can be justified. The equivocation typology distinguishes between at least 43 ways of not replying to questions in political interviews, and is presented in full in Chapter 5.

Face-threats in questions[6]

An important element of questions in political interviews is how they may constrain a politician's response because they can cause what are known as *threats to face*. This phenomenon was covered in greater detail in Chapter 2. In responding to such questions, politicians run the risk of making so-called *face-damaging responses*. Specifically, based on the work of Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), these are responses which may threaten the politician's positive face (i.e., cast them in a bad light) or their negative face (i.e., constrain their future freedom of action). In Chapter 5, it is argued that threats to face are a prime reason for political equivocation. A typology is presented in what follows for the analysis of face threats in questions, which distinguishes between 19 different forms of face threat.

According to Goffman's (1955) analysis of face and facework, people aim to preserve not only their own face during social interactions, they may also wish to preserve that of others. So, in many cases, members of the same group develop what can be considered a *collective face* – and when, for example, confronted by someone from outside their group, an inappropriate response by one member can be damaging to the wider membership. Perhaps nowhere is this more pertinent than in a party-based political system like that in the UK, where preservation of party reputation is of prime importance. Thus, when politicians engage in public discourse, they typically are compelled to defend

and even enhance both their own face and that of the party they represent. Furthermore, they are also unlikely to have any such desire to preserve the face of political rivals.

In line with this understanding of social behaviour (Goffman, 1955), Bull et al. (1996) proposed that there are *three* kinds of face that politicians are typically obliged to defend: not just their own and their party's but also the face of significant others (e.g., senior party colleagues). From their study of 18 interviews held during the 1992 General Election campaign – with the then three main party leaders – they devised a coding system based around these three kinds of face. Four researchers collaborated in the analysis (a total of 557 questions) and the development of a typology of face threats. To check reliability, one interview with each of the party leaders was independently coded by all four researchers. The application of Cohen's (1960) kappa test to these findings was found to be $k = 0.80$. Such a result, when compared with the recommendations of statisticians Landis and Koch (1977, p. 165), represents a "substantial strength of agreement".

The full list of 19 face-threat categories (each within one of the three foregoing kinds of face) is presented in the following analysis. Each category refers to how a potential response to certain questions in political interviews relates to a form of face threat. In each case, an example question is provided, drawn from those original interviews. Importantly, Bull et al. (1996) make it clear that, in terms of possible face-threats, the list should not be seen as exhaustive, merely that these 19 categories were distinguishable from their corpus of 557 questions. Following this detailed listing of the 19 face-threat categories, the way in which they are utilised is presented in the ensuing section, titled Rules of Application.

Personal face

1. CREATE OR CONFIRM A NEGATIVE STATEMENT/IMPRESSION ABOUT PERSONAL COMPETENCE

A politician's face may be threatened by a criticism, accusation, or a disagreement; however, they may also inflict self-damage through an apology, excuse, or by admitting guilt or responsibility (Jucker, 1986). For example, interviewer Jeremy Paxman asked PM Major "Isn't all this emphasis on personality a cover for the fact that you haven't got a big idea?" An affirmative answer to this question would have represented an admission of having no significant political ideas, thereby threatening his own personal competence.

2. FAIL TO PRESENT A POSITIVE IMAGE OF SELF WHEN OFFERED THE OPPORTUNITY

Occasionally, interviewers ask questions that, rather than being in some way critical or challenging for the politician, actually provide an opportunity for explicit

self-promotion. Under such circumstances, failing to make the most of such an opportunity may be unfavourable to the politician's reputation, therefore potentially face-damaging. For example, Frost asked Kinnock, "Can you just give me some specific things – these are still-frames of how your life will be different after twelve months of Neil Kinnock in Number 10?" Failure to answer this with positive self-presentation would be face-damaging; it could be considered a reluctance to be explicit about the advantages of a Kinnock premiership.

3. LOSE CREDIBILITY

Should a politician make a claim that is barely credible, this may damage face by casting doubt on their personal judgement. Credibility, or a lack thereof, can refer to any aspect of a statement: logical, factual, or otherwise. For example, Paxman asked Major, "But on the nature of the campaign so far, this whole pitch of 'You can't trust Labour' – negative campaigning – it's no reason to assume we can trust you is it?" Here, an affirmative answer (effectively, if you cannot trust Labour, it means you *can* trust Major) would be somewhat illogical, thereby detrimental in terms of the politician's judgement and credibility.

4. CONTRADICT PAST STATEMENTS, POLICIES, ETC.

Although the world of politics may occasionally compel politicians to shift in their aims and approaches, an apparent lack of consistency in policies or statements can be face-damaging. For example, Kinnock made it clear early in the interview with Frost that he was unwilling to disclose specific details of his party's forthcoming shadow budget. Later in the interview, he was asked, "And you're not going to increase Corporation Tax?". To now reply to this question would be inconsistent with his earlier statement and potentially make the politician appear indecisive.

5. PERSONAL DIFFICULTIES IN THE FUTURE

According to Goffman (1955), people may strive to protect their own face against the mere possibility of a threat. Thus, they are likely to avoid actions that may be face-damaging for the future, even those that are seemingly acceptable at the time. Politicians, specifically, can have good reason for wishing to maintain their future freedom of choice and actions; therefore they often avoid statements which can impose such limitations (see our discussion of negative face in the *Politeness theory* section of Chapter 2). In an interview with Ashdown, Day asked about the scenario of PM Major losing the forthcoming general election, and whether "he should resign in those circumstances?". Ashdown's dilemma here was, were he to say that PM Major should resign, this might become problematic for the Liberal Democrat leader if the election resulted in no overall winner and an opportunity arose for coalition with the Conservatives.

6. CREATE OR CONFIRM A NEGATIVE STATEMENT/IMPRESSION ABOUT ONE'S
OWN PUBLIC PERSONA

Most politicians have a public image and, in the interests of continued electoral success, they need to maintain an image of good standing. One of the politicians in this study – former Royal Marines officer Paddy Ashdown – had gained something of a high-minded, no-nonsense reputation. Arguably, this was in part due to his professional military background

Ashdown's persona came under threat when Paxman asked him, "Are you embarrassed at all about the way in which this whole Liberal Democrat campaign has been hung on you?". To deny such embarrassment could be considered immodest. Furthermore, it may give the impression he had encouraged a cult of personality in his party. Such a notion would likely be damaging to his reputation as a staunch democrat.

7. DIFFICULTY CONFIRMING PERSONAL OR PARTY BELIEFS, STATEMENTS, AIMS,
PRINCIPLES, ETC.

Politicians are expected to be able to clearly articulate their views on a broad range of issues. Failing to do so can be face-damaging because it may seem that either they have not bothered to consider the issue or they have not formulated a logical opinion. The following question was put to PM Major by broadcaster David Dimbleby:

> I wonder whether wavering voters aren't influenced by not quite knowing where you, Prime Minister, stand. And in particular whether you stand for what Mrs Thatcher, your predecessor, stood for or whether you stand for something different from her?

Should Major fail to answer the question, this might be seen as reluctance to clarify his stance and an unwillingness to clarify how his political plans compare to his predecessor's.

Party face

8. CREATE OR CONFIRM A NEGATIVE STATEMENT/IMPRESSION ABOUT THE
PARTY, ITS POLICIES, ACTIONS, STATEMENTS, AIMS, PRINCIPLES, ETC.

This is similar to category 1 but relates to potential face-damage of the politician's party, not them personally. In the following extract, the PM was asked a question by interviewer Brian Walden: "Mr Major, things aren't looking all that good for your party are they? You've had to go into this election without that clear and sustained lead that you must have hoped for, haven't you?" An affirmative answer to this question would be a confirmation of this negative outlook for his party, thereby implying that overall success for the Conservatives in the forthcoming election was doubtful.

9. FAIL TO PRESENT A POSITIVE PARTY IMAGE WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY ARISES

This form of threat to a party's face is parallel to the personal threat shown in category 2. So, somewhat similarly, interviewers occasionally ask questions that, rather than being challenging, actually provide an opportunity for explicit promotion of the politician's party. Under such circumstances, failing to make the most of such an opportunity may give an unfavourable impression of the party; therefore, it can be potentially face-damaging. For example, in his interview of Kinnock, Frost asked, "Can you just give me some specific things – these are still-frames of how your life will be different after twelve months of Neil Kinnock in Number 10?". This question (which was also cited as an appropriate example for category 2) if not answered appropriately by the politician, can be seen to pose a threat to the party as well as the politician. Thus, not taking the opportunity to wax lyrical about a Labour government might be somewhat damaging.

10. FUTURE DIFFICULTIES FOR THE PARTY

This category of party face corresponds to personal face-threat of category 5, in that both relate to a threat to negative face. Thus, politicians not only need to avoid imposing future restrictions on their own freedom of action, they have a similar obligation to avoid the same for their own party. The following shows a question from Dimbleby to Major: "It looks very likely that you're going to be short, at any rate, of an overall majority. If that happens, will you do what the Tories did last time they were short of an overall majority and try and do some deal with somebody to keep yourself in office?" Should the PM respond with either an affirmative or negative answer here, that would likely be disadvantageous to the future freedom of action for his party (and himself).

11. CONTRADICTIONS BETWEEN THE PARTY'S POLICIES, STATEMENTS, ACTIONS, AIMS, PRINCIPLES, ETC

The emergence of any contradictions or inconsistencies related to party policy and such like can be damaging to the party's standing in the eyes of the electorate. In the Walden-Major interview, the PM was asked, "Are you now admitting that the tax cuts that you are planning for the future will not in fact have such a great impact on the improvement of the public services, as if you gave them the money directly?" Had Major answered in the affirmative here, it was claimed that such a response would be inconsistent with his party's existing policies on taxation and public expenditure, thereby would reflect badly on his party (and himself).

12. CREATE OR CONFIRM A NEGATIVE NATIONAL ASSESSMENT (GOVERNING PARTIES ONLY)

This category does not refer directly to a political party; rather, it concerns the state of the nation. It relates only to parties currently in government because of their responsibility for the nation's standing and thereby their association with

any such negative assessment. So, when the then leader of the government (PM Major) was asked by Frost, "But this one, the latest recession was made in England, however it may have been prolonged by overseas factors – but it started here, didn't it?" Had he responded to confirm this statement (i.e., that the recession originated in England), the PM's party – because of their position of power – would be strongly implicated; thus, they would be somewhat discredited.

The face of significant others

As well as defending their own face and the political party they represent, politicians are expected to defend and support the face of positively valued others. This includes fellow party members and colleagues, and even the electorate. Furthermore, they have an obligation to avoid being supportive of those who are negatively valued (e.g., their political opponents).

13. UNSUPPORTIVE OF THE ELECTORATE

In any democratic political system, politicians are, of course, dependent on electoral support. Therefore, it would not be in their interests to cast aspersions on the wider electorate or of sizeable sections of it. In an interview with Ashdown, Frost asked, "But before proportional representation becomes, as it were, final, there would be a referendum?". To answer negatively to this question would be highly face-damaging for Ashdown. Such a response would indicate the Liberal Democrats' reluctance to give the electorate the opportunity to have a say in his party's proposed changes to the national voting system.

14. NOT SUPPORTING A SIGNIFICANT BODY OF ELECTORATE OPINION (WHERE OPINION IS DIVIDED)

There is often a substantial division of public opinion concerning major political or social issues. Under such circumstances,[7] politicians are confronted with the dilemma that, if they clearly express their views on such an issue, they may alienate large sections of the electorate. Again, in the Walden–Major interview, the PM was asked, "Are you saying that when these people tell the polls 'What I desperately care about are the public services, I reject tax cuts, I want the money spent on the public services', they are actually lying?". Obviously, an answer in the affirmative to this question – confirming that people who say they care about such issues are lying – would be highly damaging to Major in the eyes of those people and many who share their views.

15. NOT SUPPORTING A COLLEAGUE

This typically relates to fellow party members, be they in government or otherwise. In the following example, Major is asked a question about a statement

made by Norman Lamont. At that time, Lamont was Chancellor in Major's government. Interviewer Walden said to the PM:

> Listen to this wonderfully blithe statement that the Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont gave to the House of Commons during Treasury Questions last year. He said rising unemployment and the recession have been the price we've had to pay to get inflation down. This is a price well worth paying, a lot of people say. I can't imagine a more uncaring statement than that, and that's true, isn't it?

Here, had Major responded affirmatively to Walden's question, that would be a clear failure to be supportive and would be potentially face-damaging for his colleague the Chancellor.

16. NOT SUPPORTING A SUB-GROUP OF ONE'S OWN PARTY

It is common for large political parties to have clear sections and sub-groups, some which have distinct views that are opposed by others within the same party. Some politicians, particularly those who lead such parties, need to be mindful of this in their public discourse. Consider the following question from Dimbleby to PM Major, which related to removal from office of the preceding PM (Thatcher) by his party: "But do you think the Conservative Party was wrong to have removed her?" The dilemma for Major here was that stating either his agreement or disagreement would likely alienate a large section of his party.

This example represents a classic communicative conflict for a politician – an affirmative response would place them against a substantial proportion of people of one opinion; similarly, a negative response would place them against those of an opposite opinion. Under such circumstances, politicians are very likely to make an equivocal response (i.e., they give no indication of what they think) as the least face-threatening option.

17. NOT SUPPORTING OTHER POSITIVELY VALUED PEOPLE OR INSTITUTIONS

There are also people (including individuals, groups, and those represented by large organisations) who have a strong alignment – occasionally an historical one – with certain political parties. For example, certainly at the time of these 1992 analyses (Bull et al., 1996), the Conservative and Labour parties had strong connections, respectively, with the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) and with most trade unions. In an interview with Labour leader Kinnock, Paxman asked a hypothetical question concerning how a future Labour government would deal with union members engaging in one form of industrial action: "Would sympathy actions[8] be legal or illegal?" Should Kinnock declare that sympathy actions should be illegal, such a response would likely position him against a large number of trade unionists, which would be particularly disadvantageous for any leader of the Labour party.

18. NOT SUPPORTING A FRIENDLY COUNTRY

Politicians are also obliged to avoid offending other nations, particularly those with whom there are important economic, industrial, or national security relations. The UK's longstanding association with the USA represents a classic example of this – and one which politicians of all persuasions tend to be mindful of in their public discourse. For example, Kinnock was asked by Frost "If at some stage President Bush were to ring you up and ask the favour that he asked of Mrs Thatcher in 1986 – to fly American bombers from British bases against Libya[9] – would you be disposed to agree?". Should Kinnock respond negatively to such a question, many would have considered that as being inappropriately unsupportive of the USA.

19. SUPPORTING A POSITIVE VIEW OF OPPONENTS

This category also relates to significant others but, unlike those presented previously that relate to avoiding either casting aspersions or going against others, it relates to an obligation to *inflict* face-damage on opponents (or, at least, avoid being supportive). In these cases, opponents may include rival politicians, or representatives of organisations or other nations with whom there is an expectation not to support, either by withholding praise or through the expression of criticism or disapproval. For example, Major was asked by Frost, "Is there really a shift of opinion towards the Liberal Democrats or is it because they have run a better campaign than you have?". This alternative question presents the PM with two options. Responding affirmatively to either would represent support for political rivals – something politicians seek to avoid, especially during an election campaign.

Rules of application

1. TYPES OF QUESTION

The foregoing face-threat categories are applied in the context of the six different categories of question type defined previously: the three types of interrogative syntax questions (polar, interrogative word, and alternative) and the three types of non-interrogative syntax questions (declarative, moodless, and indirect). It was proposed that the criteria for deciding what constitutes an answer to interrogative syntax questions are also applicable to those utilising non-interrogative syntax (Bull, 1994), given that all of the latter can be further categorised as either polar, interrogative word, or alternative. Thus, the two principal ways of answering a polar question are to confirm or deny the proposition; a third option is to equivocate. The principal options for responding to an interrogative-word question are either to answer or to equivocate. There are typically three main options for answering an alternative question: to confirm one of the two proffered alternatives or to select a third (one that was not specified in the question); a fourth response option is to equivocate.

For each of the three question types, all potential response options are coded in terms of possible face-threats; this overall process is applied to identify the *face-threatening structure of the question*. When all the principal ways of responding to a question are considered to be face threatening, then the question is judged as creating a *communicative conflict*. The communicative significance of such conflictual questions for equivocation is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

2. NO NECESSARY THREAT

With some questions, a response may be produced which is not necessarily face-damaging (i.e., an answer that is directly relevant to the question, is convincing, and which, if necessary, the politician could suitably defend). If it is possible to produce such a response, *no necessary threat* is coded (such coding is not dependent on the actual response).

Responses to no-necessary-threat questions may be an answer or may be a non-reply. Providing a clear, direct answer to some interviewer questions is not necessarily face-threatening. For example, occasionally, questions merely seek a definition of an area of policy – to which a clear answer need not be in any way face-threatening.

Furthermore, some questions present the politician with an opportunity to promote themselves and/or their party. For example, PM Major was asked by Day, "Why do you deserve, why does the Conservative Party deserve under your leadership what the British people have never given any political party in modern times – a fourth successive term of office?". In this instance, *failing* to answer this question could be seen as highly threatening to both personal and party face (see categories 1 and 8 in the previous discussion).

In cases where a question is based on inaccurate information (or if any associated presupposition is clearly disputable), the politician by not answering may emphasise its shortcomings without any threat to face. Conversely, an answer by the politician might suggest a failure on their part to notice any inaccuracy or disputable presupposition. For example, Major was asked by Day, "Why have you changed your mind on the desirability of proportional representation?". Here, the PM could legitimately challenge Day's question by clarifying that he had never been a supporter of PR. Should he not do that, it may be viewed that he had changed his opinion on that issue.

In an interview with Paxman, Major was asked, "If you've got it wrong and if you lose, the party will hang you out to dry, won't they?". To this question, Major responded with "I haven't got it wrong and I'm not going to lose". Had the PM confirmed the premise of the question, that would be personally face-threatening; conversely, had he tried to deny that his party (in the event of electoral defeat) would "hang him out to dry", that could be considered lacking in credibility. By not answering (i.e., he responded in a way that showed he did not accept the question's speculative nature), he avoided both of these unfavourable response options.

3. DEFAULT CODINGS

Occasionally, the phrasing of a question may project a particular answer. For example, interviewer Frost asked Kinnock, "You would in fact admit that [taxes] will rise?". For the politician, anything other than an explicit denial could be seen to imply that the statement within the question is correct (i.e., that there *will* be increases in taxes). For the coding of non-replies to questions like this, the following additional categories were proposed:

3(a). Confirms by default   This relates to responses where there is no attempt by the politician to refute the statement within the question, thereby implying confirmation. An interviewer's question may present some form of negative representation of the politician or their party – the preceding question by Frost concerning increased taxation is such an example. A non-reply to this question would thus be coded as confirms by default.

3(b). Denies by default   This relates to responses where there is no attempt by the politician to confirm a statement within the question, thereby implying denial. For example, Frost also asked Kinnock, "You're definitely not going to pull more people into that [tax] bracket?". A response by the politician devoid of clear confirmation would imply – in this case – the intention that more people *would* be subjected to that taxation. A non-reply to such a question would therefore be coded as denies by default.

3(c). No clear default   Of course, many non-replies have no clear default meaning. Sometimes, the politician's non-reply can be seen as neither confirmation nor denial. For example, when Dimbleby asked PM Major, "Do you think the Conservative Party was wrong to have removed [Thatcher]?", either confirmation or denial had the potential to offend large numbers of fellow Conservatives. So, as this example posed clear face-threats in both directions, a non-reply has no clear default.

3(d). Use of multiple categories   The foregoing 19 categories of face-threat should not be seen as mutually exclusive. Indeed, there are questions that threaten, for example, both personal and party face. Furthermore, a question may threaten *one* of the three kinds of face (i.e., person, party, or significant others) but in more than one way at the same time.

4. THE MEANING OF PRONOUNS

In political interviews, problems may arise with regard to the pronoun *you*, which, in spoken English, may refer to either the singular or the plural (e.g., see Bull & Fetzer, 2006). For example, Dimbleby asked PM Major, "Did you expect to be ahead in the polls by now?". Here, "you" could refer to either the PM personally or to his party (or indeed both). In cases of such pronominal ambiguity, it is assumed to refer to both politician and party unless it is clearly

disambiguated (e.g., an interviewer might say "I am asking you what you think of this issue personally", or "What stance do you as a party take on this particular issue?"). One way of testing for potential ambiguity is to replace "you" with the politician's name, then with the name of the party. If both versions of the sentence still make sense, then it is feasible that "you" may be a reference both that particular politician *and* their party.

Conclusions

The techniques detailed in the foregoing analysis have formed part of the analyses of either political speeches (Chapter 4), broadcast interviews (Chapters 5 and 7), or parliamentary questions (Chapter 6). Although the techniques for analysing question–response sequences were devised originally for broadcast interviews, they have proved readily applicable to the analysis of parliamentary questions not only in the studies reported in this book but also in those conducted by other researchers. For example, in their substantive study of PMQs, Bates, Kerr, Byrne, and Stanley (2014) used a modified form of the typologies described in this chapter for the analysis of question–response sequences. In the following four chapters, we report the results of empirical studies of political discourse, many of which were based on these techniques.

Notes

1 We discuss Hansard in relation to accuracy in Chapter 6.
2 The vuvuzela is a basic wind instrument – typically a hand-held plastic horn – which gained in popularity following its noticeable use by supporters at football matches during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. It can be used to produce a monotonic sound, clearly audible above the noise of a large crowd.
3 This section is based primarily on the study by **Bull (1994)**.
4 Senior civil servant Sue Gray was appointed to lead an investigation into allegations that gatherings in government buildings (including 10 Downing Street – the address of the PM's main residence and official place of business) had broken Covid-19 lockdown rules. Further details of the report are discussed in Chapter 6 on PMQs.
5 This section is based on the study by **Bull (1994)**.
6 This section is based on the study by **Bull, Elliott, Palmer, and Walker (1996)**.
7 This scenario is very relevant to that which many politicians have faced more recently over the issue of Brexit.
8 Sympathy actions, sometimes referred to as secondary actions, occur when members of one union strike in sympathy with members of another union who are on strike.
9 In 1986, PM Thatcher agreed to American bombers flying from British bases to carry out airstrikes on targets in Libya. These actions by the US military were conducted in retaliation for the fatal explosion of a terrorist bomb at a West Berlin discotheque frequented by American soldiers. The President who Paxman referred to in his question – George H W Bush – was Vice-President in 1986.

Part II

Empirical studies of political discourse

4   Claps and claptraps

How political speakers and audiences interact[1]

The study of oratory has a long history, dating back to the classical civilisations of Greece and Rome – in ancient Greece through the work of Aristotle (4th century BCE/ 2006), in ancient Rome through the work of Cicero (55BCE/ 2001) and Quintilian (c.95CE/ 2015). In modern times, the study of political speech-making has been transformed through the availability of audio- and video-recordings, which can be subject to detailed microanalysis. Particular attention has been given to rhetorical techniques used by political speakers to invite applause (e.g. Atkinson, 1984a). Whereas oratory was once regarded as a form of monologue – where a speaker addresses an audience – Atkinson proposed that political speech-making can be understood more as a kind of dialogue between the speaker and their audience, in some ways comparable to how people take turns in conversation.

In this chapter, research on speaker-audience interaction is reviewed. A new theoretical model is presented of how speakers interact with audiences in set-piece political speeches (Bull, 2016a), based on the concept of dialogical interaction. In addition to applause, research is reviewed on the range of audience responses, including laughter, cheering, chanting, and booing. Research is also reviewed on rhetorical devices (elements of speech, mostly implicit, that can function to invite applause), as well as other factors that may affect speaker-audience interaction (e.g., content, delivery, and uninvited applause). This chapter is based not only on studies of UK-based political speeches but also includes recent analyses of those set in Japan, South Korea, the USA, France, and Norway. This unique cross-cultural perspective has enabled us to develop new insights into speaker-audience interaction.

In the first section of this chapter, a description is given of the ground-breaking research conducted by Atkinson (e.g., 1984a) on how applause may be invited through rhetorical devices. His analyses have proved remarkably enduring and have provided some fascinating insights into the stage management of political speeches. However, these studies were first published in the 1980s, and since then a great deal of complementary speech research has been conducted. These studies are reviewed later in this chapter, where we consider the various factors that can affect speaker-audience interaction, as well as cross-cultural differences in the behaviour of political speakers and their audiences.

In the final section of this chapter, drawing on all of this research, a new model of speaker-audience interaction in political oratory is proposed, based on the concepts of cross-cultural distinctions and dialogical interaction.

Claptraps: techniques for inviting applause[2]

Atkinson's (1984a) critical insight was to compare political speech-making with how people take turns in a two-way conversation. For example, when one speaker comes to the end of a list, this can signal the end of an utterance – a point at which the other person can or is expected to take over the speaking turn (Jefferson, 1990). In conversation, such lists typically comprise three items, so that once the listener recognises that a list is under way, it is possible to anticipate the end of the speaker's utterance; this is referred to as a *completion point*.

In the context of political speeches, the use by the speaker of a *three-part list* can signal to the audience not when to join in the conversation but when to begin their applause. A salient example of this occurred in a 1996 conference speech by Labour leader Tony Blair (the then Leader of the Opposition [LO]) when he said, "Ask me my three main priorities for government, and I tell you: education, education, and education". Here, the word "and" preceded the third and final mention of "education", thereby signalling to the audience that he was approaching a completion point, to which they responded with enthusiastic applause. Thus, just as conversationalists take it in turn to speak, so speaker and audience may also take turns. Audience *turns*, however, are essentially limited to displays of approval or disapproval, primarily through either applause, cheering or booing.

Another device identified by Atkinson (1984a) is the *contrast*. This typically takes the form of a two-part statement or phrase, where the message of the second part clearly opposes or diverges from that of the first. To enhance effectiveness, the second part of the contrast often closely resembles the first in terms of construction and duration; thus, the audience can more easily anticipate the point of completion. The following such example was from a 2011 conference speech by Labour LO Ed Miliband: "The Labour Party lost trust on the economy. I am determined we restore your trust in us on the economy".

According to Atkinson (1984a), the contrast is by far the most frequently used device for inviting applause. In essence, it comprises a word, phrase, or sentence, followed by a word, phrase, or sentence with a divergent meaning. The more closely the second part of the contrast resembles the first part – in terms of its length and how it is assembled – the more likely the audience will respond on cue. If the contrast is too short, people may not have sufficient time to realise that a completion point is forthcoming, let alone produce an appropriate response. Atkinson proposed that the use of both contrasts and three-part lists is characteristic of so-called *charismatic* speakers, and that such devices from political speeches are often extracted for coverage by the news media. The foregoing three-part list by Blair ("education, education, and education")

exemplifies this point very well. Not only did it receive widespread coverage at the time but it remains a famous piece of rhetoric. Indeed, in the one and only conference leader speech by Prime Minister (PM) Liz Truss in 2022, she appeared to parody Blair's line when she said, "I have three priorities for our economy: growth, growth, and growth".

A notable feature of both the three-part list and the contrast is that the speaker does not openly ask the audience for applause. For example, the speaker does not say, "Please put your hands together to show your appreciation" or "I am asking you for your support". Instead, these devices are embedded into the structure of the speech to indicate to the audience when applause is appropriate – that is to say, the devices are not explicit but implicit.

A good example of how these devices are utilised can be seen in ritual-ised messages, such as commendations or introductions, which may entail a process known as *naming* (Atkinson, 1984a). Occasionally, speakers may invite the audience to express their approval of and appreciation for a certain per-son. The speaker often begins by giving some kind of clues to the individual's identity; they then continue with some appreciative comments, culminating in announcing the person's name. The speaker may even make a short pause just before revealing their identity. Thereby, the audience is given ample time to realise that applause is expected and to anticipate the intended recipient, so that they are fully prepared to applaud on the announcement of their name. Naming is often combined with the speaker's expression of *gratitude* in relation to that particular person.

It should, however, be noted that Atkinson's (e.g., 1984a) research was based on the analysis of only selected speech extracts. Hence, it was entirely pos-sible that his examples were not necessarily representative of political speech-making overall. The most effective way to address this apparent shortcoming was to conduct research employing comprehensive sampling. Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) took on such an endeavour in their admirable and sub-stantial analysis of all 476 televised speeches from the three main UK political party (Conservative, Labour, and Liberal) conferences of 1981. Their findings showed that contrasts were associated with no less than 33.2% of the incidents of collective applause across those speeches, lists with 12.6%. Hence, almost half the incidents of collective applause were associated with the two rhetorical devices originally identified by Atkinson.

In addition to lists and contrasts, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) identified five additional rhetorical devices used by speakers to invite applause. These were termed p*uzzle-solution*, *headline-punchline*, *position-taking*, *pursuit*, and *com-bination* (hereafter, we refer to these collectively as *the seven basic rhetorical devices*).

In a puzzle-solution device, the speaker begins by establishing some kind of puzzle, problem, or conundrum in the minds of the audience, then goes on to reveal the solution. For example, in his leader speech to his party conference in 2015, the then PM David Cameron said, "But just for a moment, think back to May the 7th. I don't know about you but it only takes two words to cheer me up [PUZZLE] . . . Exit poll [SOLUTION]". Here Cameron was referring to

results of an opinion poll showing he was very likely to be returned to power with a majority of MPs; and of course, the audience would mostly be unaware of what those two words were ("Exit poll") until he revealed them.

The headline-punchline device is somewhat similar, although structurally simpler than the puzzle-solution. Here, the speaker simply proposes to make a declaration, pledge, or announcement – then proceeds to make it (the punchline). For example, the speaker may use headline phrases such as "I'll tell you what makes it worthwhile", "Let me say this", or "The really important thing is". The applaudable part of the message is emphasised by the speaker's calling attention to the punchline in advance.

In a position-taking device, the speaker first describes a state of affairs towards which a strongly evaluative stance might be expected. This description itself may occasionally contain little or no evaluation; but this is followed by either overt and unequivocal praise or condemnation from the speaker. An example of position-taking as a rhetorical device was evident in the 2022 speech by PM Liz Truss (the position-taking stance is italicised):

> I grew up in Paisley and in Leeds in the 80s and 90s. I've seen the boarded-up shops. I've seen people left with no hope turning to drugs. I've seen families struggling to put food on the table. Low growth isn't just numbers on a spreadsheet. Low growth means lower wages, fewer opportunities and less money to spend on the things that make life better. It means our country falling behind other countries, including those who threaten our way of life. And it means the parts of our country that I really care about falling even further behind. *That is why we must level up our country in a Conservative way, ensuring everywhere everyone can get on.*

In cases where the speaker fails to get the applause they were expecting, they may try again by repeating or rephrasing a point. This is known as a pursuit, although such cases appear somewhat rare.

Finally, any of these foregoing rhetorical devices may be combined with one another (i.e., a combination), adding further emphasis to the completion point of the message. For example, PM Cameron (in his 2015 speech) used the following combination (italicised) of a headline-punchline and position-taking:

> When we joined the European Union we were told that it was about going into a common market, rather than the goal that some had for an ever closer union. *And let me put this very clearly* [HEADLINE], *Britain is not interested in ever closer union and I will put that right* [PUNCHLINE] [POSITION TAKING].

A number of these rhetorical devices can be further illustrated from Miliband's 2011 leader speech to the Labour Party annual conference. In the early part of the speech, Miliband said, "Ask me the three most important things I've done this year and I'll tell you; being at the birth of my second son, Sam".

Thus, he used both a puzzle ("Ask me the three most important things I've done this year") and a headline ("I'll tell you"). Both devices were followed by the solution/punchline ("being at the birth of my second son, Sam"), which seemingly was the applaudable part of the message. However, the audience did not applaud at that point; then there was a short pause. Presumably, the audience was still waiting for a further two items, because Miliband had said "Ask me the *three* most important things". During the pause, Miliband nodded his head, which finally prompted the audience applause.[3] Arguably, the head nod can be understood as a form of *nonverbal* pursuit, indicating to the audience that he was inviting applause when stating "being at the birth of my second son, Sam" (Bull, 2015). This extract, because Miliband used multiple rhetorical devices (headline-punchline, puzzle-solution, three-part list, pursuit), is another clear example of a combination. In the same speech, Miliband was observed using a combination of a three-part list, a contrast, and position-taking device (numbers and letters are added for explanation):

> (1) You need to know there is an alternative, (2) you need to know it is credible, (3) so people need to know where I stand. (A) The Labour Party lost trust on the economy. (B) I am determined we restore your trust in us on the economy.

In the foregoing extract, the elements of the three-part list are indicated 1, 2, and 3; the two elements of the contrast are shown A and B (effectively, "lost trust" is contrasted with "restore your trust"). As for position-taking rhetoric, the state of affairs described by Miliband is that "The Labour Party lost trust on the economy"; he then declared his evaluative stance with "I am determined we restore your trust in us on the economy" (Bull, 2016a).

In addition to the nine rhetorical devices detailed thus far, a further two were identified by Bull and Wells (2002). They proposed the inclusion of *jokes* because, in UK political speeches at least, these are often applauded as well as generating laughter. They also identified *negative naming* as an eleventh device. Whereas in naming, the audience are invited to show their appreciation for a particular individual (Atkinson, 1984a), in negative naming the audience are invited to applaud the criticism, disapproval, or derision of a named person or group. This is typically a political opponent, an opposing party, or some other unvalued individual or group to whom the speaker's audience may object. For example, former Labour PM Gordon Brown received rapturous applause in his 2009 conference leader speech for his condemnation of the far-right British National Party: "And we will back you in the second task you've taken on – to ensure there is no place for the British National Party in the democratic politics of our country".

Atkinson's original observations (e.g., 1984a) have made an enormous contribution to our understanding of political rhetoric; in particular, through his analogy between speaker-audience interaction and conversational turn-taking. Thus, just as people take turns in conversation by anticipating when the speaker

will reach the end of an utterance (e.g., Duncan & Fiske, 1985; Walker, 1982), so audience members may anticipate speaker completion points through the embedded rhetoric of the speech. This enables them to applaud at appropriate moments and is reflected in the close synchrony between speech and applause. Audience applause is considered *synchronous* when it begins at a speaker completion point, just before, or immediately afterwards. Audience responses are considered *asynchronous* when they tend to be *isolated* (involving just one or two people), *interruptive*, or *delayed* (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000).

The continuing impact of Atkinson's (e.g., 1984a) research is reflected in a recent study of 14 speeches delivered by two leading UK politicians: the then PM, Theresa May, and her Labour opponent, Jeremy Corbyn (O'Gorman & Bull, 2021). The speeches (seven by each leader) were either from their respective 2016 party conferences or their 2017 General Election campaigns. Results showed that almost every instance of collective applause (98%) was associated with one or more of the 11 rhetorical devices[4] described in the foregoing analysis. Thus, irrespective of the marked political differences between these two party-leaders, in terms of the rhetoric they used to invite applause from their audiences, they were noticeably similar.

However, there are a number of important issues that can be raised in relation to Atkinson's (1984a) research. For example, in Heritage and Greatbatch's (1986) study, only two-thirds of the collective applause occurred in response to the seven basic rhetorical devices. Such a finding prompts the question: by what specific means did the remaining one-third of the applause occur? Furthermore, audiences do not only applaud – they may respond in other ways, such as cheering, laughing, chanting, or even booing. Thus, for a truly comprehensive analysis of audience responses, these other forms of response need to be considered, including isolated as well as collective responses, and uninvited responses as well as invited. In addition, there are other factors besides rhetorical devices which may be important in inviting audience responses, such as the role of speech content and speech delivery (i.e., nonverbal and vocal cues). The relative importance of all of these factors needs to be considered in any model of speaker-audience interaction.

Factors that affect speaker–audience interaction

Delivery[5]

The delivery of a speech can refer to various forms of nonverbal communication, such as the use of posture, hand gestures, gaze, and facial expression. It can also include vocal delivery, for example, tone of voice, pitch, speech rate, and volume. Delivery has long been recognised for its importance in oratory. In ancient Rome, the use of gesture was considered in the treatises of both Cicero (55BCE/ 2001) and Quintilian (c.95CE/ 2015). Notably, Quintilian used the term *gestus* to refer not only to the actions of speakers' arms and hands but to movements of the entire body.

According to Atkinson (1984a), applause is far more likely when a rhetorical device is accompanied by appropriate delivery. Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) categorised a sample of speeches in terms of the seven basic rhetorical devices, which were further coded in relation to what was termed *stress*. Stress was coded according to whether the speaker gazed at the audience at or near a completion point, whether the message was delivered more loudly than surrounding passages, whether there was increased emphasis or variation in pitch or rhythm, or when there was a clear use of gesture. In the absence of any of these features, those parts were coded as *no stress*. Whenever there was only one of these features apparent, that was coded as *intermediate stress*; two or more such features were coded as *full stress*. Over a half of the fully stressed messages were applauded, whereas only a quarter of the intermediate messages were applauded. Furthermore, less than 5% of unstressed messages were applauded. Thus, Heritage and Greatbatch supported Atkinson's view that appropriate delivery by the speaker greatly increases the chance of a rhetorical device receiving applause.

From an alternative perspective, a speaker's nonverbal behaviour can indicate that applause at the conclusion of a rhetorical device is *not* appropriate (Bull & Wells, 2002). So, for example, a speaker may deliver a three-part list, each item accompanied by a hand gesture, and receive tumultuous applause. But if the speaker continues to gesture after the third item and/or takes a visible intake of breath, this would suggest that the list was not intended as an applause invitation. Not every rhetorical device receives applause but Atkinson's analysis never really accounted for this. From this perspective, appropriate delivery is as integral to an applause invitation as are rhetorical devices.

The content of speech[6]

Of course, as Atkinson (1984a) also pointed out, audiences do not simply applaud rhetorical devices, they also applaud appropriate speech content. He conducted an analysis of applaudable speech content and found that, overwhelmingly, it took the form of what he called ingroup praise (praising their own political party) or outgroup derogation (criticism of political opponents). In a sample of such statements, almost all (95%) were either favourable references to ingroup individuals or to the group as a whole, or were unfavourable references to opponents. Atkinson took the view that audiences are much more likely to applaud appropriate speech content if it is formulated in rhetorical devices.

In a further analysis of content, Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) also found that applause was reserved for a relatively narrow range of message types. These were statements favourable to the speaker's own party, praise of certain valued individuals or groups, support for particular policies, criticisms of individuals or factions within the speaker's own party (internal attacks), or statements critical of outgroups such as opposing parties (external attacks). The applauded messages could be any of these such statements, either singly or in combination. In

total, these categories of political message made up over 81% of all applauded messages in their sample.

Heritage and Greatbatch (1986) also analysed those external attacks in their sample in greater detail. Whereas 71% of those expressed in one or more of their seven rhetorical devices were applauded, only 29% of those not associated with a rhetorical device received applause. Thus, while a clear relationship between applause and certain types of speech content was acknowledged, these findings were consistent with Atkinson in that such content is much more likely to receive applause if formatted in appropriate rhetoric. Thereby, speakers may also facilitate their interaction with audiences, given the strong normative expectations that audience members should applaud at party political conferences.

However, what the foregoing analysis does not comprehensively address is the role of speech content in the absence of speaker applause invitations. In one study (Bull, 2000a), instances were identified from leader speeches at UK party political conferences of collective applause occurring in the absence of any of the seven basic rhetorical devices. In every case, the audience applauded statements of political policy; namely, what the leader proposed he would do if returned to power. Thus, for some messages, speech content may be appreciated by the audience to such an extent that it will be applauded in the absence of any rhetorical device.

The following such example comes from a 1996 address by Blair – his last conference speech before becoming PM:

> We will be part of the European Social Chapter as every other government Tory or Labour is in the rest of Europe. And there will be a right for any individual to join a trade union and if . . .
> <div align="center">xxxxXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXxxxxxx</div>
>
> and if a majority of the workforce want it, for the union to represent those people.
> xxxxxxxxXXXXXXXXX

In Blair's use of the phrase "to join a trade union", there was nothing to suggest a completion point. Indeed, given that it was followed with "and if", it seems very likely that he intended to continue. Nor did his delivery suggest a completion point; he was not gesturing and he continued to look straight ahead at the audience. Of course, it is possible that the audience mistakenly anticipated a completion point after "join a trade union" but, given the strong traditional association – particularly at that time – of trade unionism with the Labour Party, it is much more likely that the interruptive applause endorsed Blair's support of the right to join a trade union. Thus, the audience applause seemed a direct response to this particular speech content.

Uninvited applause[7]

In the foregoing example, the applause for "to join a trade union" appeared to be uninvited, as well as a direct response to the content of speech. That is to say, Blair was not inviting applause through any of the rhetorical devices described previously, nor did his delivery suggest an applause invitation.

In a study of 15 speeches from five annual UK party political conferences (1996–2000), both uninvited and invited applause were analysed by Bull and Wells (2002). To identify uninvited applause was relatively unproblematic (inter-rater reliability was confirmed by a Phi coefficient of 0.94). Most applause instances (86%) were considered to be invited; the remaining 14% was uninvited. However, unlike the previous study (Bull, 2000a), some applause associated with rhetorical devices was considered to be uninvited, not because of the speech content but because the associated delivery appeared not to indicate an applause invitation (75% of all incidents of uninvited applause).

For example, the following speech section came from a 1999 conference address by the then Conservative LO William Hague: "What annoys me most about today's Labour politicians is not their beliefs – they're entitled to those – but their sheer, unadulterated hypocrisy. They say one thing and they do another". Here, Hague used two contrasts in quick succession ("beliefs" contrasted with "hypocrisy"; "say one thing" contrasted with "do another"). However, after the phrase "they do another", Hague also showed a very clear and visible intake of breath, which suggested that his intention had been to continue and that he was not seeking applause at that point. Hence, the applause which occurred after "they do another" was considered uninvited and interruptive.

Thus, from this perspective, uninvited applause can occur not only as a direct response to speech content but also through a misreading of rhetorical devices as applause invitations. Such incidents can be identifiable when the associated delivery (in the foregoing case, Hague's intake of breath) suggests that the speaker intends to continue.

Cross-cultural studies[8]

While Atkinson's (1984a) research was based essentially on UK-based political speeches, due consideration must be given to potential cross-cultural differences in speaker-audience interaction (Bull & Waddle, 2021). For example, the rhetorical devices as identified from British political speeches may not be characteristic of worldwide political oratory, they may be specific only to UK political culture. Furthermore, while the devices identified from UK research are characteristically implicit in the structure of speech, this may not be true for other cultures. The same may be said about applause, which is the characteristic form of audience response in British political speeches but may not be characteristic of political speeches set in other countries.

Accordingly, a series of studies have been conducted of speaker-audience interaction at political meetings in different cultures: Japan (Bull & Feldman,

2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012); South Korea (Choi & Bull, 2021; Choi et al., 2016); the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015; Goode & Bull, 2020); France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017); and Norway (Iversen & Bull, 2016). The findings from these studies are reported in the following analysis.

Japan[9]

Two studies were conducted of political speeches in Japan, the first based on 36 speeches from the 2005 General Election campaign (Bull & Feldman, 2011); the second, on 38 speeches from the 2009 General Election campaign (Feldman & Bull, 2012). All the speeches were delivered at various indoor locations (e.g., school classrooms and gymnasia); the audiences typically comprised party supporters, making the events somewhat comparable to party conference speeches in the UK.

The seven basic rhetorical devices (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) were readily identifiable across these speeches; however, they only accounted for a small proportion of applause (29% in the 2005 Election, 26% in the 2009 Election). Hence, it was found necessary to conduct further investigation of the applause instances in these speeches, from which six new categories of rhetorical device were identified. Firstly, *greetings/salutations* are common at the start of every speech, when the speakers briefly introduce themselves. Next, speakers typically *express appreciation* to the audience for their attendance. During the speeches, the politicians regularly make *requests for support* from the audience. They may follow some of their statements with *requests for agreement*, such as "Don't you think so?" or "Don't you agree?". They may also use *descriptions of their campaign activity*, such as people they met or the conversations they had. Finally, it was considered necessary to utilise the category of *other* for any applaudable statements not befitting those previously presented. In addition, in line with the findings of Bull and Wells (2002), the category of *jokes/humorous expressions* was also used. The results showed that the pattern of rhetorical devices used by speakers between the two election campaigns (2005 and 2009) was highly similar (.93). Hence, the findings of the first study were not just confined to one general election but were arguably more typical of Japanese political speech-making in general.

There were a number of interesting differences between British and Japanese political speakers. In particular, a notable feature of UK-based political speeches is that rhetorical devices are typically implicit – embedded in the structure of speech. In contrast, Japanese speakers predominantly make use of explicit invitations. To assess the relative proportion of both categories, the data were reorganised into two superordinate categories of explicit and implicit affiliative response invitations. Implicit invitations comprised the seven basic rhetorical devices established from UK-based data (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), together with campaign activity descriptions. Explicit invitations comprised greetings/salutations, expressing appreciation, requests for support, requests for agreement, and jokes/humorous expressions. Notably, in Japanese

speeches, the majority of applause instances occurred in response to a speaker making an explicit invitation: 68% in the speeches from the 2005 Election (Bull & Feldman, 2011); 70% in those from 2009 (Feldman & Bull, 2012). The most frequently applauded form of rhetorical device in Japanese speeches was explicit requests for support (30%, Bull & Feldman, 2011). This last finding contrasts interestingly with British speech research (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), where the most common rhetorical device was contrasts (33%) – an implicit and thereby far less direct form of applause invitation.

Another interesting difference is in the phenomenon of so-called negative naming (Bull & Wells, 2002). This is a form of rhetoric that is sometimes used by British politicians; however, it was not a feature of any of the 74 Japanese political speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012). While verbal antagonism towards political opponents can sometimes enhance the reputation of British politicians (see Waddle et al., 2019), such behaviour is unlikely to benefit their Japanese counterparts. Indeed, it can be counter-productive, as direct attacks on political opponents can damage the reputation of Japanese speakers far more than those being criticised (Bull & Feldman, 2011).

All of the early UK-based research on political speeches was focused essentially on applause. However, of course, audiences can respond in ways other than applause. They may, for example, cheer or laugh. In these two studies of Japanese politicians, laughter and cheering were analysed in addition to applause. In the 2005 Election campaign speeches, although applause was the predominant form of audience response (59% of responses), there was also a substantial proportion of laughter (25%) and cheering (16%) (Bull & Feldman, 2011). In those from 2009 (Feldman & Bull, 2012), there was almost as much laughter (39%) as applause (40%), and cheering accounted for 9% of responses.

In addition, vocalisations by the Japanese audiences termed *aizuchi* were also analysed. Common *aizuchi* are "*hai*", "*ee*", or "*un*" (meaning "yes", with varying degrees of formality), "*sō desu ne*" ("that's how it is, I think"), "*sō desu ka*" ("is that so?"), "*hontō, hontō ni*", or "*honma*" ("really"). *Aizuchi* are considered reassuring to the speaker, showing that the listener is active and involved in the discussion. Actual *aizuchi* responses were relatively infrequent – only 3.3% of all affiliative responses from the 2009 Election speeches (Feldman & Bull, 2012) – but those that did occur were typically in response to the speaker requesting agreement (75% of all *aizuchi* responses). Specifically, these took the form of "*hai*", "*tadashii desu*", and "*honto desu*" (meaning "yes, this is true"), "*machigai nai*" and "*sono ori desu*" ("you are correct"), "*atarimae*" and "*tozen*" ("naturally"/"obviously"), and "*tashika ni*" ("certainly").

Another notable feature of Japanese audience responses was the total absence of *isolated applause*. Isolated applause relates to instances when very few people clap (often just one or two). This is in contrast to *collective applause*, which is when widespread audience applause occurs. Isolated applause has been noted in several studies of UK-based political speeches (e.g., Bull, 1986; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). Furthermore, in an analysis of all applause instances in six UK party political conference speeches (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000), 4.6% was

judged to be isolated. In contrast, in Japan, *all* audience responses were collective (i.e., the audience members applaud, laugh, cheer, or produce *aizuchi* in unison). The distinction between collective and individual responses is further discussed in the final section of this chapter.

South Korea[10]

Two studies were conducted of political speeches in South Korea (subsequently referred to just as Korea). These analyses were based on three distinct contexts: acceptance speeches following nomination as a party's presidential election candidate (from the Election of 2012), election campaign speeches (also from the 2012 Presidential Election), and inauguration speeches (from the seven presidential elections between 1981 and 2012). These two studies (Choi & Bull, 2021; Choi et al., 2016) were the first to make systematic comparisons between political speeches in different social contexts.

There were distinct audience behaviours observed in each of the three settings. Firstly, there was a characteristic, predominant form of response to the speakers for each context. Presidential inauguration speeches, where they celebrate the inauguration of the nation's new president, are chiefly ceremonial; in this more formal setting, applause was the predominant response. Acceptance speeches are associated with the appointment of the party's candidate for the upcoming presidential election and the launch of their campaign. In this more partisan ingroup setting, a combination of applause and cheering was the most prominent response. Election campaign speeches are the least formal and most competitive of the three settings, and here verbal responses predominated (e.g., shouts of "That's right", "Yes", "No", or "President"), together with both isolated responses and interruptions.

Further notable characteristics of the behaviour of Korean audiences were chanting and sequential responses (those which involved a transition from one response form to another; for example, chanting was typically preceded by applause and cheering). Chanting, in particular, was strongly associated with more informal and competitive contexts, when audiences expressed their support for their political leaders and policies, as well as affirming their group identity. Chanting was most frequent in campaign speeches (on average once per minute); in acceptance speeches, it occurred at 0.2 responses per minute; however, it was not observed in any of the presidential inauguration speeches.

Furthermore, in line with the Japan-based analyses (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), the Korean speeches were analysed in terms of a dichotomy between explicit and implicit rhetorical devices (Choi & Bull, 2021). Message types categorised as explicit were those which took the form of question-answer sequences (referred to as dialogic devices; e.g., "Good evening. Are you well?", "Wouldn't you agree with me?", or "Please do assist me"). Dialogic formatting characterised the rhetorical devices greetings/salutations, expressing appreciation, requests for support, requests for agreement, and jokes/humorous expressions. Implicit speaker rhetoric comprised the devices

contrasts, lists, puzzle-solutions, headline-punchlines, position-takings, pursuits, naming, and combinations, as well as those categorised as miscellaneous (because they did not include any explicit invitations). On the basis of this dichotomy, it was found that rhetorical devices were predominantly implicit in the acceptance and inauguration speeches (75% and 79%, respectively). However, they were mostly explicit (60%) in the campaign speeches.

The predominance of dialogic rhetorical devices in Korean campaign speeches (Choi & Bull, 2021) is considered consistent with findings from the two analyses of Japanese political speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), where explicit rhetorical devices predominated. This contrasts markedly with British political speeches, which are essentially characterised by implicit rhetorical devices.

USA[11]

An analysis was conducted by Bull and Miskinis (2015) of 11 speeches in the American Presidential Election of 2012, where the candidates were the incumbent Democrat President Barack Obama and Republican party nominee Mitt Romney. In addition to the 14 rhetorical devices analysed in the Japanese studies (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), two further devices were included – those of naming (Atkinson, 1984a) and negative naming (Bull & Wells, 2002). Overall, the seven basic rhetorical devices (as identified by Atkinson [1984a] and Heritage and Greatbatch [1986]) accounted for most of the rhetorical techniques used by both Obama (82%) and Romney (81%), in particular, contrasts and lists (which, when added together, accounted for 33% and 35% for each candidate, respectively). Notably, there was a highly significant positive correlation (.87) between the candidates for these seven devices, thus indicative of a somewhat distinctive style of American political rhetoric.

The data were also reorganised into explicit and implicit devices, and the total proportion of implicit devices (the seven basic rhetorical devices, plus namings, negative namings, and descriptions of campaign activities) was high for both candidates (Obama, 82%; Romney, 81%). Thus, the results of this study showed marked similarities with analyses of British political speeches (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), where implicit devices also predominated.

There was also evidence of some notable cultural differences between the UK and the USA, not in terms of rhetorical devices but in the responses of audiences. UK-based political speech research has been almost exclusively focused on applause (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). However, in the two foregoing studies of Japanese political speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), laughter and cheering were analysed, in addition to applause. In this study of the 2012 American Presidential Election (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), two additional categories were included (*chanting* and *booing*). It was also apparent from these US speeches that there were some responses not easily attributable to any of these five categories; thus, a sixth

category (others) was included. This category included unison vocal responses, such as empathetic sighs and shouts of "Yes!" or "Amen".

From the analysis of the 2012 campaign speeches (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), cheering itself was found to be the most frequent audience response by some margin (66% of all collective responses). Applause accounted for only 8% of all audience responses. In a subsequent analysis of the 2016 US Presidential Election campaign (Goode & Bull, 2020), simultaneous incidents of cheering and applause followed by chanting were frequently observed. This was particularly the case for Donald Trump (27 occasions in five speeches) but less so for Hillary Clinton (only three in five speeches). A further noteworthy form of behaviour from the 2012 American audiences was what was termed a "constant flurry of individualised responses" (Bull & Miskinis, 2015, p. 536). These vocalisations – which, in most cases, were isolated – were mostly interruptive (i.e., they occurred while the politician was still speaking and seemingly not inviting applause). Their frequency and concurrence with speech meant it was unfeasible to annotate them. These individualised responses contrasted sharply with the behaviour of Japanese audiences, where any such isolated responses were entirely non-existent (Bull & Feldman, 2011).

One of the most notable features of American audience behaviour in these speeches was the occurrence of booing, where it comprised 8% of all audience responses. Clayman (1993) proposed that there are two principal ways whereby audiences coordinate their behaviour. These were termed *independent decision-making* and *mutual monitoring*. In independent decision-making, individual audience members may act independently of one another, yet their actions are coordinated (e.g., through applause in response to rhetorical devices). Conversely, mutual monitoring relates to the circumstances where individual response decisions may be guided, at least partly, by reference to the behaviour of other people in the audience. Responses associated primarily with independent decision-making (e.g., invited applause) generally begin with a *burst*, which rapidly builds to maximum intensity as many audience members respond collectively. Mutual monitoring, however – the process most strongly associated with booing – typically shows a *staggered* onset as the initial reactions of a few audience members prompt others to join in. In Clayman's analysis of booing, it was stated that "clappers usually act promptly and independently, while booers tend to wait until other audience behaviours are underway" (p. 124).

From Bull and Miskinis's (2015) analysis of the 2012 Election speeches, two distinctive forms of booing were identified: *disaffiliative* (where the audience boo the speaker) and *affiliative* (where the audience align with the speaker, e.g., by booing an opponent derided by the speaker). The following instance of disaffiliative booing occurred in a speech given by Romney at a conference in Houston, Texas, delivered to a seemingly hostile audience. "If our goal is jobs, we have to stop spending over a trillion dollars more than we can take in every year. And so, to do that I'm gonna eliminate every non-essential expensive program I can find. That includes Obamacare".[12] Romney was not only booed for this statement, which was patently unpopular with this particular

audience; there were also disapproving shouts of "No", "Shame", and "Get off the stage".

In contrast, an example of affiliative booing was observed in response to a statement by Obama during a speech at Colorado State University: "Last week my opponent's [Romney's] campaign went so far as to write you off as a lost generation. That's you according to him". The booing from the audience in response to this disparaging statement was clearly not an expression of disapproval for Obama; rather, they were acting in affiliation with him by expressing their disapproval of Romney.

Interestingly, all 45 instances of affiliative booing in these 2012 campaign speeches were preceded by rhetorical devices, which indicates that this is another form of audience response that may be invited by speakers. Across the 11 speeches by the two presidential candidates, the rhetorical device most frequently associated with affiliative booing was that used by Obama in the preceding extract – negative naming (56%). By way of contrast, in the UK-based research, negative naming was used primarily to invite applause (Bull & Wells, 2002). Findings from other UK research (including Atkinson, 1984a; Bull, 2006; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986) suggest that affiliative booing is a relatively uncommon feature of British political speeches. More noticeably, in the two studies of Japanese speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), there was a total absence of booing, as was also the case in the analysis of Korean speeches (Choi et al., 2016). Thus, this form of speaker-audience interaction does appear to be very much a distinctive feature of American political culture.

The studies reviewed in the foregoing analyses were based on four distinct political cultures: the UK, Japan, South Korea, and the USA. It is interesting that, in the two Western cultures (UK and USA), implicit rhetorical devices predominate, whereas in the two East Asian cultures, explicit rhetorical devices predominate. These results would be consistent with the concept of a distinctive Western style of political rhetoric, which appears to be based primarily on the use of implicit rhetorical devices. Of course, such an interpretation does not take full account of the potential role of language, namely, that the English language is common to both the UK and the USA. Implicit rhetorical devices might simply be a feature of speeches delivered in English. Hence, in the remaining two studies, rhetorical devices were analysed in two non-English speaking European political cultures: namely, those of France and Norway.

France[13]

Ledoux and Bull (2017) conducted an analysis of ten speeches from the 2012 French Presidential Election campaign by the two main candidates: Nicolas Sarkozy (*Union pour un Mouvement Populaire*) and his opponent François Hollande (*Parti Socialiste*). The speeches took place both indoors (e.g., in large indoor arenas or conference halls) and outdoors (in city centre locations, including the locations historical political speeches had been delivered, e.g., the *Place de la Concorde*).

Across the ten speeches, collective audience responses were coded using the same five categories as in the American study (Bull & Miskinis, 2015): applause, cheering, chanting, laughter, and booing. All instances of booing were affiliative (i.e., the audience were aligning themselves with the speaker against his opponent, not against the speaker himself). Isolated responses were also coded, including individual verbal comments and nonverbal responses, namely, whistling and blowing the vuvuzela.[14] Audience responses were coded as either synchronous or asynchronous with speech; the proportion of synchronous responses was just 44%.

Seventeen rhetorical devices were identified from these ten speeches. These included the 11 from the original British research: contrasts, lists, naming, expressing gratitude (Atkinson, 1984a), puzzle-solutions, headline-punchlines, position-taking, pursuits, combinations (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), jokes, and negative naming (Bull & Wells, 2002). The six devices originally observed in Japanese speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011) were also identified: greetings/ salutations, expressing appreciation, requests for support, requests for agreement, descriptions of campaign activities, and other.

Notably, in the case of some devices, additional French language features were identified. For example, position-taking was further emphasised with the inclusion of "*Voilà*" (this may be translated as "This is why/what"), which typically resulted in an enthusiastic, widespread audience response. For example, Sarkozy said in a speech at the *Place de la Concorde*, "*les mensonges font toujours davantage de moi que la vérité! Voilà la vérité de la Place de la Concorde!*" (translated as: "Lies always harm more than truth! That is the truth of the Place de la Concorde!"). Similar to the greetings observed in Japanese speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011), French speeches typically begin with a ritual but brief "*Mes chers amis*" (meaning, "my dear friends"), again typically resulting in an enthusiastic audience response. Furthermore, candidates would draw their speeches to a close with a similar ritualistic conclusion, in particular, with "*Vive la République et vive la France!*" (i.e., "Long live the Republic, and long live France!").

Overall, the French speeches were characterised predominantly by implicit affiliative response invitations (75% of all rhetorical devices). The devices most commonly used were position-takings (accounting for 20% of overall), lists (13%), and headline-punchlines (10%). Only 12% of responses were invited using explicit devices, and non-rhetorical response invitations were initiated primarily through speech content. The proportion of audience responses coded as isolated was 21%. Of the isolated responses, applause accounted for only 12%; verbal comments and cheers were associated with 61% and 20%, respectively.

The results of this study, particularly the predominant use of implicit affiliative response invitations, confirm that French speech-making has far greater parallels with the other Western nations (USA and UK) than with the foregoing East Asian cultures. However, French speeches were observed to be less synchronous (44%) than those in the UK (61%, Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000), while all responses in Japanese speeches have been reported as synchronous

(O. Feldman, personal communication, April 16, 2014). Compared to analyses of British speeches, where 4.6% of applause was isolated (Bull & Noordhuizen, 2000), and in Japan, where no isolated applause occurred (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), the French scored higher on this dimension, with 8% of the overall applause being isolated. There were also notable similarities between French and American audiences in terms of higher asynchrony and response diversity, including chanting, laughter, and booing. Moreover, booing by the French audiences was similar to that observed from their American counterparts – it was affiliative and typically invited by speaker rhetoric in the same way as applause. This contrasts markedly with Japanese and Korean political speeches, where no incidents of booing were observed (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012; Choi et al., 2016); nor were there any instances of chanting by the Japanese audiences.

Norway[15]

In this study of Norwegian political speeches (Iversen & Bull, 2016), 30 speeches were analysed, all from the 2013 General Election campaign period. The speeches were delivered by 20 parliamentary candidates, each standing for one of eight different political parties (Labour, Conservative, Progress, Christian Democrat, Centre, Liberal, Socialist, and Green). Each of these parties achieved some parliamentary representation as an outcome of the election.

In accordance with previous research in the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015) and France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017), audience responses were categorised in terms of applause, cheering, chanting, laughter, and booing. From these Norwegian speeches, applause was the most common audience response (accounting for 57% of overall), followed by laughter (24%), and cheering (15%). There was only a single instance of booing, which occurred during a Conservative party rally on the mention of a "red-green government". In this particular response, seemingly the audience were expressing their alignment with the speaker against their left-wing opponents. However, there was no reason to believe the booing was invited – it was clearly interruptive, and the speaker attempted to quell the booing. On this basis, booing appears not to be a notable feature of Norwegian audience behaviour.

As in the study of French rhetoric (Ledoux & Bull, 2017), these Norwegian speeches were coded in terms of 17 rhetorical devices. Interestingly, a novel 18th device was identified in this Norway-based study, which was labelled *repetition/familiarity*. This might take the form of a party motto (e.g., "People first"), a phrase that is familiar to the general public (e.g., "Take from the rich, and give to the poor"), or a phrase used repetitively by a speaker (e.g., "This is care from the Conservative heart"). This device was observed in 16 of the 30 general election speeches and found to successfully invite a collective audience response on a total of 62 occasions.

Overall, of the rhetorical devices used across these speeches, those categorised as implicit predominated (72%). This predominance indicates a very

similar pattern to that observed in previous research in the UK (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a; Bull & Wells, 2002; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986), in the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015) and in France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017), pointing very strongly to what might be considered a Western-style rhetoric – one which is strongly characterised by the use of implicit applause invitations.

A model of speaker–audience interaction in political speeches[16]

The focus of this chapter has been on how and why audiences respond to political speeches. It draws its initial inspiration from Atkinson's (e.g., 1984a) pioneering analysis of how politicians use rhetorical devices (or *claptraps*) to invite audience applause. From subsequent research in the UK, Japan, South Korea, the USA, France, and Norway, our understanding of speech-making and audience behaviours has been enhanced and extended, so that it has become possible to propose a model of speaker–audience interaction in political speeches (Bull, 2016a). There are two principal sections to the model: the cross–cultural context of speaker–audience interaction and political speech–making as dialogue. Each of these sections is detailed in what follows.

The cross–cultural context of speaker–audience interaction

1   Speaker-audience interaction needs to be understood in a cross-cultural context.
2   Whereas audiences in Japanese political speeches typically responded together (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), in American presidential speeches, there was a constant flurry of asynchronous and uninvited individual remarks, typically expressing attentiveness, support, or encouragement for the speaking candidate (Bull & Miskinis, 2015).
3   In Anglo-American political speeches, implicit rhetorical devices are the norm (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a; Bull & Miskinis, 2015; Bull & Wells, 2002; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986).
4   The use of implicit rhetorical devices as applause invitations is also characteristic of both French (Ledoux & Bull, 2017) and Norwegian speeches (Iversen & Bull, 2016), suggesting that that the use of such rhetoric is not just a feature of English language use.
5   In contrast, in Japanese and Korean election speeches, rhetorical devices used for inviting applause are typically explicit (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Choi & Bull, 2021; Choi et al., 2016; Feldman & Bull, 2012).
6   Audience responses are culturally variable. In the study of the American 2012 Presidential Election (Bull & Miskinis, 2015), the most frequent response was cheering, whereas in Japanese general election speeches, it was applause (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012).
7   Another distinctive feature of presidential speeches in both the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015) and in France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017) was invited

booing. This was not reported in previous analyses of British speeches (Atkinson, 1984a; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986; Bull, 2006); it was almost entirely absent from Norwegian general election speeches (Iversen & Bull, 2016). No form of booing was ever observed in the two analyses of Japanese general election speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), nor in the analyses of Korean speeches (Choi & Bull, 2021; Choi et al., 2016).

8   In negative naming, a speaker may ridicule or criticise a political opponent or a rival political group. In the UK, negative naming is typically used as a rhetorical device to invite applause (Bull & Wells, 2002), whereas in both the USA and France, it is used as a rhetorical device to invite booing. Negative naming was never observed in either of two studies of Japanese political speeches (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012).

9   These differences in political speech-making may be explained in relation to the following cultural distinctions (Bull & Waddle, 2021). In Western nations, a leading politician can enhance their reputation in the eyes of the electorate by attacking opponents (e.g., Waddle et al., 2019). Such adversarial behaviour is unlikely to generate the same admiration or support in Japan, where this form of behaviour tends to reflect badly and could cause far more reputational damage to the speakers themselves than to their opponents (Bull & Feldman, 2011).

Political speech-making as dialogue

1   Political speech-making has traditionally been regarded as monologic but the research reported here shows how political speeches can be understood as a form of dialogue between speakers and audiences, akin to how people take turns in conversation.

2   However, in contrast to conversation, audience responses are somewhat limited, typically, to applause, laughter, cheering, chanting, shouting, or even booing.

3   Audience responses may be collective (from the audience as a whole or a substantial proportion of it) or isolated (from individuals or very few people).

4   Audience responses may be affiliative (the audience align with the speaker) or disaffiliative (the audience express dissatisfaction with the speaker).

5   However, specific forms of audience response are, intrinsically, neither affiliative nor disaffiliative:

   5a   For example, although applause is typically regarded as affiliative, it may also be delayed, isolated, spasmodic, unenthusiastic, or even take the form of a slow handclap to express dissatisfaction with a speaker.

   5b   Similarly, although booing is typically regarded as disaffiliative (the audience boo the speaker), it may also be affiliative (the audience align with the speaker to boo a political opponent).

    5c Laughter is typically affiliative but an audience may laugh at the speaker in a disaffiliative manner.

    5d Cheering is typically affiliative but may also be ironic, thereby disaffiliative.

    5e Chanting is typically affiliative but may be disaffiliative if the content of the chant is hostile.

6   Audience responses may be invited by speakers through rhetorical devices. Conversely, they may be uninvited, either initiated by the audience in response to speech content or through the misreading of rhetorical devices.

7   Rhetorical devices may be implicit (embedded into the structure of speech) or they may be explicit (the speaker overtly invites an audience response).

8   Delivery (nonverbal/vocal actions of the speaker) typically indicates whether or not a rhetorical device is intended as an affiliative response invitation. This is particularly relevant in the case of rhetorical devices used as *implicit* invitations.

Conclusions

The contribution of the pioneering work of Atkinson (e.g., 1984a) was substantial in terms of increasing our understanding of the less obvious components of oratory and how audiences respond. However, subsequent political speech research, especially that which was based in countries beyond the UK, has shown us that there are many cultural differences in both how speeches are delivered by speakers and how audiences tend to respond to those speeches.

    Furthermore, speech-making was traditionally regarded as monologic but the research reported in this chapter shows how political speeches can be regarded as a form of dialogue, akin to the way in which people take turns in conversation. Indeed, according to Weigand (2000, 2010), all language should be regarded as dialogic. She rejects the traditional distinction between monologue and dialogue, arguing that it fails to adequately capture the nature of language as a form of communication. Weigand's theory is based on two premises: language is used primarily for communicative purposes and communication is always performed dialogically. She further proposes that rhetoric is inherent to dialogue; hence, the distinction between rhetorical and non-rhetorical language is unnecessary. From this perspective, the rhetorical techniques reviewed in this chapter may be construed not as unique to political speech-making but rather as specific manifestations of dialogic interaction in one distinctive social context.

    In spite of all this research, there are still those who like to deny the importance of rhetorical techniques in political oratory. Indeed, Atkinson (2004, p. 239) himself relates the story of how a prominent politician – Ken Livingstone[17] – was asked in a radio interview what he thought of the rhetorical techniques identified through his speech research. Livingstone dismissed their importance, replying "Public speakers are born, not made. People shouldn't

worry about all these techniques; they should just be themselves". Notably, in his response, Livingstone made use of two contrastive devices: (1) Public speakers are (A) born (B) not made; (2) People (A) shouldn't worry about all these techniques (B) they should just be themselves. Thus, even in denying the importance of rhetorical devices, Livingstone used exactly the kind of rhetorical techniques identified by Atkinson!

Notes

1 Large parts of this chapter are based on **Bull (2016a)**.
2 This section is based primarily on **Bull (2016a)**.
3 Conceivably, some audience members may have the view that a father's attendance at the birth of their child does not warrant applause.
4 Contrast, list, puzzle-solution, headline-punchline, position-taking, pursuit, combination, expressing gratitude, naming, negative naming, and jokes.
5 This section is based primarily on **Bull (2016a)**.
6 This section is based primarily on **Bull (2016a)**.
7 This section is based primarily on **Bull (2016a)**.
8 This section is based on **Bull and Waddle (2021)**.
9 This subsection is based on studies by **Bull and Feldman (2011)** and **Feldman and Bull (2012)**. All the speeches were in Japanese but translated by native speakers into English for analysis.
10 This subsection is based on studies by **Choi, Bull, and Reed (2016)** and **Choi and Bull (2021)**. All the speeches were in Korean. Translations into English were made by a native speaker (Choi).
11 This subsection is based on the study by **Bull and Miskinis (2015)**.
12 Obamacare was the term used for the Affordable Care Act, which aimed to provide affordable health care for all American citizens. It had been introduced in 2010 by President Obama.
13 This subsection is based on the study by **Ledoux and Bull (2017)**. All the speeches were in French. Translations into English were made by a native speaker (Ledoux).
14 The vuvuzela is a basic wind instrument – typically a hand-held plastic horn – which gained in popularity following its noticeable use by supporters at football matches during the 2010 FIFA World Cup in South Africa. It can be used to produce a monotonic sound, clearly audible above the noise of a large crowd.
15 This subsection is based on the study by **Iversen and Bull (2016)**. All the speeches were in Norwegian. Translations into English were made by a native speaker (Iversen).
16 This section is based primarily on **Bull (2016a)**.
17 Livingstone was Mayor of London from 2000 to 2008 and a Labour MP from 1987 to 2001.

5   Being slippery? Equivocation in political interviews

Politicians have an unenviable reputation for evasiveness which is often ascribed to their personalities – that they are devious and slippery, the kind of people who rarely give a straight answer to a straight question (Bull, 2003). But are the questions they receive really so straight? To what extent is their evasiveness a response to the sort of questions they are asked? The focus of this chapter is on political evasion – in particular, how and why politicians fail to reply to questions, including an analysis of questions which may lead to evasive discourse.

The more technical term for evasive discourse is *equivocation*; when a person equivocates, "they deliberately use vague language in order to deceive people or to avoid speaking the truth" (Collins, 2022). Equivocation has also been defined as "non-straightforward communication; it appears ambiguous, contradictory, tangential, obscure, or even evasive" (Bavelas et al., 1990, p. 28). Alternative definitions have included "the gentle art of saying nothing by saying something" (Watzlawick, Bavelas, & Jackson, 1967, p. 78), "the intentional use of imprecise language" (Hamilton & Mineo, 1998, p. 3), and more recently, "the rhetorical principle of calculated ambivalence" (Wodak, de Cillia, Reisigl, & Liebhart, 2009, p. 215).

This chapter is focused on a number of different questions in relation to political equivocation:

1   How much do politicians equivocate? Is it the case that they *never* answer questions, as some would have us believe? Or are there some questions they do answer? If so, what is the proportion of questions to which politicians answer?
2   In what ways do politicians equivocate? Particular attention is given to a typology of equivocation which has been developed by the authors (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016).
3   Why do politicians equivocate? According to a theory proposed by Bavelas et al. (1990), people equivocate when confronted with questions which create what is termed a *communicative conflict*. According to Bull et al. (1996), communicative conflicts are created primarily by what are termed *threats to face*.[1] These theories are discussed in depth in this chapter.
4   What is the relationship between equivocation and deception?
5   How might equivocation vary according to culture?

How much do politicians equivocate?

Politicians undoubtedly have an unenviable reputation for evasiveness but to what extent is this reputation deserved? Of course, it may be just a social stereotype; hence, the need for a more systematic empirical assessment on whether and how much politicians equivocate in response to questions.

A substantive study of political equivocation was conducted by Feldman, Kinoshita, and Bull (2015) in Japan. They analysed 194 televised interviews, broadcast over a 14-month period in 2012–2013. Overall, 145 politicians were compared with 49 non-politicians. The non-politicians were apparent *experts* – interviewees such as university professors, social critics, and economists, who were considered able to speak on specific issues and to make them comprehensible to the layperson. The analysis of these interviews was based on the proposal that equivocation can be understood in terms of four dimensions: *sender, content, receiver*, and *context* (Bavelas et al., 1990).

These four dimensions of equivocation can be defined as follows. Sender refers to the extent to which a response reflects the speaker's opinion; if the speaker fails to acknowledge a statement as his own opinion, or attributes it to another person, it is considered more equivocal. Content refers to comprehensibility (an unclear statement being considered more equivocal) and can be distinguished from context, which refers to the extent to which the response is a direct answer to the question (the less the relevance, the more equivocal the message). Receiver refers to the extent to which the message is addressed to the other person in the situation (the less so, the more equivocal the message).

Thus, responses to questions by the politicians and non-politicians were rated on these four dimensions. Significant differences were found for three of the dimensions: sender, receiver, and context. Thus, in comparison to the non-politicians, politicians were less inclined to answer the questions asked (context) and to disclose their own thoughts and ideas (sender); politicians' responses were also more inclined to address people other than the interviewers asking the questions (receiver). Only the content dimension revealed no statistically significant difference between politicians and non-politicians.

Whereas the foregoing study of equivocation was based on these four dimensions (Bavelas et al., 1990), an alternative approach is the analysis of what has been termed *reply-rate* (Bull, 1994). This refers to the proportion of questions that receive a *direct answer*, defined as a response in which politician explicitly provides the information requested in the question. So, the lower the reply-rate, the more equivocal the politician. In terms of the foregoing dimensions, reply-rate corresponds to equivocation on the context dimension.

Thus, an analysis of 33 broadcast interviews held between 1987 and 1992 with UK political party leaders (Bull, 1994) showed a mean reply-rate of just 46%. So, by this measure, the politicians answered less than half of the interviewers' questions. In an independent study of a totally different set of interviews (Harris, 1991) – but also featuring leading politicians Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock – the politicians gave direct answers to only 39% of questions. More

recently, a study was conducted of 26 interviews from the 2015 and 2017 General Election campaigns (Waddle & Bull, 2020c). The politicians again were UK party leaders: (in 2015) Prime Minister (PM) David Cameron, Labour's Ed Miliband, Liberal Democrat Nick Clegg, and UKIP's Nigel Farage; (in 2017) PM Theresa May, Labour's Jeremy Corbyn, Liberal Democrat Tim Farron, and UKIP's Paul Nuttall. The overall reply-rate across those interviews was just 38%. In their Japanese study, Feldman et al. (2015) found reply-rates of just 42% and 43% for national and local-level politicians, respectively – so, despite the different cultural setting, a similar pattern was evident in that the politicians answered less than half the interviewers' questions.

   In comparison, it is interesting to consider reply-rates in televised interviews with people who are not politicians. In the study by Feldman et al. (2015), a significantly higher reply-rate of 52% was found for the non-politicians on the context dimension. The late Diana, Princess of Wales, in her celebrated and now infamous interview with Martin Bashir, answered 78% of questions (Bull, 1997). The British au-pair Louise Woodward, who had been convicted in the US of the manslaughter of eight-month-old Matthew Eappen – also interviewed by Bashir – answered 70% of questions; Monica Lewinsky (the White House intern who had been involved in a sexual relationship with then President Bill Clinton) answered 89% of questions in her interview with journalist Jon Snow (Bull, 2000b). The mean reply-rate of 79% across these three interviews was significantly higher than that of 46% for the 33 political interviews analysed by Bull (1994). From all the data presented in the foregoing analysis, the widely held view that politicians characteristically do not answer questions appears not to be a mere social stereotype; it is well supported by empirical evidence.

In what ways do politicians equivocate?

In seeking to understand how politicians equivocate, a typology of equivocation has been devised, which now distinguishes between 43 different ways of not replying to a question (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016). This typology is divided into what are called *superordinate* and *subordinate* categories. For example, *attacks the question* is a superordinate category, which can be further subdivided into eight subcategories (see number 4 in the list that follows). The typology was originally devised for analysing political interviews but has now been slightly modified so that it can be extended to the analysis of question-response exchanges in parliament. It should be noted that these categories are not mutually exclusive; an equivocal response can be scored along several dimensions of this typology.[2] In total, 13 superordinate categories (with their associated subcategories) are identified as follows:

1   *Ignores the question*. The politician not only fails to answer the question but even to acknowledge that a question has been asked.
2   *Acknowledges the question without answering it*. In this case, the question is acknowledged by the politician (e.g., "That's an interesting question") but they continue their response without actually giving an answer.

3   *Questions the question*. Two different forms of this are identifiable:

   (a)   *Request for clarification*. The politician asks for further information about the question or seeks to clarify it.
   (b)   *Reflects the question*. The politician makes no attempt to answer the question but instead reflects it back to the interviewer (e.g., "Well, what do you think?").

4   *Attacks the question*. Eight different ways have been identified:

   (a)   *The question fails to tackle the important issue.*
   (b)   *The question is hypothetical or speculative.*
   (c)   *The question is based on a false premise.*
   (d)   *The question is factually inaccurate.*
   (e)   *The question includes a misquotation.*
   (f)   *The question includes a quotation taken out of context.*
   (g)   *The question is objectionable.*
   (h)   *The question is based on a false alternative.*

5   *Modifies the question* (Bull & Strawson, 2020). Here, the politician changes the wording of the question, then responds to that version (e.g., giving a non-specific response to a specific question).

6   *Personalisation*. The politician responds by directing their comments personally at the interviewer. Seven different forms have been identified (Waddle & Bull, 2016):

   (a)   *Interviewer bias*. Suggestion that the interviewer is biased in their personal views.
   (b)   *Broadcast organisation bias*. Suggestion that the organisation (e.g., the BBC) represented by the interviewer is (or was) in some way biased.
   (c)   *Interviewer incompetence*. Claiming that the interviewer is mistaken, lacking in intelligence, or showing incompetence.
   (d)   *Interviewer conduct*. Bemoaning the interviewer's behaviour in the interview (e.g., suggestions of impoliteness or hostility).
   (e)   *Interviewer history*. Making comments about, for example, the interviewer's employment record or past conduct.
   (f)   *Interviewer frame of mind*. Suggestions that the interviewer is in a state of agitation or anger (e.g., "Calm down!").
   (g)   *Blandishments*. Comments intended to be positive or genial in nature (e.g., flattery or banter).

7   *Declines to answer*. Five different ways have been identified:

   (a)   *Refusal on grounds of inability*. For example, a politician may claim to be unable to answer questions which involve a future prediction (e.g., whether unemployment will decrease or whether inflation is likely to increase).
   (b)   *Unwillingness to answer*. For example, a politician might decline to answer a question on the grounds that it might threaten national security.

(c) *Inability to speak for someone else.* A politician may decline to answer a question, stating it is not possible to answer on someone else's behalf.
(d) *Deferred answer.* Claiming it is not possible to answer at that particular time.
(e) *Pleads ignorance.* The politician claims they do not know the answer to the question.

8   *Makes political points.* Eight different ways of making political points are identifiable:

(a) *External attack.* Responds by attacking political opponent(s) (or, e.g., a rival state).
(b) *Presents policy.*
(c) *Justifies policy.*
(d) *Gives reassurance.*
(e) *Appeals to nationalism.*
(f) *Offers political analysis.*
(g) *Self-justification.*
(h) *Talks up one's own side.*

9   *Gives incomplete reply.* Five different forms of incomplete reply have been identified:

(a) *Starts to answer but does not finish.* The response may peter out, or the politician may break off through self-interruption.
(b) *Negative answer.* The politician states what will not happen instead of what will happen.
(c) *Half answer.* For example, two questions are asked (a *double-barrelled question*) but only one receives an answer.
(d) *Fractional reply.* More than two questions are asked (a *multi-barrelled question*) but, for example, only one is answered.
(e) *Partial reply.* Only part of a single-barrelled question receives a reply.[3]

10   *Repeats answer to previous question.*
11   *States or implies that the question has already been addressed (when in fact it was not answered).*

(a) *The question has been asked already.*
(b) *The question has already been answered.*

12   *Apologises.*
13   *Literalism.* Takes the question literally as a means of not answering its substantive content.

Equivocation profiles of leading politicians[4]

In terms of the superordinate categories of the foregoing typology, a comparison was made of equivocation profiles for three leading politicians of the latter

part of 20th century: PM Thatcher, Leader of the Opposition (LO) Kinnock, and PM John Major. Results showed a remarkable degree of similarity between them. The correlations were as follows: Thatcher–Kinnock, .93; Thatcher–Major, .94; Kinnock–Major, .88. Each correlation was statistically significant and the mean correlation for the three comparisons was .92. Thus, in terms of the superordinate categories, these three politicians (from different political parties) equivocated in highly similar ways. For all three, making political points was by far the most frequent technique (Thatcher, 76%; Kinnock, 67%; Major, 65%). Attacking the question was the second most frequent form for both Thatcher (26%) and Kinnock (37%). For Major, declining to answer was the second most frequent form (36%); his third was attacking the question (33%).

However, if all of the categories from the typology are considered, then distinctive forms of equivocation were more characteristic for each of these politicians. For Thatcher, this was *personalisation* directed at the interviewer. For example, she famously (on two different occasions) addressed the very experienced and celebrated interviewer Robin Day – who by that time had been knighted to become *Sir* Robin – as "*Mr* Day". This failure to use Day's correct form of address could be construed as an overt insult and put-down, especially given that it was Thatcher who had been responsible for awarding Day with the knighthood in the first place (in 1981). With a different interviewer – Jonathan Dimbleby – she used another form of put-down, asking him, "Do you remember Harold Wilson? Well perhaps you don't, you're too young". Clearly, political journalist Dimbleby was more than old enough to remember Wilson – the former Labour PM – of which Thatcher would have been well aware.

Two forms of equivocation unique to Kinnock in these interviews were *negative answers* and *reflecting the question*. Reflecting the question is a subcategory of *questions the question*, in which the interviewee deflects the question back to the interviewer, thereby making no attempt to answer. So, for example, when Kinnock was asked by Day what proportion of his MPs might be on the hard left, his response was to say, "You tell me". This can be seen as a very ineffectual form of equivocation, as Day followed up by simply reiterating the question. In a negative answer, the interviewee states not what will happen but rather what will not happen. So, for example, when asked by Day whether the Labour Party would have an incomes policy, Kinnock stated at length several historical examples of such policies which the Labour Party was not going to adopt. Negative answers again can be seen as an ineffectual form of equivocation, since they simply invite the interviewer to ask for a positive answer, which is precisely what Day did – he followed up with "That is why I'm asking what you *would* do".

The use of negative answers and reflecting the question contrasted sharply with the somewhat personally antagonistic tactics of Thatcher. One way of assessing the effectiveness of these tactics is to assess interviewers' responses. So, after a personalised response by Thatcher, interviewers would typically ask a different question (in 83% of cases) instead of reformulating the original question. In contrast, Kinnock's attempts to question questions just led to further

reiterations of the same question by the interviewers. Furthermore, most of Kinnock's negative responses (75%) also led to interviewer reformulations of the same question. Thus, whereas Thatcher's personalised tactics had the effect of inhibiting interviewers from pursuing a particular line of enquiry, Kinnock's defensive tactics simply invited further questioning on the same topic.

Three forms of equivocation appeared to be characteristic primarily of Major (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1991): *literalism, pleading ignorance*, and the *deferred answer*. A good example of a literalism can be seen in Major's response to a question about unemployment (posed by Brian Walden during the 1992 General Election campaign). Walden cited a statement made by the then Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer Norman Lamont in which he referred to unemployment and recession as "the price we've had to pay to get inflation down. This is a price well worth paying, a lot of people say". Walden continued by saying, "I can't imagine a more uncaring statement than that, and that's true, isn't it?". Notably, being uncaring about unemployment was a charge often levelled at Conservative governments around that time. In an extended response, Major referred to the condition of what were then called unemployment offices, describing them as "bare sparse nasty places to go into". Thus, rather than dealing with the substantive issue of unemployment, Major dealt with the question in a more literal way by confining his response to the physical state of unemployment offices.

In a *deferred reply*, the politician says he or she is unable to answer the question for the time being. So, for example, Major declined to answer questions from Walden regarding a new local services tax to replace the disastrous flat rate poll tax[5] introduced by Thatcher (Major's predecessor as PM). Major simply told Walden that he would have to "wait and see" as to what would be proposed in a forthcoming consultation document. Throughout his premiership, Major was occasionally criticised as weak, ineffectual, and indecisive – and this strategy of "wait and see" arguably made him look somewhat dilatory.

Perhaps even more damaging to a politician's reputation is that of pleading ignorance. This was highly characteristic of Major, and perhaps the most surprising coming from a leading politician, especially one who was PM for seven years. While both Kinnock and Thatcher might admit to an inability to answer some questions, this usually applied to topics generally accepted as difficult to predict, such as inflation or unemployment. In contrast, Major would plead ignorance to questions on topics where it would be widely assumed that he was better informed and even did know the answer. For example, it was common knowledge at the time that Thatcher made extensive use of image makers but Major, in an interview with Sue Lawley, claimed no knowledge of this, a denial which simply stretched credulity. Pleading ignorance could be seen as a particularly ineffective strategy, exposing Major as either naïve or deceitful. Furthermore, an interviewer is highly likely to pursue such a response, even to dissent with the aired lack of knowledge. Since Major also occasionally equivocated through deferred replies (the "wait and see" form of response), pleading

ignorance would only be likely to reinforce any reputation of ineffectuality and indecision, whether it was warranted or otherwise.

Unlike the respective styles of Thatcher (directing personal comments at the interviewer) and Kinnock (giving long negative replies detailing what he would not do), Major's were more explicit in that he often made no attempt to hide the fact that he was not answering the question. Such differences in communicative style are not necessarily reflective of differences in reply-rate. However, to the untrained observer, these types of response adopted by Major are more obvious forms of political evasiveness.

Another politician observed through equivocation research to have a distinct individual style was the former Labour cabinet minister Peter Mandelson (Waddle & Bull, 2016, 2020c). Mandelson is known to have used a specific form of personalisation in responding to questions on at least three different occasions – namely, telling the interviewer to "calm down". Such a tactic, perhaps intentionally, can have the opposite effect. So, an interviewer fulfilling their duty of asking questions, when told repeatedly to "calm down", is more likely to become somewhat agitated. This can have something of a disarming effect and allow the politician to divert the agenda away from that which they want to avoid. One such case is shown in the following extract from 2009, when interviewer Jeremy Paxman was asking Mandelson about issues of government responsibility (the relevant personalised comments are italicised):

Paxman: Is there anything that's the responsibility
Mandelson: *Hold on Jeremy*
Paxman: Is there anything that's the responsibility
Mandelson: *Just calm down.*
Paxman: Look, you said
Mandelson: *Just calm*
Paxman: No
Mandelson: *Just calm down a minute and listen to the answer.*
Paxman: All right. Well you've just told us. The answer is "No, that's not your responsibility".
Mandelson: *Just*
Paxman: What about the
Mandelson: *Jeremy*
Paxman: question of you saying now you want
Mandelson: *Jeremy, calm*
Paxman: right regulation, not light regulation? Is that not your responsibility?
Mandelson: *Calm down a minute and, If you'll just calm down for one moment perhaps I can get a word in.* My view of regulation is [. . .]

In addition to the foregoing analyses, recent research has been conducted of PM May's equivocation style. However, since that study (Bull & Strawson, 2020) was based not on political interviews but on Prime Minister's Questions, it is reported in the next chapter, which is focused specifically on PMQs.

Why do politicians equivocate?

The equivocation typology (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016) can be used to identify how politicians fail to answer questions in political interviews but not why they do so. This question can be addressed in terms of the theory of equivocation proposed by Bavelas et al. (1990). The theory is occasionally referred to as the situational theory of communicative conflict (STCC) (e.g., Hamilton & Mineo, 1998) due to its emphasis on how behaviour should be understood in relation to the context of situation. According to the STCC, people typically equivocate when posed a question to which all of the possible replies have potentially negative consequences but where, nevertheless, a reply is still expected. This situation, termed a *communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict*, is, for the sake of brevity, referred to throughout this chapter just as a *communicative conflict* (CC).

Many everyday situations can be seen to create these kinds of conflicts. One common dilemma involves a choice between saying something false but kind or saying something true but hurtful. For example, a person receives a highly unattractive gift from a well-liked friend, who then asks directly "Did you like the gift?". In responding, the recipient has to choose between two negative alternatives: saying, falsely, that they like the gift or, somewhat unkindly, that they do not. According to the STCC, the recipient will, if possible, tend to avoid both of these negative alternatives – especially when a hurtful truth serves no purpose. Instead, they may equivocate; for example, someone might say "I appreciate your thoughtfulness" without saying whether or not they liked the gift. According to Bavelas et al. (1990), such responses must always be understood in terms of the situation in which they occur – hence, the term *situational* theory of communicative conflict.

A series of experiments were conducted by Bavelas et al. (1990) in which a number of everyday communicative conflicts were described. Participants were asked to indicate how they would respond to these scenarios. Their responses were rated by observers along the four dimensions of sender, content, receiver, and context (described previously in relation to the study of Japanese political interviews [Feldman et al., 2015]). In comparison to non-conflictual scenarios, Bavelas et al. found that the conflictual situations prompted significantly more equivocal responses.

In addition, a field experiment on political equivocation was conducted at the 1984 Canadian Liberal Party leadership convention (Bavelas, Black, Bryson, & Mullett, 1988). Following Pierre Trudeau's announcement of his intention to resign as the Canadian PM and leader of the Liberal government, there was a forthcoming leadership election. Of the several candidates, John Turner was the front-runner and Jean Chretien was a very popular second choice. Convention delegates wearing badges for either Turner or Chretien were approached and asked, "Do you think the Liberals will win the next election under John Turner?". Hypothetically, this question would put supporters of Jean Chretien in a communicative conflict. If they said that the party could

win under Turner, they would publicly concede a major point to the candidate they opposed. If they said that the Liberals could not win under Turner, they might seem disloyal to their own party. No such conflict was hypothesised for Turner supporters. Results showed that the responses of Chretien supporters were judged to be significantly more equivocal (on both sender and context dimensions) than those of Turner supporters.

Notably, the STCC is a general theory of equivocation, not just a theory of political equivocation. However, Bavelas et al. (1990) argued for its particular relevance to the analysis of interviews with politicians, given the number of communicative conflicts created by this situation. For example, there are many controversial issues which divide the electorate. Politicians may seek to avoid direct replies supporting or criticising either position, which might offend a substantial number of voters. Another set of conflicts is created by the pressure of time limits. A politician obliged to provide a brief answer to a question concerning a complex issue has to make a choice between two unattractive alternatives: either reducing the issue to a simple, incomplete answer or possibly appearing long-winded, circuitous, and evasive. Furthermore, a politician who lacks sufficient knowledge of an issue of concern may have to make the unfortunate choice between acknowledging ignorance or improvising – possibly even fabricating an answer.

Substantive empirical evidence has been provided by the authors and colleagues in support of the STCC in the context of political interviews. In one study of 18 televised interviews broadcast during the 1992 British General Election (Bull et al., 1996), 557 questions were analysed according to whether they created a communicative conflict. Overall, 41% of questions were judged to be conflictual, for which the modal response was to equivocate (64% of questions). Of the remaining 59% of questions judged to be non-conflictual, the modal response was to answer (60% of responses). Not only do these data support the observation that conflictual questions are characteristic of political interviews, they also show that equivocation is the most likely response to such questions.

Face and facework in political interviews

Although Bavelas et al. (1990) observed that CCs are particularly prevalent in political interviews, they did not provide any underlying theoretical explanation for this beyond stating that CCs are created by avoidance-avoidance conflicts. On that basis, it is fair to ask: what is it that politicians are motivated to avoid?

In Chapter 2, the concepts of face and facework were introduced and their relevance to political discourse was considered. In the context of political interviews, it was proposed that questions may be formulated in such a way that politicians run the risk of making what are termed *face-damaging responses*. These may threaten the politician's *positive face* by making themselves and/or their political allies look bad; they may also threaten the politician's *negative face*

by restricting their future freedom of action (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Upholding positive face in political interviews is highly important, because the political survival of democratically elected politicians depends ultimately on the approval of a majority of the electorate (Jucker, 1986). However, upholding negative face also matters, because politicians will seek to avoid responses which might impede or be detrimental to their future freedom of action. This is effectively characterised in the old political maxim *never say never* (Bull & Fetzer, 2010).

The CCs identified in political interviews by Bavelas et al. (1990), referred to in the preceding discussion, can certainly be understood in terms of threats to face. So, for example, when politicians equivocate on divisive political issues, they can be seen to protect their own face by not espousing opinions which a substantial body of voters may find offensive or unacceptable. Furthermore, the conflicts created by the time limits of an interview may be face-damaging, either by appearing incompetent (by reducing the issue to a simple, incomplete answer) or devious (by sounding long-winded, circuitous, or evasive). Again, in instances where the candidate lacks sufficient knowledge of the issue being addressed, it may be face-damaging to the politician either to appear incompetent (by admitting ignorance) or risk future face-damage if subsequently it is shown that their answer was less than adequate. In short, issues of face arguably underlie all such political interview communicative conflicts identified by Bavelas et al.

From this perspective, CCs may occur when *all* the principal forms of response to a question are potentially face-damaging. An illustrative example is presented in what follows, based on four conflictual questions posed by BBC interviewer Jeremy Paxman to PM Tony Blair in an interview broadcast during the 2005 UK General Election campaign (Bull, 2009). These four questions related to the death in 2003 of Dr David Kelly, a microbiologist and chief scientific officer, who was employed by the Ministry of Defence. He apparently took his own life after he was named as the source of revelations to the BBC (that intelligence officers were unhappy with the government's dossier on Iraq's weapons of mass destruction [dubbed the *dodgy dossier*]). The government was widely assumed to bear some responsibility for his suicide, and this was the focus of Paxman's questions in the following exchanges:

Paxman-1:   Do you accept any responsibility at all for the death of Dr David Kelly?

Blair-1:   [Pause . . . sigh] It was a terrible terrible thing to have happened. I don't believe we'd any option however but to disclose his name because I think had we failed to do so that would have been seen as attempting to conceal something from the committee that was looking into this at the time and again in relation to this

Paxman-2:   Do you accept any responsibility at all?

Blair-2:   I, I, I've said what I've said and I feel desperately sorry for his family and indeed for the terrible ordeal that they were put through

but as I said at the time and again this has been into time and time
again I if we had concealed the fact cos this whole row was about
um the information that as you know we've been over this many
many times had been given to the BBC reporter he had then
come forward and said to his superiors this is me I think it's me
who's responsible for having given this story there was a foreign
affairs select committee report going on at the time I think if we'd
concealed that from people we'd have been subject for a different
to a different type of

Paxman-3:   So the answer to the question is you don't accept any responsibility?

Blair-3:   It's not a question of not accepting responsibility it is a question of
simply explaining the circumstances that happened.

Paxman-4:   It's a question to which you could give a yes or no answer Prime
Minister.

Blair-4:   Yeah but it's maybe not a question you need to give a yes or no
answer to.

The first two of Paxman's turns are clearly polar questions. His third and
fourth turns are declarative questions. However, since they are both put for-
ward for agreement or disagreement (Harris, 1991), arguably they can also be
treated as polar questions. Hence, to answer any of these four questions requires
either an affirmative or a negative. In fact, Blair equivocated in response to
all four questions. After his fourth response, Paxman moved on to a different
subject.

The reasons for Blair's equivocation can be understood in terms of Paxman's
face-threatening questions. Had Blair answered in the negative (i.e., he did not
accept responsibility), his response – for the loss of a ministry employee under
such circumstances – would very likely have been considered entirely lacking
in credibility. Furthermore, he might also have been perceived as unsympa-
thetic and uncaring. Conversely, if he had answered in the affirmative (i.e., he
did accept responsibility), that would have reflected extremely badly on his
own and his government's perceived competence. In addition to these potential
face-threats, such a response might also have opened up the possibility of litiga-
tion from Dr Kelly's family. Thus, Paxman's question created a classic commu-
nicative conflict, in which either confirmation or denial by Blair would have
been extremely face-damaging.

From this perspective, equivocation was arguably the less face-threatening
response. However, it is still potentially face-threatening, because it makes the
PM look evasive. As stated previously, politicians in general have an unenvi-
able reputation for slipperiness in the face of difficult questions; indeed, Blair
himself was characterised by a political opponent as having a "skill for ambigu-
ity" (Hague, 2002). In these exchanges, Blair can be considered to be doing
facework through equivocation. Thus, in his first three responses, he seeks to
justify his and the government's actions and expresses regret and concern for
the bereaved family, thereby defending his positive face. In his fourth response,

he asserts "it's maybe not a question you need to give a yes or no answer to", thereby defending his freedom of action and his negative face (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). Thus, both the reasons for Blair's equivocation and the various forms of equivocation he deploys may be conceptualised in terms of facework and face management.

A typology of how face threats posed by questions in broadcast interviews has been devised by Bull et al. (1996). The typology – described in full in Chapter 3 – was applied to the analysis of all the 557 questions from 18 televised interviews in the 1992 General Election. Notably, none of those questions were judged to be devoid of any form of face-threat. For example, Liberal Democrat leader Paddy Ashdown had recently been suffering from a cough. Under those circumstances, even the seemingly polite and innocuous enquiry about his health (as that which came from interviewer David Frost) arguably posed a threat to face if, as a consequence of his cough, Ashdown was unable to fulfil speaking engagements during the campaign.

All the identified communicative conflicts in these interviews (Bull et al., 1996) were judged to be created by threats to face. As stated previously, in the majority of cases, the politicians responded to these conflictual questions with equivocation (64%), as predicted by the STCC. The majority of questions were polar (87%). Given that there are three principal responses to such questions (affirm/deny/equivocate), the possibility of equivocal responses occurring by chance alone would be just 33%. Notably, in the face-threat typology, equivocation is regarded as face-threatening on the grounds that it makes the politician look evasive but arguably less face-threatening than other threats listed in the coding system. Hence, on the basis of a face-threat analysis, it was expected that equivocation would be the most likely response to conflictual questions (Bull et al., 1996).

However, it is important to note that communicative conflicts may be created not *only* by threats to face (Bull, 2000b). In the foregoing example, if, in response to the four questions from Paxman, Blair had acknowledged any responsibility for the death of Dr David Kelly, as well as being highly face-damaging, it might also have made both him and his government vulnerable to the risk of litigation from Dr Kelly's relatives (Bull, 2009). Furthermore, when President Clinton was questioned over his notorious affair with Monica Lewinsky, he was not only at risk of looking incompetent, treacherous, and downright deceitful, he was also in real danger of criminal prosecution and impeachment (Bull, 2000b).

Nevertheless, it remains the main proposal that threats to face are the prime cause for CCs in political interviews. Indeed, not only do they create pressures towards equivocation; they may also create pressures towards answering questions. For example, consider the scenario that the Leader of the Opposition is asked during a general election campaign to give some idea of how society might be different if they are elected as Prime Minister. Here, not replying or equivocating in response to such a question would be extremely face-damaging – it would make the LO look totally incompetent. Hence, in such a scenario,

it can be predicted with confidence that the politician will give an answer. From this perspective, whether a politician equivocates or whether they answer can be understood within the same underlying theoretical framework – this is termed the *face-threatening structure of questions* (Bull, 2008; Bull et al., 1996).

In the foregoing section, equivocation profiles were presented for three party leaders. These can also be analysed in terms of their potential face-damaging consequences. For example, pleading ignorance (as was used by Major) was a particularly ineffectual form of equivocation (Bull, 2003). The problem there is twofold. If he really did not know the answer to a question, then, as PM, he ran the risk of being seen as naïve or incompetent. On the other hand, if he actually did know the answer but was unwilling to reply, then he was at risk of being seen as deceitful. Both alternatives could be seen as having the potential to be highly face-damaging.

Similarly, the negative reply, such as when Kinnock stated what he was not going to do rather than what he would do, was another ineffectual form of equivocation. Not only is the negative reply evasive, it typically allows the interviewer to draw attention to the evasion by repeating the question and reiterating the request for an answer, which was precisely what happened in Kinnock's interview with Day (Bull, 2003).

In contrast, highly skilled use of equivocation was used by Blair during the 1997 UK General Election campaign (Bull, 2000b). In televised interviews, he was regularly questioned about the substantial differences in party policy between the time of Labour's disastrous electoral defeat in 1983 and the return to winning ways by New Labour in 1997. In response to questions during the campaign, Blair made extensive use of the term *modernisation* to justify the dramatic *volte-face* in policy. His party went on to a landslide victory in that election. This *rhetoric of modernisation* allowed Blair explicitly to both acknowledge policy changes which had taken place and to present them as an adaptation of the traditional values of the Labour Party in that contemporary political situation. Not only could he equivocate skilfully in response to conflictual questions, he could present a positive face for his party, both as principled and moving with the times.

From the foregoing analysis, *face management* can be seen to have two key aspects: it is not just about avoiding making yourself look bad, it can also involve saying things which make you look good in the eyes of others (Bull, 2000b). From this perspective, Blair's rhetoric of modernisation did both. It enabled him not only to avoid the risks of making face-damaging responses but also to present a positive image both for himself and for his party through what was claimed to be the highly inclusive social identity of New Labour. These positive strategic advantages are not represented in Bavelas et al.'s (1990) original theory, which focused essentially on equivocation as a means of not giving replies to awkward questions. In contrast, the concept of face can be applied to both the *causes* and *consequences* of equivocation, and thereby offers a way of analysing the strategic advantages of different forms of imprecise and ambiguous language.

Equivocation theory (Bavelas et al., 1990) has provided important insights into the situational pressures that lead politicians to equivocate. At the same time, two notable modifications to the theory have been proposed: that threats to face are the prime reason as to why communicative conflicts occur in political interviews and that equivocation needs to be understood in terms of its consequences, as well as it causes. A third modification to the theory is proposed in what follows; namely, that in certain contexts, equivocation can be seen as a form of deception.

Equivocation and deception[6]

In the original theory of equivocation, a clear distinction is made between equivocation and deception. According to Bavelas et al. (1990, p. 170), "many would consider equivocation a form of deception. We do not share this opinion and propose instead that equivocation is neither a false message nor a clear truth but rather an alternative used precisely when both of these are to be avoided".

However, from an alternative viewpoint, equivocation can also be seen as a form of deception. Deception has been defined as "an act that is intended to foster in another person a belief or understanding which the deceiver considers to be false" (Krauss, Geller, & Olson, 1976; as cited in Zuckerman, DePaulo, & Rosenthal, 1981, p. 3). From this perspective, equivocation – if it is intended to foster beliefs – can be seen as deceptive.

This argument can be elaborated from research on far-right political discourse. Two such studies have been conducted: one in Belgium (Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008), the other in the United Kingdom (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014). The Belgian study was based on two debates between Etienne Vermeersch (a distinguished Flemish philosopher) and two politicians (Filip Dewinter and Gerolf Annemans); both had been Members of Parliament for the far-right party *Vlaams Blok* (Flemish Bloc).

Flemish Bloc was a nationalist party, which called for independence for Flanders, and was also strongly anti-immigrant. "Our own people first" was the slogan of this party, according to which priority in all matters must be given to Flemish citizens over immigrants. In 2004, the Ghent court of appeal ruled Flemish Bloc in contempt of the 1981 Belgian law on racism and xenophobia, a view upheld by the Belgian Supreme Court. Following these verdicts, Flemish Bloc dissolved itself and created a new party – *Vlaams Belang* (Flemish Interest). In both of the debates, Vermeersch sought to demonstrate that the politicians of this new party had not abandoned their racist views.

An analysis of the politicians' responses to those arguments (Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008) focused in particular on their use of implicit discourse to convey their racial stance. This was conceptualised in terms of an underlying communicative conflict, based on the STCC (see the foregoing analysis; Bavelas et al., 1990; Hamilton & Mineo, 1998). On the one hand, the MPs were obliged by law to delete certain passages from their political programme.

Hence, when confronted with passages which might appear racist, they avoided expressing commitment to those utterances, either refusing to endorse them or distancing themselves in some way. On the other hand, arguably, the MPs would also wish somehow to reassure their hard-core supporters that the party's ideology remained the same.

In this context, implicit discourse enabled the MPs to put over their message but with sufficient ambiguity to avoid risks of prosecution or wider condemnation for racism. So, for example, when the philosopher asked "Has the principle *Our own people first* been abolished then?", one MP replied, "There is nothing dirty or racist about it. It simply means that I defend what is most precious to me. It is no disgrace to love your own children more". Although the MP does not answer the question, there is a clear implication that the principle *Our own people first* had not been abolished. The philosopher then rephrased the question in a slightly different way: "Does *Our own people first* mean priority for Flemish people regarding housing or employment?" The MP responded:

> I'm not allowed to be in favour of that. It is forbidden by law, since the change of the anti-racism law. You are not going to extract statements about that from me, because otherwise I risk condemnation. But in general terms I can tell you that in my opinion nationality gives certain rights and duties and hence also certain privileges.

In the foregoing case, the MP refused to answer the question but, again, there was the clear implication that the Flemish people should have priority in housing and employment (i.e., "in my opinion nationality gives certain rights and duties and hence also certain privileges").

In terms of the four dimensions of the STCC, the implicit language of these MPs might be regarded as equivocation in terms of content; that is to say, it might seem superficially unclear, vague, or ambiguous. Nevertheless, even though not explicitly stated, it carries the clear implication that the underlying *Our own people first* message has not changed. From this perspective, it might be regarded as a form of what has been termed *doublespeak*: language that deliberately disguises, distorts, or reverses the meaning of words (e.g., Lutz, 1987).

Notably, this linking of the concept of doublespeak to the content dimension of the STCC is novel. In the theory's original version (Bavelas et al., 1990), content is defined simply in terms of comprehensibility – an unclear statement being considered more equivocal. In contrast, the concept of doublespeak provides a useful bridge between equivocation and deception. Doublespeak can be seen both as deceptive (given that there is deliberate intent to disguise, distort, or reverse the meaning of words) and as equivocal (given that it is seemingly vague or ambiguous).

Notably, a once well-known far-right British politician (Nick Griffin) was caught on camera openly advocating this kind of doublespeak (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014). Griffin, a former leader of the far-right British National Party (BNP), was shown on a *YouTube* video alongside David Duke, a former

leader of the Ku Klux Klan (a far-right American organisation with a violent history of lynching and murdering African American people). The video was recorded at a private meeting of American White nationalists but subsequently uploaded onto the internet by *UKfightback* (an anti-fascist organisation). In the video, Griffin stated:

> But if you put that, i.e., getting rid of all coloured people from Britain, as your sole aim to start with, you're going to get absolutely nowhere, so instead of talking about racial purity, we talk about identity, we use saleable words, freedom, security, identity, democracy. Nobody can come and attack you on those ideas.

Thus, in this video, Griffin openly advocated a form of doublespeak as a calculated communicative strategy.

In 2009, Griffin was elected Member of the European Parliament (MEP) for the constituency of North West England. As a result, he was invited to appear on the popular BBC topical debate television programme *Question Time* (22 October). This was the first time a politician from a far-right party had appeared on such a programme in the UK; it thereby provided a unique opportunity to analyse such political discourse in the context of a national television debate.

The results of this particular study (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014) were compared with the foregoing analysis of debates with Belgian far-right politicians (Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008). Just as with the two Flemish politicians, it was proposed on the basis of the STCC that Griffin was caught in a communicative conflict. On the one hand, the BNP was widely perceived as a racist party, and to support the BNP, let alone vote for them, was totally unacceptable to significant sections of society. Conversely, much of the BNP's political support came from its anti-immigrant stance; to be seen to abandon this would be highly face-damaging in the eyes of its hard-line supporters. Hence, it was proposed that both Flemish Bloc and the BNP found themselves in a comparable social and political situation, characterised by communicative conflict. Accordingly, it was hypothesised that the distinctive features of right-wing discourse already identified by Simon-Vandenbergen (2008) in the Belgian study would also be a feature of Griffin's performance on *Question Time*.

In particular, it was hypothesised that Griffin would utilise various forms of doublespeak to put over the underlying racial message of the BNP. Notably, Griffin's implicit discourse (like that of the far-right Belgian politicians) was regarded as a form of doublespeak (appearing somewhat vague and ambiguous). Terms such as "British people" and "indigenous people" were never clearly defined. However, although never explicitly stated, the terms appear readily understood by members of both the *Question Time* audience and panel as meaning White people. At the same time, this interpretation, if challenged, had the strategic advantage of *deniability*, and Griffin does indeed deny that is what he means. Nevertheless, such terms carry a clear implicit message to

reassure the party's supporters that the underlying anti-immigrant message was unchanged.

Interestingly, audience members seemed to be aware of this duality. For example, one audience member remarked "I think the, erm, the public who are voting for the BNP do need to be educated about what Nick stands for. He's basically a wolf in sheep's clothing". Another audience member quipped "you'd be surprised how many people will have a whip round to buy you a ticket, and your supporters, to go back, go to the South Pole, it's a colourless landscape, it'll suit you fine".

According to the STCC, equivocation may be used as an *alternative* to deception. In this section, it has been argued that equivocation may also be used as a *form* of deception. In addition, equivocation and deception may be linked together through the concept of doublespeak. Doublespeak can be seen as deceptive, given that there is deliberate intent to disguise, distort, or reverse the meaning of words, but also as equivocal, given that it can be vague or ambiguous. Undoubtedly, there are situations in which people equivocate to avoid deception. But, as argued previously, there are also contexts in which equivocation itself may be seen as a form of deception. In short, people both equivocate to avoid deception but also equivocate as a form of deception – and may do so as a deliberate and calculated communicative strategy.

Equivocation and the use of implicit discourse

Although doublespeak may be seen as a form of equivocation, it is equivocation of a particular kind; that is to say, it makes particular use of implicit messages. Bavelas et al. (1990) do not distinguish between replying to a question indirectly through implicit language (what they call hinting at an answer) and not replying to it at all. Thus, they regard equivocation as a continuum, arguing that such an approach is far more useful than a dichotomy (equivocal/unequivocal), since it is more likely to detect subtle differences between messages. However, the foregoing analyses (Bull & Simon-Vandenbergen, 2014; Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008) suggest that, through the use of implicit discourse, the far-right politicians are able to put over their political message, which they would not be able to do if they simply avoided answering the questions. From this perspective, there may be a qualitative difference between implicit messages and other forms of equivocation. This may be illustrated from the analysis of implicit messages in other, non-political contexts.

For example, in one study, it was shown how physicians use implicit language when confronted with the difficulty of communicating a terminal diagnosis (Del Vento, Bavelas, Healing, Maclean, & Kirk, 2009). Informing a patient that their illness is incurable and thus will end their life can never be easy, and from the perspective of the STCC (see the foregoing analysis; Bavelas et al., 1990; Hamilton & Mineo, 1998), it can be seen to create a communicative dilemma – the need to be truthful without seeming callous. The solution proposed by the researchers was to use implicit language, from

which patients can infer the meaning. So, for example, doctors used euphemisms like referring to the patient's "condition" rather than using the explicit term "cancer". They also used a communicative device known as *litotes* (i.e., negating the opposite of the explicit term, e.g., rather than saying "the news is *bad*", saying "the news is *not good*"). There were several sources of evidence to suggest that the patients receiving bad news still understood the terminal diagnosis. This kind of implicit language enabled the physician to be truthful without being callous; hence, this might be seen as skilled communication in this particular context.

In another study (Bull, 1997), the use of implicit language was analysed in the celebrated and now infamous BBC interview between Diana, Princess of Wales, and journalist Martin Bashir, broadcast shortly before her divorce from Prince Charles. In this instance, it was argued that Diana faced a communicative conflict. If she was too outspokenly critical of her husband and the Royal Family, she likely would have alienated public opinion, exacerbated an already difficult domestic situation, or even faced some kind of retaliation. Conversely, if she avoided any comment on her husband or the Royal Family, or even denied there were any problems between them, she would not have been able to give her side of the story and, arguably, would have appeared somewhat naïve for agreeing to the interview in the first place.[7]

The focus of the analysis was on what were termed *answers by implication*: responses in which a person makes their opinions clear but without explicitly stating them. Notably, all of Diana's *answers by implication* took the form of critical comments. So, for example, when Bashir asked Diana what her husband thought of her interests, she replied, "Well I don't think I was allowed to have any. I think that I've always been the eighteen-year-old girl he got engaged to, so uhh I don't think I've been given any credit for growth". The assertion "I don't think I was allowed to have any" arguably carried the strong implication that Charles did not think very much of her interests.

Accordingly, it is proposed that not replying to a question is by no means the same as giving an implicit reply – there is an important distinction between them (Bull, 1997). Hence, from this perspective, a fourth modification of the STCC is proposed. Although implicit responses can be usefully understood in the context of the STCC, they are not necessarily forms of equivocation; indeed, they can be a subtle means of answering a question, while still addressing the concerns created by a communicative conflict.

Equivocation and culture[8]

In the previous chapter, the important role of culture was stressed in understanding rhetorical techniques whereby politicians invite affiliative audience responses, such as applause, laughter, or cheering. No attention is given to the role of culture in the original version of the STCC (Bavelas et al., 1990). However, this notable omission is addressed here, illustrated by a case study of equivocation in Japan (Feldman et al., 2015).

First, it is important to clarify that precision, clarity, and forthrightness are not necessarily seen as virtues in Japanese communicative style, even in many situations where those qualities are valued in the West (Feldman et al., 2015). Ostensibly, Japanese people, in general, tend to limit themselves to implicit language, avoid taking extreme positions, and even regard vagueness as a virtue and an ambiguous speaking style as quite acceptable. To avoid leaving an over-assertive impression, there is an apparent inclination to depend more frequently on qualifiers such as *maybe*, *perhaps*, *probably*, and *somewhat*. Since Japanese syntax does not require the use of a subject in a sentence, omission of the subject can often create a great deal of ambiguity. In addition, there is a tendency to prefer understatement and hesitation, and avoid explaining or expressing things precisely or pointedly, instead using indirect expressions. Although there are multiple pronouns that mean *I*, there is a definite tendency to avoid their use as much as possible – thus, in order to express an opinion without personal commitment, people may use expressions like "many people say" or "it is said". All of these communication-related configurations reflect the large degree of equivocation. This can be found in sessions when individuals are asked to reveal their own opinion on a range of issues or when asked to share information related to, for example, work and life experience.

An equally important trait is related to the way politicians in particular construct their discourse in line with Japanese tradition, according to which real feelings and opinions about politics and people should not be on public display, where things must be kept calm and controlled. An important distinction in Japanese discourse is between *honne* (which means honest and informal, the actual genuine intent) and that of *tatemae* (which means formal, ceremonial, designed for public consumption). A person may discuss a particular issue from either standpoint: *honne* or *tatemae*. When the speaker discloses genuine thoughts, opinions, and judgements, regardless of the expected reception they will receive, that is *honne*. When statements are carefully worded in order to restrict the conversation to official positions or when the speaker sticks to ambiguous expressions without revealing honest opinions and feelings, that is *tatemae*. Thus, the speech of Japanese politicians (and government officials) generally fits either into one of these distinctions. For public officials, *honne* and *tatemae* are the two sides of the Japanese political coin; they signify the difference between public disclosure and private discretion.

Politicians thus tend to present their views with varying degrees of openness (*honne*) or vagueness (*tatemae*) depending on the circumstances in which they find themselves. When speaking before a large public gathering, such as party conventions or a large press conference, politicians typically engage in *tatemae*, generally expressing little beyond the official, broadly accepted views of their particular political organisation. For example, on establishing a new government, the policy speech delivered by the Japanese PM to both houses of the *Diet*, traditionally, is primarily an occasion to expound the official cabinet or party line. Notably, a linguistic trait peculiar to *tatemae* statements is that speakers tend to avoid vocabulary that indicates any judgement of or commitment

to any particular position. Such speakers typically hedge their comments with words like *could be*, *perhaps*, and *probably*. They often use terms like *positively* or *constructively* to give a vague impression of their intention to move on an issue at some future point, *energetic* or *assiduous* to convey a sense of effort, and *work hard* or *to endeavour* when they intend to take no personal responsibility. Thus, politicians say something, loading their speech with much professional jargon and abstractions, without revealing any personal opinion; and they phrase comments so that their stance on certain issues cannot be clearly determined.

Talking in *tatemae* euphemisms – by blurring commitments, opinions, and emotions, or by presenting only official, widely accepted views – is the most common form of Japanese public speaking. Conceivably, it may be the most prudent way for *Diet* members and government officials to express themselves and remain politically viable. *Tatemae* allows them to protect their own opinions and emotions from public scrutiny, avoid advocating or directly associating themselves with particular policies, and limits the risk of embarrassing colleagues or offending those of a different political persuasion.

From this perspective, equivocation may be seen not just as a response to situations that create communicative conflicts but as a cultural norm, both within Japanese political culture and within Japanese society as a whole. This significant role of culture in equivocation represents a fifth modification of the original version of the STCC and one that warrants a great deal more attention in future research.

Conclusions

From the evidence reviewed in this chapter, it is clear that politicians often fail to answer questions. Furthermore, at least 43 different ways of not answering questions have been identified. Reasons for political equivocation have been addressed in a theory originally proposed by Bavelas et al. (1990) – the so-called situational theory of communicative conflict (e.g., Hamilton & Mineo, 1998).

However, a number of modifications to the STCC have been proposed. These can be summarised as follows:

1   Threats to face are the prime reason why communicative conflicts occur in political interviews.
2   Equivocation needs to be understood in terms of its consequences as well as its causes.
3   In certain contexts, equivocation can be seen as a form of deception.
4   There is a qualitative difference between implicit messages and other forms of equivocation.
5   Equivocation is not just a response to situations that create communicative conflicts but may also be seen as a cultural norm, for example, in the case of Japanese society and politics (Feldman et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the STCC has undoubtedly made a notable and invaluable contribution to our understanding of equivocation. Although politicians have an unenviable reputation for evasiveness, it is not just politicians who avoid answering questions. Under certain circumstances, we all equivocate; and the significant contribution of Bavelas et al. (1990) was to highlight distinctive circumstances under which such equivocation occurs.

Notes

1 The range of face-threats in questions identified in that research is detailed in Chapter 3.
2 The typology was originally proposed by Bull and Mayer (1993) and was extended by Bull (2003). Further modifications followed: namely, to item 6 (proposed by Waddle & Bull, 2016) and item 5 (Bull & Strawson, 2020).
3 For further information and examples on partial replies, half answers, and fractional replies, see Chapter 3.
4 This section is based primarily on the studies by **Bull and Mayer (1993)**, **Bull (2003)**.
5 Formally known as the Community Charge, this tax was introduced in 1990 by Margaret Thatcher's government. It provided for a single flat-rate per-capita tax on every adult; it was abolished and replaced before the 1992 General Election by the Council Tax, a graduated tax on property.
6 This section is based primarily on the studies by **Simon–Vandenbergen (2008)** and **Bull and Simon–Vandenbergen (2014)**.
7 In recent years, revelations have emerged concerning how the interview with the Princess was acquired. It was originally seen as a triumph of journalism. However, details of unethical practices – including the use of forged documents – have since shown that agreement for the interview was obtained under false pretences (Urwin & Hellen, 2020).
8 This section is based on the study by **Feldman, Kinoshita, and Bull (2015)**.

6 The Westminster Punch and Judy Show?

Leaders' exchanges at Prime Minister's Questions

Punch and Judy is a traditional knockabout puppet show, popular with families at British seaside resorts. It is characterised by domestic strife and violence, typically between the eponymous couple Mr Punch and his wife Judy. Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) – which, as a spectacle, is sometimes likened to this aggressive puppet show – is the UK Parliament's primary regular debating event. On each occasion, the Prime Minister (PM), or an official stand-in, takes and responds to verbal questions on governmental issues, which, via an official selection process, can be asked by any Member of Parliament. PMQs is notorious for its adversarial discourse, especially for the gladiatorial encounters between PM and Leader of the Opposition (LO). Analyses of those encounters form the principal focus of this chapter.

This particular focus on the interactions between the PM and LO can be amply justified by the way in which their encounters have become increasingly central to the event. The proportion of time taken up by the LO-PM exchanges has increased in recent decades – the number of LO questions has gone up, and there has been a tendency for them to be longer, as have the PMs' responses (Bates et al., 2014). Furthermore, their encounters have become of primary interest to observers; indeed, PMQs is now typically viewed as a contest between LO and PM (Reid, 2014).

Based on these interactions between PM and LO, nine empirical studies of PMQs conducted by the authors and colleagues are reported in this chapter (Bull, 2013; Bull, Fetzer, & Kádár, 2020; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Bull & Waddle, 2019; Bull & Wells, 2012; Fetzer & Bull, 2019; Waddle & Bull, 2020a; Waddle et al., 2019; and a supplement[1] for this publication). Before that, we provide a background to PMQs, followed by an overview of the adversarial discourse for which the event has become renowned.

A background to PMQs

Every Wednesday at noon whenever Parliament is sitting, the House of Commons chamber – usually packed with members at this point – is called to order by *the Speaker*,[2] who announces the start of PMQs. Lasting half an hour or so, the event is an opportunity for any MP (through a prearranged process) to ask

the PM a question on a topic of their choosing. There is no requirement for the PM to be made aware of the question topic, thereby maintaining the possibility of surprise, as well as a degree of political accountability.

Such a democratic process is not exclusive to the UK. Somewhat similar proceedings for questioning governments take place across Europe and further afield. For example, Canada's corresponding process is labelled *Question Period*, India's is *Question Hour*, and in both Australia and New Zealand it is known as *Question Time*. Historically, the UK was the forerunner for such a process (Norton, 1993); in its earliest form, it goes as far back as the premiership of the first British PM, Sir Robert Walpole, who served from 1721 to 1742.

However, until the second half of the 20th century, the opportunity for UK MPs to question the PM was not quite the regular parliamentary occasion that we see today. That changed in 1961, when it became a twice-weekly event – Tuesdays and Thursdays – whenever Parliament was not in recess (House of Commons Information Office, 2010a). No further notable schedule changes occurred until 1997, when it switched to just Wednesdays. As the televising of Parliament had begun a few years earlier (in 1989), it is this single weekly event that has become the form familiar to viewers and observers over the past quarter of a century.

In advance of every session, MPs who wish to ask a question of the PM are required to submit their intention. A process known as *the shuffle* designates who and in what order they will be called to pose their question[3] (UK Parliament, 2022b). The first MP's question at every PMQs is something of a ritual – "Question number one, Mr [or Madam[4]] Speaker" – intended to ask the PM to list their engagements for that day, which receives the response "This morning I had meetings with ministerial colleagues. In addition to my duties in the house, I shall have further such meetings later today". The first MP is then allowed to ask their question of choice. The PM makes their response immediately after each question. Questions come from opposition and government MPs alternately but this alternate pattern is interrupted by the six questions from the LO and (currently) the two from the leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP).[5] So, only these two opposition leaders are afforded the opportunity to follow up on a preceding question in a subsequent turn, should they wish.

Whilst MPs do not have to declare in advance the details of their question, there are parliamentary rules to which they should conform (see UK Parliament, 2022b). Namely, the purpose of a question should be to acquire information or to urge action on an issue that is the responsibility of the government. Furthermore, it must be on an issue for which – in the case of PMQs – the PM is responsible and be based not on speculation but on fact. It must not seek information that is readily available (e.g., from a freely accessible publication), nor refer to an active legal matter (i.e., referred to as *sub judice*). In addition, the content and tone of questions should be within what is termed neutral language; for example, it should not be vague, trivial, or offensive.

In spite of the existence of these rules and the presence of the Speaker to oversee the proceedings, PMQs is renowned for its adversarialism. This

is particularly true of the "weekly high noon showdown" (Waddle, 2018, p. 41) between the two main party leaders: the LO and the PM. Indeed, their exchanges have been labelled "a form of verbal pugilism" (Bull & Wells, 2012, p. 46). So, similar to how heavyweight boxers are evaluated on their abilities to deliver and counter punches, the two leaders are expected to be skilled in delivering and countering verbal punches – and in both contests, they are expected to remain within their respective set of rules.

The sport of boxing is conducted under what became known as the *Queensberry rules*,[6] and contestants are required to adhere to those rules whilst exchanging blows. In their exchanges at PMQs, the party leaders are required to conduct themselves in accordance with the aforementioned parliamentary rules. Included in the requirements for the question-response format, they should refrain from what is termed *unparliamentary language*. This includes making suggestions that other MPs have false motives and making direct accusations of lying. A key role of the Speaker during debates is to enforce these rules, including, for members adjudged to have broken the rules, to order their withdrawal from the session. One such occasion occurred during a Common's debate[7] on 31 January 2022. The leader of SNP, Ian Blackford, said that the PM "has wilfully misled Parliament". The Speaker, Sir Lindsay Hoyle, repeatedly insisted that Blackford either withdraw the comment or state that the PM "*inadvertently* misled the House". After much toing and froing between the Speaker and the SNP leader, Blackford went on to say "it is not my fault if the Prime Minister cannot be trusted to tell the truth". As the Speaker stated "Under the power given to me by Standing Order Number 43,[8] I order the [right] honourable Member to withdraw immediately from the House", Blackford rose from his seat and vacated the chamber.

It is under such rules and conventions that PMQs has become the widely-viewed, premier political event we know today. Furthermore, opinion of PMQs varies considerably. Famous for the often-antagonistic exchanges between leaders and the partisan barracking from the benches, some key figures have expressed views opposed to the knockabout behaviour. When David Cameron became Conservative leader in 2005, he said he was "fed up with the Punch and Judy politics of Westminster, the name calling, backbiting, point scoring, finger pointing" (Cameron, 2005). However, he later admitted in an interview that he had not succeeded in keeping his pledge to stamp out such behaviour due to the adversarial nature of the occasion (BBC, 2008). Indeed, PMQs has been likened to "an unpleasant football match, in which the game played publicly is accompanied by all sorts of secret grudge matches, settlement of scores, and covert fouls committed when the players hope the [referee] is not looking" (Hoggart, 2011). This view from a national journalist has parallels with the opinion of former Speaker John Bercow, who, in a speech early in his tenure, stated that MPs needed to be aware of the "seriously impaired impression which PMQs [. . .] is leaving on the electorate". He said the event – once "an atmosphere of comparatively cordiality" – was now characterised by "a litany of attacks, soundbites and planted questions from across the spectrum".

He claimed that questions were now dominated by the party leader exchanges and that "if it is scrutiny at all, then it is scrutiny by screech" (BBC, 2010).

However, somewhat contrary to the views lamenting the boorish behaviour commonly on display are those highlighting its merits. For example, the first PMQs exchanges between LO Ed Miliband and PM Cameron were notably "relevant and serious" (The Guardian, 2010). Of course, there are many other instances of praise (e.g., Sedgemore, 1980; Thatcher, 1993). Indeed, there are some that are positively glowing – even about the knockabout behaviour. Gimson (2012) claims that PMQs is not only a "test of courage" but also "one of the few genuinely popular bits of British politics" (p. 11), thereby suggesting the event is a major contributor towards maintaining public engagement. Gimson even goes as far as including a famous Punch and Judy exhortation in the article's title – *PMQs: That's the way to do it!*

The adversarial discourse of PMQs is the main focus of all nine empirical studies conducted by the authors and colleagues reported in this chapter. Firstly, we present an overview of adversarialism in PMQs, then an analysis of the way in which face-threatening questions are posed to the PM and the means by which the PM counters those face-threats (Bull & Wells, 2012). There follow seven studies which identify four distinctive aspects of PMQs discourse: (1) personal attacks (Waddle & Bull, 2020a; Waddle et al., 2019; 2023 supplement); (2) the use of quotations (Fetzer & Bull, 2019; Bull & Waddle, 2019); (3) equivocation by the PM (Bull & Strawson, 2020); (4) forms of address to the Speaker (Bull et al., 2020). Finally, a ninth study is presented, intended to assess whether PMQs discourse is no more than political point scoring or whether it plays a more significant role as a distinctive form in political opposition (Bull, 2013).

Overview of PMQs adversarialism

The adversarial discourse of PMQs was the focus of a study by Harris (2001), titled *Being politically impolite*. Basing the analysis on politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987, see Chapter 2), Harris argued that a sizeable proportion of PMQs discourse comprises intentional and explicitly face-threatening acts (FTAs), which may either threaten positive face (make a person look bad) or pose a threat to their future freedom of action (negative face).

From the analysis of twelve PMQs sessions (March to November 2000), Harris (2001) argued that systematic impoliteness is not only sanctioned but is also something of an expectation in such adversarial political proceedings. Thus, even the severest FTAs tend not to cause interpersonal problems, nor is that their purpose. MPs have a clear understanding that a key responsibility of opposition in politics is just that – to oppose, challenge, criticise, and ridicule those who hold power, and ultimately to bring about their removal from office. Never is this more apparent than in PMQs, particularly in the discourse of the LO and PM. Indeed, for the LO – the person whose primary aim is to replace the PM – PMQs is the platform to present such a case. It affords them the regular opportunity to augment their own positive face by attacking the face (both

positive and negative) of the PM, which, if successful, should enhance their own leadership credentials. Furthermore, due to the instant and watchful attention of the media (and now social media), the exposure has never been greater.

Harris (2001) identified various techniques for the performance of FTAs, which, in many cases, function to attack the PM's competence. One such technique is a question requesting detailed information – specifically, information the PM is unlikely to have at their disposal or that which they would not wish to make public because it is unfavourable to the government. Should the PM fail to supply the requested details in their response to this type of question, the LO may follow up by providing those details, thereby seeking to embarrass the PM. Harris included the following LO question as such an example: "Will the [PM] now tell the House what the price of a litre of petrol was when he took office, and what it has increased to today?"

Harris identified another common tactic involving questions with built-in face-threatening implicatures or presuppositions. One example was "Doesn't he find it deeply disturbing that the Trade Secretary is a classic example of this all-mouth and no-delivery Government?", which, of course, includes the presupposition that the PM's government is "all-mouth and no-delivery". Another example was "Will the [PM] promise straightforwardness and honesty in future health announcements?" – a question which implies that previous government announcements were lacking in straightforwardness and honesty. Arguably, the clear intention of this question was to imply dishonesty but to do so within the bounds of acceptable parliamentary language (i.e., not making a direct accusation of dishonesty).

Adversarial discourse[9]

The study we report in this section followed up on the sterling work of Harris (2001) but, rather than using illustrative examples, was a more systematic analysis. The aim of Bull and Wells (2012) was the development of a typology of FTAs in PMQs. The analysis encompassed 18 sessions of PMQs (from July to November 2007). For the first nine sessions, the PM was Tony Blair. Blair resigned on 27 June and was succeeded by Gordon Brown. Thus, the later nine sessions that were analysed were Brown's first as PM. The LO at that time was Conservative leader Cameron.

The analysis was focused on question and response (Q-R) sequences between the LO and PM. The key aims were the identification of techniques for FTAs in the LO's questions and the ways the PM may counter FTAs in their responses. A further consideration was Harris's concept of mitigating techniques – namely, the ways politicians attempt to soften the force of FTAs in order to stay within the confines of parliamentary language, thereby avoiding censure from the Speaker. Importantly, as Harris (2001) pointed out, the Q-R sequences are not merely questions and responses. For example, syntactically, the LO's question turn may include far more than just a question. Thereby, the results are reported in what follows as question *turns* – as well as response turns and mitigating techniques.

Question turns

Six different techniques through which a questioner may perform FTAs were identified:

- *Preface*. As Harris (2001) pointed out, the Q-R sequences are not merely questions and responses, respectively. For example, syntactically, the LO's question turn may include a preface of one or more propositions with an interrogative (e.g., "can the PM confirm that" or "is the PM aware that"), followed by a summarising *action-seeking* or *information-seeking* proposition. Prefaces may, for example, be used to make political points or attack political opponents. By such means, the LO may perform an FTA not directly via their interrogative but certainly as part of their overall speaking turn.
- *Detailed questions*. As identified by Harris (2001), opponents often pose questions which on the surface are requests for detailed information. However, such disingenuous questions typically function to highlight something of potential embarrassment to the government.
- *Contentious presuppositions*. Harris (2001) noted how questions in PMQs may be based on presuppositions that, by their very nature, present a clear face-threat. For example, a question from Cameron to Blair included "shouldn't he, just this once, apologise for what can only be described as an abject failure to deliver". This question includes the contentious presupposition "just this once", thereby strongly implying that the PM is not inclined to apologise.
- *Communicative conflicts*. As detailed in previous chapters, there are some questions to which all forms of response can be potentially undesirable for the responder but, nonetheless, a response is still expected (Bavelas et al., 1990). Bull et al. (1996) proposed that such questions pose a communicative conflict, in that, however the politician responds, there exists the potential for a loss of face. In PMQs, these conflictual questions may, for example, relate to a clear failure of policy – which to confirm would be somewhat face-damaging to the PM but to deny would be entirely lacking in credibility.
- *Invitation to perform a face-damaging response*. Some questions include requests for the PM to respond in a way that is face-damaging to them and/or their party (e.g., to make an apology, to acknowledge a failed policy, or to be critical of a department of government or of a colleague).
- *Asides*. Politicians may make a remark which is separate from the Q-R format, designed to be sneering or critical of an opponent. For example, a critical aside may be made following an interruption by an MP or the rebuke of an MP by the Speaker.

Response turns

Five different techniques were identified through which the PM may counter an FTA in their response. Firstly, the PM may entirely *ignore* the context of the question. Secondly, they may *promote positive face* – in effect, taking the

opportunity to *beat the drum* for their own side on an issue somewhat related to the context of the question. The third form of response is a *rebuttal*. These may take the form of an unequivocal refutation of the accusation or proposition in the LO's question. The next type of response is *self-justification*. Such a response may, for example, take the form of a detailed explanation or set of reasons for some recent governmental actions. The fifth and final form of response is to *attack*. Bull and Wells provided the following example, in which PM Brown responds to a conflictual question from LO Cameron with an attack:

Cameron: The big question this week is can we believe what the [PM] says? So let us start with his credibility gulf over the election. The [PM] was asked, "Hand on heart, if the polls showed a 100-seat majority, would you still have called off the election?" and he said yes. Does he expect anyone to believe that?

Brown: I will take no lectures from the [LO]. This summer he was for grammar schools, against them and then for them again. He was for VAT on air fares and then against it. He was for parking charges and then against them. He was for museum charges and then against them. I will take no lectures from the [LO] about that.

Importantly, these five ways in which the PM may counter an FTA are not mutually exclusive. Indeed, we see three in the foregoing response by the PM: (1) Brown appears to rebut Cameron's FTA when he says "I will take no lectures from the LO" followed by saying why; (2) he ignores the context of the question concerning his calling of the election; (3) he makes an unambiguous attack on what he claims shows Cameron's indecisiveness on policy issues. Moreover, it is entirely conceivable for a PM's response to employ all five techniques in defence of face.

Mitigating techniques

Here, we focus on what Harris (2001) calls mitigating techniques, which are used to soften the force of an FTA and/or remain within the bounds of acceptable parliamentary language. Three such techniques identified for this purpose are:

Third-person language. MPs are expected to refer to any other member by their formal title (e.g., the honourable Gentleman, the right honourable Lady, the Attorney General, the Prime Minister) or with third-person pronouns; they should also address their remarks through the Speaker. According to Harris (2001), the use of such language – an expectation in line with appropriate parliamentary discourse – can mitigate the severity of an FTA. A speaking MP who uses a second-person pronoun (e.g., "you") would be deemed in breach of acceptable parliamentary language, so may face admonishment from the Speaker. The use of third-person

language is covered in much greater detail later in this chapter in the sec-
tion *Addressing remarks to the Speaker* (Bull et al., 2020).

Humour. The use of humour in a question or a response may soften the force
of an FTA. An example of humour used in this manner came from Cam-
eron at his final PMQs as PM on 13 July 2016. Although it was disparag-
ing about his opponent (LO Jeremy Corbyn) in relation to his position as
Labour leader, and thereby a clear FTA, Cameron's use of humour had a
somewhat mitigating effect:

> Let me say something to the right honourable Gentleman about the
> democratic process of leadership elections, because I did say a couple
> of weeks ago [*Interruption*]. I have to say that I am beginning to admire
> his tenacity. He is reminding me of the Black Knight in *Monty Python
> and the Holy Grail*.[10] He has been kicked so many times but he says,
> "Keep going, it's only a flesh wound." I admire that.

Quotations. The use of a quotation (i.e., citing the past words of others or
even of the opponent in the ongoing exchange) can be used to mitigate
the force of an FTA. Furthermore, by directly quoting their opponent,
a politician may make a damaging insinuation without being explicitly
disparaging. The use of quotations in PMQs is covered in more detail in
what follows, where we report findings of two particular studies: Fetzer
and Bull (2012) and Bull and Waddle (2019).

Summary

The study reported in the preceding analysis (Bull & Wells, 2012) presented
an overview of adversarialism in PMQs, conceptualised in terms of an overall
typology of how questions pose FTAs and how PMs may respond to such
attacks. Notably, every question posed by LO Cameron to PMs Blair or Brown
in these 18 PMQs (a total of 108 questions) included one or more face-threats,
as specified in the foregoing typology. Such a finding graphically illustrates the
adversarial nature of PMQs discourse. In the next section, there follow a series
of studies concerned with four distinctive aspects of PMQs discourse: personal
attacks (including how the topic of debate affects the levels of personal antago-
nism), quotations, equivocation, and language addressed via the Speaker.

Distinctive features of PMQs discourse

Personal attacks[11]

The opening section of this chapter presents a varied commentary on PMQs,
in particular, on how the behaviour on display is somewhat hostile (e.g., Hog-
gart, 2011). Such opinions have been publicly voiced even by those who have
chaired the weekly debates [Speaker Bercow (BBC, 2010)] or fronted them
[PM Cameron (BBC, 2008)]. Indeed, Cameron himself was the subject of

many press articles, for example, for the "furious mud-slinging", particularly in his clashes with LO Miliband, and the "public disgust" expressed in letters of complaint to Parliament (Chorley, 2013). It was in light of such press interest and public dissatisfaction that we conducted our initial study of personal attacks in PMQs.

A key aim of this study (Waddle et al., 2019) was to investigate whether the apparent build-up of adverse publicity and public disapproval was an indicator of a gradual shift towards greater personal antagonism in PMQs. For our assessment of personal attacks, our focus was on language identifiable as disrespect. A clear and salient example of disrespect occurred around the time of our analysis. At the session on 18 December 2013, Cameron said in a response to Miliband, "You don't need it to be Christmas to know when you are sitting next to a turkey". The target of Cameron's personal attack in this instance was not the LO but his colleague, Shadow Chancellor Ed Balls. Of course, this is an extreme case of disrespect – most are more subtle and certainly less insulting – but it adequately demonstrates the personal antagonism that has perhaps prompted the foregoing "disgust" and the need for a systematic analysis.

We focused our analysis only on the exchanges between LO and PM. Our period of analysis resembled a different investigation of PMQs (Bates et al., 2014), which was based on the premierships of Margaret Thatcher, John Major, Blair, Brown, and Cameron. Bates et al.'s study covered the early sessions of the five PMs; however, we analysed both the early and latter periods for each PM. Thereby, we could assess not only changes across a period spanning five decades (1979–2016) but across each PM's time in office.

We analysed all LO-PM exchanges in the first ten and last ten sessions of the then PM and a corresponding amount for his four predecessors[12] – a total of 1,320 speaking turns. Every speaking turn was analysed in terms of whether or not a personal attack was made. Defined as personal antagonism deemed as disrespectful, identified forms of attack included the following (see Waddle et al., 2019, p. 68; Waddle, 2018, p. 113): *negative personality statements* (e.g., Cameron to Miliband: "If he had an ounce of courage, he would rule it out"); *implied, enduring negative character traits* (e.g., Cameron to Miliband: "Every forecast the right honourable Gentleman has made about the economy has been wrong [. . .] He has made misjudgement after misjudgement on every single question"); *aspersions/disparaging insinuations* (e.g., Miliband to Cameron: "He is being funded to the tune of £47 million by the hedge funds. Everyone knows that is why he is refusing to act but what is his explanation?"); *patronising/condescending remarks* (e.g., Cameron to Miliband: "That is a much better question; I think we are making some progress"); *mockery* (e.g., Cameron to Miliband: "Apparently, someone can go around to his office, and he stands on a soapbox to make himself look a little taller"); *badgering* (i.e., comments resembling personal harassment, e.g., Cameron to Brown: "The PM claims to be a numbers man, so is it 90 percent, is it 95 percent or is it 98 percent? Come on!"); and *negative names/labels*. A notable example of this last type, which Cameron directed at Miliband, formed the title of our article: "He is just the

nowhere man of British politics". Finally, it is important to note that only attacks directed personally at the other leader in the exchange were accounted for – so, as insulting as it was to the Shadow Chancellor, Cameron's "turkey" jibe would not necessarily have qualified.

The results showed that, for the five PMs overall, a substantial proportion (31%) of their combined early and latter response turns included a personal attack on the LO. Individually, Cameron's level of personal attacks was the highest (39.2%) – significantly higher than both Blair and Thatcher (both at 24.2%); Major's were at 30%; and Brown was the second-highest, at 37.5%. In terms of individual periods, the lowest was Thatcher's early sessions, when just five of her first 60 response turns included such an attack (8.3%). The period with the highest proportion of attacks was that of Cameron's in 2015 (see endnote 12), when 61.7% of his 60 response turns included personal antagonism directed at Miliband.

The corresponding overall figure for LOs in their questions was 31.8%. Individually, the LO who made the highest proportion of attacks in a 60-question period to the PM was Cameron, with 61.7% at the end of Brown's premiership. LO Cameron's figures were also high against Brown at the beginning of his premiership (46.7%), as were LO Miliband's against PM Cameron in 2015 (also 46.7%). The LO whose proportion of attacks was the lowest (8.3%) was Corbyn in Cameron's latter period prior to his resignation as PM in 2016.

Further analyses assessed the changes over time. In terms of successive premierships, there was a clear trend for PMs to show greater antagonism than their predecessor – combining early and latter periods, there was an increase in attacks from Thatcher to Major to Brown to Cameron; only Blair's was not an increase compared to Major, whom he succeeded. In terms of across premierships – comparing latter periods with early periods – for the PMs combined, there was a highly significant increase in their personal antagonism towards the respective LOs. Individually, there was a trend for PMs to increase their levels of personal attacks. The increases by PMs Thatcher, Major, and Brown were all statistically significant. Blair also showed an increase (from 18.3% to 30%) but not significantly so. Cameron, whose premiership began with a very high level of personal attacks on the LO (58.3%), showed a small increase when still facing Miliband in 2015 (see the preceding analysis). However, he was the only PM whose personal antagonism showed a downward trend by the end, dropping significantly to 20%.

Cameron's distinctive, threefold reduction in personal antagonism prior to his departure from office prompted us to speculate on this anomalous outcome. His high levels of personal attacks show that, as he himself admitted, he had not been successful in his pledge to stop "the Punch and Judy politics of Westminster" (BBC, 2008). Corbyn, however, the LO who questioned Cameron in his latter period, was certainly showing a less antagonistic style. According to Culpeper (2011), impoliteness tends to be reciprocated; perhaps Cameron was reciprocating with relative politeness? Indeed, with face-preservation in mind, Cameron (and his advisors) may have considered that the knockabout,

antagonistic approach to a relatively polite – and more senior[13] – opponent may have reflected badly on the PM. Another possibility relates to a different kind of self-interest: opinion polls were far from favourable for Labour under Corbyn at that time; the Conservatives may have considered that damaging Corbyn was not to their advantage. Cameron voiced such an opinion at his final PMQs when quoting correspondence he had received: "Sensible, sober, polite answers to Mr. Corbyn . . . let him create his own party disunity". One further possibility concerns the Brexit referendum. Unusually, the UK's two main political opponents were on the same side – both campaigning to remain in the EU – which may have factored in reduced mutual antagonism at the time of that momentous political situation. Indeed, for 38 consecutive speaking turns in the run-up to and just after the referendum,[14] there were no personal attacks on each other. Such a sequence was not seen in any other period of our analysis extending from 1979 to 2016.

Why the antagonism?

Waddle et al. (2019) discussed what might underlie the trend towards increased personal antagonism in PMQs and the potential functions of personal attacks. Certainly, since the televising of Parliament began, scrutiny of performances has increased (Reid, 2014) and a rise in *personality politics* has occurred (Bates et al., 2014). Under circumstances akin to post-match analysis, party leaders will be mindful as such and might wish to elevate themselves – highlighting cognitive differences over their opponent (Ilie, 2004) – and may well *play to the crowd*. This need for one-upmanship is highly likely in any period just before a general election. Another possible function of personal attacks is the notion of *deconstruction* (Reid, 2014). For example, PM Blair's chief advisor Alastair Campbell reported the tactic of highlighting their opponent LO William Hague's apparent verbal skills as a personal shortcoming, namely, suggesting they masked a lack of sound political judgement (Campbell, 2007). One further proposed function related to a *stratagem of argument* documented almost two centuries ago: if an opponent has the upper hand, one can always resort to a personal insult (Schopenhauer, 1831).

2023 supplement

Back in 2020, we conducted a small-scale study assessing the LO-PM exchanges in PMQs during the early months of the Covid-19 pandemic (Waddle & Bull, 2020b). The PM was Boris Johnson and his opponent was the then recently appointed Labour LO Keir Starmer. In those somewhat unprecedented times, we noted some particularly antagonistic personal attacks in responses to questions concerning approaches to the pandemic. Occasionally, the PM would accuse the LO of not acting in the national interest. Such responses prompted follow-ups from Starmer, including "Of course I'm going to ask about that" and "I know that the Prime Minister has rehearsed attack lines". In light of these findings – and a series of allegations related to the PM's actions and

conduct in office (see, e.g., King, 2022) – it was deemed pertinent to this chapter to more thoroughly assess PMQs exchanges from the Johnson premiership by following the methods and scope[15] of the foregoing large-scale study (Waddle et al., 2019). Key findings are presented in the following analysis.

Johnson's overall personal attacks – a combination of his early and latter periods (in 47.5% of his response turns) – were, by this same measure, in excess of all five of the foregoing PMs.[16] As for individual periods, his assessed levels of personal antagonism in neither his early nor latter period were quite as high as those of Cameron when responding to Miliband (58.3% in 2010 and 61.7% in 2015). Like Cameron, Johnson started his premiership with personal attacks in more than half of his responses (53.3%). His latter period showed a relative reduction in attacks – but still in 41.7% of his response turns.

In terms of personal antagonism in LO questions, Corbyn showed a significant increase on his previous low – now 36.7% of his turns included a personal attack. Starmer's (at 55%) were higher than any LO assessed in the foregoing study (Waddle et al., 2019), with the single exception of Cameron (61.7% in PM Brown's latter period).

Some points of note from this analysis include Corbyn's now increased levels of personal attacks. The then LO had now been in that role for four years, having also served through the premiership of Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May. Importantly, the span of this early period of PM Johnson coincided not only with the 2019 General Election but also the prorogation of Parliament.[17] The first of these led to exchanges in which the PM, who needed the approval of the House to call the election, occasionally accused the LO of reluctance – at his first PMQs (4 September 2019) using the insults *frit* and *frightened* and saying, "I can see only one chlorinated chicken in the House, and he is sitting on the Opposition Front Bench". In relation to the second of these issues, unlike the aforementioned unusual alignment (i.e., PM Cameron and LO Corbyn both campaigning against Brexit in 2016), there were now clear differences between LO and PM. Johnson had been at the forefront of the *Leave* campaign; and now, they had substantial disagreements over Brexit processes. So, Corbyn – once labelled "the saint in the bear pit" for his relative politeness at PMQs (Lees, 2015) – showed a not uncommon increase in personal antagonism over time. However, it is conceivable that these highly contentious circumstances may have factored in his over four-fold increase.

The findings for Starmer are also worthy of closer consideration. So, the LO who accused Johnson of having "rehearsed attack lines" was now outscoring the PM in his number of attacks. One thing that stood out from a qualitative analysis of the LO question turns was that many related to the PM's personal conduct, including what was dubbed *Partygate* (see endnote 7 and, e.g., Lyons, 2022). For example, consider the following particularly noisy exchange from 20 April 2022:

Starmer: These are strange answers from a man who yesterday claimed to be making a humble apology. [Laughter from members.] Does the Prime Minister actually accept that he broke the law?

Johnson:	Yes, Mr Speaker, I have been absolutely clear that I humbly accept what the police have said. I have paid the fixed penalty notice. And, Mr Speaker, what I think the country, what I think the whole House would really rather do is get on with the things for which we were elected, deliver on our promises to the British people, and it's – You could not have clearer evidence of the intellectual bankruptcy of Labour. They have no plans for energy, they have no plans for social care, [Shouting from members.] [**The Speaker:** Order!] and they have no plans to fix the economy.
The Speaker:	Prime Minister, sit down. I want to hear what you have got to say but I can't hear when you're talking that way [The Speaker points in the direction the PM was faced when speaking]. I am here in the Chair – please, if you can help me. [The PM rose from his seat] No, I think we have had enough.
Starmer:	The state of it! The party of Peel and Churchill reduced to shouting and screaming in defence of this lawbreaker. [Shouting from members.] [. . .]

In this exchange, conducted over much jeering and cheering from members, the question agenda related to the PM's personal conduct. Under the circumstances of such an agenda, it is probable that personally antagonistic discourse is more likely to feature. Importantly, the only section of the exchange coded as a personal attack was Starmer labelling the PM a "lawbreaker".[18] The PM's antagonistic claim of "intellectual bankruptcy" was not coded as a personal attack because of its group focus (i.e., Labour). These findings here are further indicators for the need to look beyond the quantitative analysis in order to gain a deeper insight into the interactions.

Summary

Overall, the findings of Waddle et al. (2019) and the 2023 supplement show that personal attacks are very much characteristic of the adversarial discourse of PMQs. We have reviewed what might be the causes and motivations that bring about such vocal animosity played out in full view of the public. In the next subsection, we report on a wide-scale investigation showing the circumstances under which political opponents tend to curb the Punch and Judy politics.

The role of topic[19]

In this study of LO–PM discourse at PMQs, we used the same dataset of 660 question–response sequences but this time we further coded every exchange for question topic. The study was conducted in light of research of US Presidential press conferences, which shows that journalists display significantly lower

levels of aggression when the question topic relates to issues of *foreign* policy (Clayman, Heritage, Elliott, & McDonald, 2007). This tendency evokes an adage from the days of the Cold War: "politics stops at the water's edge".[20] To facilitate this additional level of coding, we used the UK policy agenda codes, which consists of 19 main policy topics (with 200+ subtopics) (John, Bertelli, Jennings, & Bevan, 2013). Our research aim was an assessment of PMQs for the existence of a similar reduction in verbal aggression dependent on the policy under discussion.

In terms of topics of the 660 questions, the most common types were those related to the *economy* (24.4%) and *government operations* (22.3%). Topics that showed a higher likelihood of personal disrespect between the leaders were government operations, in which almost half of the LO questions and PM responses contained a personal attack (46.9% and 46.3%, respectively). Other topics high in personal antagonism were *social welfare* and *law/crime*; economy and *health* topics were associated with levels of antagonism between 30% and 40%. Notably, all of these topics are strongly domestic in policy terms. By comparison, topics more closely linked to foreign policy were lower in LO–PM attacks – namely, *foreign affairs* (14.3% of questions and 10.2% of responses) and *defence* (21.4% and 19%). To test for overall statistical significance, we used a dichotomous variable across all 660 exchanges, each befitting either *domestic* (n = 561) or *foreign* (n = 99) policy. Results showed highly significant differences in levels of personal attacks: LO questions were over twice as likely to be antagonistic when on domestic policy issues (36% vs. 17.2% for foreign); PM responses were almost three times more likely (37.4% vs. 13.1%).

Why the reduced antagonism?

The results of our PMQs study were reflective of observations of US Presidential press conferences (Clayman et al., 2007) in showing what might be considered a Westminster version of "politics stopping at the water's edge". Although the US study was of *journalistic* questioning, our analysis of exchanges between politicians showed findings in line with that. So, what might underlie the clearly reduced personal antagonism when the discourse at PMQs relates to foreign policy issues? One potential explanation put forward in our study was linked to a phenomenon from US political science research termed the "rally 'round the flag effect" (RE). High profile instances of the RE relate to a serving President benefitting from a surge in popularity (often temporary) during an international crisis (Mueller, 1970). Obviously, we were not suggesting the sudden emergence of feelings of popularity between LO and PM. However, an explanation for what might bring about the RE – namely, *patriotism* (Lee, 1977) – is quite persuasive. When questioning the PM on some issues of foreign policy, it is entirely plausible that the LO may wish to avoid appearing unpatriotic because of undue antagonism. This is certainly not likely to be the case, for example, when discussing the economy.

The patriotism description is complemented by a further explanation, which relates to *intergroup theories* (see Dragojevic & Giles, 2014); namely, when there is a common focus on an outgroup issue, intergroup harmony may increase (see Gaertner & Dovidio, 2000). Thus, for some international issues, national identity may eclipse party rivalry; therefore, the LO may be disinclined to be personally disrespectful in their questions. As for the PM's responses, a supplementary analysis showed a large, statistically significant effect of question on response during foreign policy exchanges. Thereby, when the LO tended to be less antagonistic, so too did the PM.

Quotations[21]

Quotations are a common feature of the exchanges at PMQs. Politicians often report the words of others in their speaking turns. They may quote expert opinion (e.g., health professionals, scientists, industry specialists). They occasionally quote what other politicians (both allies and opponents) have said. They may also quote members of the public and, sometimes, even quote themselves.

To examine this form of discourse more closely, Fetzer and Bull (2019) conducted a study of exchanges in 40 PMQs sessions. For all of these, Cameron was the PM taking the questions. The LO questions came from two different Labour leaders: 20 sessions were held in 2013–2014 when Miliband was LO; 20 were in 2015–2016 with LO Corbyn. As is now standard, there were six LO questions on each occasion, so a grand total of 240 exchanges (480 speaking turns) across both of these periods.

In terms of overall word count, there were 28,304 in the LO-PM exchanges in the Miliband period and 31,704 in that of Corbyn. In the former, quotations accounted for 2,608 words (9.2% of overall); in the latter, they accounted for 3,486 words (11% of overall). As for the sources of quotations, for one such type, there was a notable distinction between the two periods. For quoting the words of members of the public – typically received via a letter or email or occasionally in-person – the total count across the Miliband-Cameron exchanges was just 32 words. However, in the exchanges with Corbyn, it was 1,294 words – 37.1% of the overall quotation word count. It was questions of this type that prompted the second study reported in this section (Bull & Waddle, 2019).

Corbyn's campaign for the leadership of the Labour party included a call for a "new kind of politics" (ITV, 2015). A salient feature of a "new" approach was very obvious at his first PMQs session as LO on 16 September 2015. His first question as LO included the following:

> I've taken part in many events around the country and had conversations with many people about what they thought about this place, our Parliament, our democracy, and our conduct within this place. And many told me that they thought [PMQs] was too theatrical, that Parliament was out of touch and too theatrical, and they wanted things done differently but,

above all, they wanted their voice heard in Parliament. So I thought, in my first [PMQs] I'd do it in a slightly different way, and I'm sure the [PM] will absolutely welcome this, as he welcomed this idea in 2005, but something seems to have happened to his memory during that period. So I sent out an email to thousands of people and asked them what questions they would like to put to the [PM], and I received 40,000 replies. Now, there isn't time to ask 40,000 questions today – our rules limit us to six. And so, I would like to start with the first one, which is about housing. Two-and-a-half thousand people emailed me about the housing crisis in this country. And I ask one from a woman called Marie, who says, "What does the government intend to do about the chronic lack of affordable housing and the extortionate rents charged by some private sector landlords in this country?"

Corbyn's use of such a quotation in his speaking turn constituted a novel approach to questioning the PM. All six of his turns at this PMQs were of this type. He went on to use them over coming sessions but not to the same extent. Their numbers dropped to three or four, then one or two over subsequent sessions. It was not until 13 April 2016 – his twentieth PMQs – that no questions of this type were asked. From those sessions overall [the same 20 as the latter period in the foregoing study (Fetzer & Bull, 2019)], 31 included such quotations; 89 did not. This approach by Corbyn presented an opportunity for research, specifically, to test for interactional differences between the two question types.

The study (Bull & Waddle, 2019) was conducted with two different aims in mind. Firstly, to assess whether Corbyn's novel approach to questions had an impact on the levels of *reply-rate* by the PM, namely, the proportion that receive an explicit reply. Secondly, whether by virtue of quoting members of the public in the questions, this has an effect on the levels of personal antagonism in the LO-PM exchanges. For simplicity, those are referred to as *public questions*; the others are referred to as *non-public questions*.

Results from the reply-rate analysis showed the public questions to be associated with a reply-rate of 23% by the PM, only slightly higher than his 20% reply-rate to non-public questions. The non-significant difference between these was not an indicator that quoting members of the public in questions at PMQs has any effect on the reply-rate. However, for the assessment of personal antagonism, there were differences of statistical significance. Firstly, across their respective 120 turns, Cameron made significantly more personal attacks on Corbyn (25.8%) than vice versa (15%). Furthermore, there were interesting statistical differences related to the two types of question: there was a significant difference between them in their non-public question exchanges (the PM made an attack in 28.1%; the LO, 14.6%) but not for public question exchanges (PM, 19.4%; LO, 16.1%).

We saw in the earlier section that quotations in the LO-PM exchanges can be used as a form of adversarial discourse in PMQs (Bull & Wells, 2012).

However, the findings of this study provide some evidence that, by quoting members of the public in questions to the PM, there can be a reduction in one notable form of adversarialism – that of personal antagonism. So, whilst public questions did not bring about an increase in explicit replies, they did have a measurable mitigation effect on this particular form of Punch and Judy politics.

Equivocation[22]

In the previous chapter, we reported on a notable feature of political discourse – equivocation – namely, not answering questions. The focus there, however, related to settings where the questions are asked by broadcasters and journalists. Here, in line with the other studies in this chapter, the setting is a parliamentary one, and the people asking the questions are opposition politicians. The study reviewed here (Bull & Strawson, 2020) is an analysis of equivocation in PMQs not only of reply-rate but also of the forms of equivocation used by the PM.

The study covered all 23 PMQs events held during Theresa May's first period of government as PM – from succeeding Cameron on 13 July 2016 until the snap election on 8 June 2017.[23] The LO asking questions in those sessions was Corbyn. This analysis of LO-PM exchanges would enable not only a comparison of reply-rates to questions in the parliamentary setting with those from broadcast interviews but also an evaluation of this particular PM's use of equivocation at PMQs. This assessment of the PM's equivocal responses made use of the typology of equivocation (see Chapter 5) developed from previous interview research (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Waddle & Bull, 2016).

Of the 138 LO questions in these sessions, May gave an explicit reply to 11%. The only other comparable PMQs reply-rate data available to us at that time was that of PM Cameron from the study reported in the previous section (Bull & Waddle, 2019) – where his overall reply-rate was 21%. This shows that May replied to Corbyn's questions at a significantly lower rate than her predecessor. In terms of the type of equivocal responses used by May, most of her commonly used forms were in line with the foregoing typology of equivocation: making political points, ignoring the question, personal attacks, stating/implying the question was answered, and acknowledging the question. The first of these – making a political point – was used more than any other form of equivocation, which matches the findings of interview research (e.g., Bull & Mayer, 1993).

However, May was seen often to use a form equivocation which has been identified as something of a distinct personal style. In a small-scale study of just two interviews held in 2016 (Bull, 2016b), it was noted that the then recently appointed PM gave equivocal responses to questions that did not befit the foregoing typology. This *May-esque* style of evasive response was labelled "gives non-specific response to a specific question". Interestingly, May was now found to be applying this same equivocal technique in some responses to Corbyn's questions at PMQs. An example of this was seen in an LO-PM exchange on 2 November 2016. Corbyn's question "Is it not the case that her

cuts to Universal Credit[24] will leave millions worse off?" received the following response from May:

> On the point that the right honourable Gentleman raised in relation to Universal Credit, the introduction of Universal Credit was an important reform that was brought about in our welfare system. It is a simpler system, so people can see much more easily where they stand in relation to benefits. Crucially, the point about Universal Credit is making sure that work always pays. As people work more, they earn more. It is right that we do not want to see people just being written off to a life on benefits and that we are encouraging people to get into the workplace.

Earlier, the PM was responding to a specific LO question asking about whether cuts to this benefit system would adversely affect claimants. However, although the response remains related to the topic – by providing a broad overview of Universal Credit and her opinion of the system's merits – it failed to address the specific request about the effects of cuts. This form of equivocation favoured by May can be seen as *covert*, where, in their response, the politician makes no acknowledgement of any unwillingness to reply and may even be attempting to conceal the evasion (Clayman, 2001).

Bull and Strawson (2020) discussed this kind of equivocal response in terms of how it would fit in an updated version of the foregoing typology. It was proposed that, as May's response appeared to address a different question – but one strongly related to the question's focus – she is effectively answering a self-selected, modified version. Thereby, such equivocation could be categorised as *modifies the question*. Furthermore, equivocation of this type can be considered to be highly covert, as there may be a deliberate attempt on the part of the politician for their response to be accepted as a direct reply. In this way, the questioner – and perhaps the viewing public – may be satisfied at the time that a reply was forthcoming. This scenario highlights a benefit of microanalysis, in that such evasion should always be identifiable from appropriately conducted research.

As stated previously, this research of equivocation in the arena of PMQs presented the opportunity for a specific comparison with political interviews. May's low reply-rate at just 11% – and even Cameron's preceding figure of 21% – represents a notable difference to the findings of interview research. For example, a recent study of ours covering 26 interviews of party leaders across the General Election campaigns of 2015 and 2017 found an overall average reply-rate of almost 38% (Waddle & Bull, 2020c). Thus, perhaps unsurprisingly, politicians are much less inclined to be forthcoming in their responses to opponents than they are to professional interviewers.

This analysis of May's performance at PMQs not only made the front page of a national newspaper (Hope, 2019), it also featured in a question at PMQs! On 1 May 2019, she was asked the following question from SNP MP Marion Fellows: "May I be lucky enough to be one of the 27% who get their question

answered by this PM?". Fellows – who presumably was referring to the press article published that morning – in her obvious criticism of May actually mis-quoted the PM's low reply-rate, which was only 11%. Fellows continued her turn by asking the PM about an issue of personal finance. The PM's response included no comment on the MP's opening question.

Addressing remarks to the Speaker[25]

A further distinctive feature of PMQs discourse is that MPs should address their remarks not directly to other members but through the Speaker. They are required to refer to each other in the third person – either through the use of formal titles (e.g., the right honourable Gentleman) or third-person pronouns. By way of illustration, the following (from PMQs on 13 July 2022), which was included in a response by PM Boris Johnson to a question from LO Keir Starmer, shows both foregoing aspects:

> It would be fair to say that *he* has been considerably less lethal than many other Members of this House, *Mr Speaker*, and *I will tell you* why that is [. . .] Over three years, in spite of every opportunity, *the right honourable and learned Gentleman* has never really come up with an idea, a plan, or a vision for this country.

In this response, it can be seen that the PM uses a third-person pronoun (he) and a formal title (the right honourable and learned Gentleman) when refer-ring to Starmer. Also, his remarks, which are aimed at the LO, are addressed through the Speaker. By these means, PMQs discourse may be considered a kind of *mediated address*. Thereby, MPs are not interacting directly as such but their interactions – adversarial or otherwise – are made via the involvement of the Speaker.

According to Harris (2001), this form of third-person language directed via the Speaker has a mitigating effect, whereby it softens the force of FTAs in PMQs discourse. The aim of the study reported here (Bull et al., 2020) was to examine whether the evidence strongly supports this claim or whether the use of "Mr Speaker" in parliamentary exchanges can work to amplify FTAs. The analysis was focused on 40 sessions of PMQs with PM Cameron: 20 from 2013–2014, when Miliband was LO; 20 from 2015–2016, when the LO was Corbyn.

In terms of methodology, as with all of our studies on PMQs, we can access the transcripts of the exchanges online from *Hansard* (see UK Parlia-ment, 2022a). Hansard is the official written record of proceedings in Parlia-ment, including PMQs. Although it is very close in terms of the actual spoken exchanges, it is an edited account – therefore, not entirely verbatim. For exam-ple, occasional references to the Speaker – presumably because, in general, they are deemed insignificant – are edited out of the published account. To ensure

comprehensive inclusion for the analysis of these terms of address, PMQs videos (mostly available online – see *YouTube*, 2022) were used in addition to the transcripts.

Initial analysis of the LO-PM exchanges suggested two primary functions of using the term of address "Mr Speaker". The first of these is using the term in line with the ritualistic organisation of parliamentary discourse, for example, in expressing gratitude for the opportunity to speak – "Thank you, Mr Speaker" – at the start of the turn. The second function of the term is to signal conflict in one's turn. For example, the conflictual remark might relate to a challenge to the opponent's version of events stated in their preceding turn or to remonstrate with the PM about a particular policy. In these LO-PM exchanges across the 40 sessions, all "Mr Speaker" references could be categorised as befitting either of these two functions. Overall, these terms of address featured more in the LO questions than in the PM responses. Both the PM and the LOs used "Mr Speaker" more often in the conflictual sense; in the case of LO use, the difference between conflictual and ritualistic use was significantly greater.

In relation to what Harris (2001) suggested about addressing comments via the Speaker – that it has a mitigating effect – the ritualistic use is not consistent with that proposal. When used thus, there is no apparent mitigation. Conversely, when the function is one of conflict – which, after all, is a key component of the LO's role as the government's highest-profile political opponent – it may be seen as a form of mitigation. However, a somewhat different explanation relates to the ongoing power imbalance between the leaders. As head of government, the PM is typically in a position of power far greater than the LO. Under these circumstances, it is feasible that, in conflictual discourse, the LO may, in a sense, be rallying the Speaker in his criticism of the PM. Whereas a PM – already in a position of power – may be less inclined to such an appeal in their discourse.

The foregoing proposal has parallels with a courtroom setting, where an appellant's aim is to convince the judge of their argument in a legal case. In this sense, the LO may be seen as appealing to the Speaker in support of his challenge to, for example, the PM's behaviour, record, or the policies of the government. Thus, addressing comments through the Speaker in this way, rather than a form of mitigation, may serve more to amplify an FTA – effectively, a distinctive form of parliamentary political opposition.

There is also evidence that the use of third-person language as a form of mitigation (Harris, 2001) is not so straightforward. Consider the following (see Bull & Wells, 2012), which was included in a question at PMQs in 2007 from LO Cameron to PM Brown:

> Never have the British people been treated with such cynicism. Mr Speaker, for ten years *he has plotted and schemed* to have this job – and for what? No conviction, just calculation; no vision, just a vacuum. Last week *he lost his political authority*, and this week *he's losing his moral authority*. How long are we going to have to wait before the past makes way for the future?

In this turn, Cameron makes a clear FTA on the PM, using third-person language in accordance with parliamentary convention. Had he not followed convention and spoken directly to Brown (e.g., "you are losing your moral authority"), he would likely have been rebuked by the Speaker. However, an alternative perspective of the third-person language is that it is even more face-threatening to the PM because it makes him an *object* of Cameron's discourse and thereby may be seen as somewhat more demeaning.

It is clear from previous research (e.g., Bull et al., 2020; Bull & Wells, 2012; Harris, 2001), and perhaps, to observant TV viewers that third-person references and addressing comments via the Speaker are not uncommon at PMQs. However, there is a compelling argument that such use of language may occasionally function not as mitigation but to amplify the force of an FTA.

The punch of PMQs?

A function of political adversarialism[26]

In the preceding sections of this chapter, we have reported on studies looking closely at various forms of discourse in PMQs, particularly in relation to adversarialism in the exchanges between the main opponents. In this section, we report on the findings of another study of PMQs discourse but one that looked more broadly at what might be achievable through adversarial parliamentary discourse.

The study, titled *The role of adversarial discourse in political opposition* (Bull, 2013), was an entirely qualitative analysis of a sequence of LO-PM exchanges at consecutive PMQs sessions (6 July and 13 July 2011). The respective leaders were Miliband and Cameron, and the topic of all twelve questions was the same – what became known as *the phone-hacking scandal*.

The phone-hacking scandal was a major news event, which dominated headlines and news broadcasts over a number of weeks in 2011. It was prompted by revelations of improper and potentially illegal practices of news-gathering by UK-based tabloid newspapers published by *News International*;[27] most prominently, the *News of the World*. One of the most damning revelations was the hacking (thereby gaining access to voicemails) of the personal phone of a 13-year-old schoolgirl in 2002, who had been reported missing by her family. The girl, Milly Dowler, was found murdered later that year. The revelations led to widespread public disapproval and anger and prompted the *News of the World*'s closure. In its final edition on 10 July 2011, its editorial included "Phones were hacked, and for that this newspaper is truly sorry [. . .] there is no justification for this appalling wrongdoing".

From the analysis of the LO-PM exchanges at the aforementioned PMQs, four overarching issues raised in the LO's discourse were identified. These are detailed in the following list, including a summary of what happened next in association with each issue:

(1) Miliband urged the PM to set up an independent public inquiry to investigate the culture and the news-gathering practices of print journalism in

the UK. The PM's initial response at PMQs included an agreement for the need of an inquiry. Miliband reiterated this requirement at the next week's PMQs. Straight after that session, Cameron announced the setting-up of an inquiry, to be chaired by senior judge Lord Leveson. Later dubbed the *Leveson inquiry*, it began four months later.

(2) Miliband raised concerns about the possible future takeover of *BSkyB*[28] by News International. This issue was spread over multiple LO questions at these sessions. Later in the day of the latter of these PMQs, the proposed takeover was withdrawn.

(3) Miliband called for the resignation of the chief executive of News International, Rebekah Brooks (former *News of the World* editor). It was widely understood that Brooks was a friend of Cameron, as she had been with previous PMs. This issue, like the foregoing one, was also a feature of multiple questions over the two weeks. For example, on 13 July, the LO asked, "Does the PM now agree with me that it is an insult to the family [of Milly Dowler] that Rebekah Brooks, who was editor of the *News of the World* at the time, is still in her post at News International?". Cameron expressed agreement in his response. Brooks resigned from her position as chief executive two days later.

(4) Miliband criticised the PM for having previously appointed Andy Coulson – another former *News of the World* editor – as his Director of Communications (Coulson had resigned from this position earlier that year). Again, multiple questions over the two sessions featured this issue. For example, in the last LO question on 13 July, Miliband stated that the PM "should apologise for the catastrophic error of judgment he made in hiring Andy Coulson". Cameron made no reference of Coulson's appointment in his response. However, at an associated debate in the Commons the following week, Cameron, in reference to the appointment, stated:

> I have said very clearly that if it turns out that Andy Coulson knew about the hacking at the *News of the World*, he will not only have lied to me but he will have lied to the police [. . .] I have an old-fashioned view about innocent until proven guilty, but if it turns out that I have been lied to, that would be the moment for a profound apology. In that event, I can tell you that I will not fall short [. . .] On the decision to hire him, I believe that I have answered every question about that. It was my decision [Interruption] Hold on. It was my decision; I take responsibility [Interruption] People will, of course, make judgments about it. Of course, I regret, and I am sorry about, the furore it has caused.

The following year, Coulson was charged with the offence of phone-hacking. In 2014, he was found guilty of the charge (conspiracy to intercept voicemails) and received a prison sentence of 18 months.

Summary

We see in the foregoing analysis how, over consecutive sessions in PMQs, the LO persisted in his criticism of the government and those connected to the phone-hacking scandal. It was argued that, whilst Miliband is certainly not solely responsible for the aforementioned actions and events that followed, his adversarial, face-threatening discourse contributed to the subsequent changes. Thus, although PMQs is often lambasted for Punch and Judy politics, here we see how the high-profile exchanges may play a major role in an issue of national importance.

Conclusions

So, what should readers take away about PMQs from this chapter? The event has been operating in Westminster, in one form or another, for close to three centuries and it has gained a reputation – at least over the past few decades – as an occasion characterised by disingenuous, evasive, and boorish behaviour (e.g., see Allen et al., 2014). Even the most cursory of glances of most studies reported here are likely to bear out such views. For example, we have seen that a question receiving an unambiguous, direct reply can be something of an infrequent occurrence (Bull & Strawson, 2020). Also, at times, exchanges between the main protagonists devoid of personal antagonism are in the minority (Waddle et al., 2019), particularly when personal conduct tops the agenda (see 2023 supplement). However, we have also seen that, for questions of a certain focus (Waddle & Bull, 2020a) or those asked on behalf of the public (Bull & Waddle, 2019), the interactions can be far more respectful. Furthermore, the case for PMQs as a channel for accountability and an opportunity to instigate necessary change is strongly arguable from the study of exchanges on phone-hacking (Bull, 2013).

The PMQs model, or versions of a similar format, are in operation in a host of countries around the world. Undoubtedly, there are as many nations that operate less democratically where citizens would welcome their leaders facing such adversarial scrutiny. Despite the shortcomings, criticisms, and at times cringeworthy conduct associated with the UK version, it generates widespread interest in the political process. This is ably demonstrated by the televised punditry and the arousal of social media following each and every session. Taking all of this into account, whether or not Punch and Judy make an appearance, PMQs as we know it is very likely to continue as the one to watch.

Notes

1 We conducted a supplementary analysis of personal attacks in the Johnson premiership specifically for this book. Hereafter, we refer to that as the *2023 supplement*.
2 The Speaker is the parliamentary presiding officer who chairs the debates and oversees the order of proceedings.
3 Even if MPs are unsuccessful in their submission – thereby are not on the *Order Paper* – they may still be able to ask a question by standing up at the end of a turn on the day. The Speaker tries to include additional questions from MPs not on the Order Paper via these means.
4 From 1992 to 2010, the Speaker of the House of Commons was Betty Boothroyd, the only woman to have held that position.

5 This refers to the SNP leader in the House of Commons, not necessarily the party's main leader, who is currently based in the Scottish Parliament.

6 The name came about due to their endorsement in the 19th century by the Marquess of Queensberry.

7 The debate related to the *Sue Gray Report*. Senior civil servant Sue Gray had been appointed to lead an investigation into allegations that gatherings in government buildings (including 10 Downing Street) had broken Covid-19 lockdown rules. Partial report details were published on 31 January 2022. Included were findings of a "serious failure" in expected standards of government and of "failures of leadership" (Institute for Government, 2022).

8 This is an example of the parliamentary process known as *naming* (see the section *Person-situation context* in Chapter 2) for what is considered disorderly conduct (UK Parliament, 2022c).

9 This section is based on the study by **Bull and Wells (2012)**.

10 *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* is a satirical feature film which "spoofs the legends of King Arthur's quest to find the Holy Grail" (Monty Python Wiki, n.d.). In one sword-fight scene, the character *The Black Knight*, despite losing his limbs, continues fighting, claiming "it's just a flesh wound".

11 This section (excluding the 2023 supplement) is based on the study by **Waddle, Bull, and Böhnke (2019)**.

12 Cameron was PM during our analysis, so initially we took his latest sessions (in 2015) as his latter period. When he resigned in 2016, we were then able to include his actual final ten sessions. As the format (weekly/six LO questions) was not consistent across our overall period of analysis, we included the first and last 60 LO-PM exchanges for each premiership.

13 Corbyn is more than 17 years older than Cameron. At that time, Cameron was 49 and Corbyn was 67.

14 Includes PMQs on 11 May, 8 June, 15 June, and 29 June 2016. The referendum date was 23 June.

15 Analysis of the first ten and last ten PMQs sessions of his premiership (a total of 120 Q-R sequences between LO and PM).

16 A higher level of personal attacks than Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown, and Cameron – but *statistically significant* in relation to only the first three.

17 The government proposed a suspension of Parliament for five weeks. Political opponents claimed this was an unnecessarily lengthy suspension and a blatant attempt to hinder MPs' scrutiny of the PM's plans for Brexit (BBC, 2019). The then Speaker, John Bercow, branded the prorogation "a constitutional outrage" (Laud, 2019). Following appeals, the prorogation was ruled unlawful by the Supreme Court.

18 The PM had recently been fined following a police investigation into parties held in Downing Street during lockdown, becoming "the first known Prime Minister to have broken the law whilst in office" (Lyons, 2022).

19 This section is based on the study by **Waddle and Bull (2020a)**.

20 During the early years of the Cold War, Senator Arthur Vandenberg voiced such an opinion in a call for increased unity in US politics.

21 This section is based on the studies by **Fetzer and Bull (2019)** and **Bull and Waddle (2019)**.

22 This section is based on the study by **Bull and Strawson (2020)**.

23 The first PMQs session was on 20 July 2016, the 23rd session was on 26 April 2017.

24 Universal Credit is a system of welfare benefit.

25 This section is based on the study by **Bull, Fetzer, and Kádár (2020)**.

26 This section is based on the study by **Bull (2013)**.

27 News International, a publisher of newspapers in the UK, is now known as *News UK*.

28 *BSkyB* (British Sky Broadcasting) was a broadcasting company in the UK. It is now *Sky UK*.

7   Political journalism

The previous three chapters have been focused on what politicians say – in speeches, interviews, and parliamentary questions. However, a further important consideration is the evaluation of what is said *to* and *about* politicians. The focus of this final empirical chapter is specifically on political journalism.

In the first book of its kind (edited by Coen & Bull, 2021), *The psychology of journalism* presented an overview of every aspect of psychological process related to the production and consumption of news. Although the focus of the book is not exclusively on *political* journalism, several chapters give attention to certain political issues. These include Brexit (the UK's departure from the European Union) (Meredith, 2021), public attitudes and media bias towards refugees (Lido, Swyer, & De Amicis, 2021), and visual communication and photojournalism (Bull, 2021).

In this chapter, political journalism is examined in two specific contexts: broadcast interviews and television news. Four empirical studies related to political journalism in the UK are reported in what follows, three focused on broadcast interviews (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996) the fourth, on the television news (Bull, Negrine, & Hawn, 2014).

All four studies are discussed in the context of a provocative book titled *What the media are doing to our politics* (Lloyd, 2004). Journalist Lloyd claimed that the media no longer function as effective scrutineers of politicians. Instead, he proposed that they have become an alternative establishment in their own right – openly hostile to politicians and the political process, which they denigrate at every opportunity. Thus, interviews are constructed around the politicians' most vulnerable points, rather than presenting a more rounded discussion of ongoing political problems. Politicians who come to expect this treatment seek to protect themselves through media training, intended to make them bland, guarded, or evasive. Notably, in these encounters, both sides assume bad faith – interviewers assume evasion or deceit, interviewees assume that they will be attacked for their weaknesses. From this perspective, politicians are only granted access to the media on increasingly harsh terms, and journalism itself has become a cause of popular disengagement and disenchantment with civic and political life. Lloyd advocates a new form of what he calls "civic

journalism", paying much more attention to the full complexity and content of political events.

Adversarialism

Of particular relevance to Lloyd's (2004) argument is the concept of *adversarialism*. An adversary is an opponent or even an enemy (the term is derived from the Latin *adversus*, meaning *turned against*). The terms *adversarial* and *adversarialism* are typically used to refer to systems or situations where the participants may be seen as opponents (i.e., their relationships are oppositional to one another).

In the UK, adversarialism is characteristic of many aspects of life. In the legal system, prosecution and defence lawyers oppose one another in attempting to convince the judge or jury of the defendant's guilt or innocence. Politics in the UK has been characterised as "adversary politics" – "a stand-up fight between two adversaries for the favour of the lookers-on" (Finer, 1975; as cited in Mair, 2008, p. 215). In this chapter, the focus is on adversarialism as a distinctive feature of contemporary political journalism. Over time, political journalism has arguably become progressively more adversarial; to be an adversary is now the expected role of the journalist. It is proposed that the four microanalytic studies reported in what follows (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Bull et al., 2014; Elliott & Bull, 1996) – all of which investigate some aspect of political journalism – help us to identify specific interactional features which characterise adversarial journalism.

Broadcast interviews

In this section, three studies are reviewed – all of which were focused on questioning techniques in televised interviews, as used by professional political interviewers (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996). This review is preceded by an account of other relevant research.

Adversarial interviewing in the UK can be traced back to the 1950s, with the break-up of the BBC's monopoly over television. Until then, news gathering had been characterised by intense conservatism, based on the BBC's traditional statutory obligation to maintain balance and impartiality in the presentation of news and current affairs (see BBC, 2022a). In practice, this meant avoiding all forms of political controversy, which effectively meant not questioning the government (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

A factor in the journalistic restraint of those times was the so-called Fourteen-Day Rule, which had been introduced during the Second World War. It prohibited discussion on either television or radio of any topics or parliamentary bills to be debated over the next 14 days. Since parliamentary business was normally published only a week in advance, this meant that the list of excluded topics was effectively limitless. In practice, there was an embargo on media discussion of almost any issue of current topical relevance (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

It was in 1955 that the BBC's television monopoly came to an end. An entirely different approach was taken by the new, independent television companies, intended to be lively, investigative, and entertaining (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). In addition, a new breed of interviewers was also hired – in particular, former barrister Robin Day. Day later came to be celebrated as the *Grand Inquisitor* for his interview style of aggressive cross-questioning (Day, 1989). Until that time, senior politicians had been treated with great deference. However, in 1958, in what became a famous interview with the then Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan, Day strikingly broke with this tradition. The following day, the interview was described by Derek Marks in an editorial in the *Daily Express* (24 February 1958) as "The most vigorous cross-examination a Prime Minister has been subjected to in public".

The Fourteen-Day Rule came to be simply ignored by the independent television companies without any repercussions, and it was subsequently dropped by Parliament. The BBC – who were losing audience share to their new rivals – had hitherto submitted interview questions in advance. However, they too soon abandoned that practice and unscripted interviews became the norm (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

In current political journalism, adversarialism has become commonplace. No longer is it regarded as remarkable; indeed, it has become the expected role of the political journalist – in effect, it has become part of the job. Thus, in both the UK and the USA, interviewers are expected to conduct challenging broadcast interviews. However, as journalists, they are also expected to maintain a stance of impartiality and objectivity. Hence, from this perspective, the conduct of broadcast interviews can be seen as a balancing act between adversarialism and impartiality (Clayman & Heritage, 2002).

A number of techniques for maintaining impartiality are identified by Clayman and Heritage (2002). Interviews are characteristically formatted in terms of questions and responses, which allow interviewers to defend their neutrality, on the grounds that they are merely asking questions. Interviewers may also embed statements within questions to disagree with, criticise, or in some other way challenge the politician. *Third party attributions* are one of the ways that neutrality can be maintained. Attributing critical or hostile statements to a third party (rather than making them in the first person) ensures that interviewers' personal position is not on record. Thus, their responsibility (and that of their organisation) for questioning which may appear critical or even hostile to any politician is deferred.

The question–response format itself can also be used to conduct highly adversarial interviews. *Negative formulations* are one such technique whereby interviewers may use questions to present a highly negative view of the politicians or the political party they represent (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). For example, the question "So you're almost certain to lose the next election very badly, aren't you?" is very difficult to rebut for a politician whose party is trailing badly in the opinion polls. Another adversarial technique is the *accusatory question*, for example, recounting a recent error of judgement or failed policy

then asking, "Why did you do that?" or "How could you possibly have thought that would work?" – thereby drawing close attention to something the politician may want to avoid.

Finally, *splits, forks*, and *contrasts* may highlight disagreements between politicians and their allies, or inconsistencies or self-contradictions in a politician's own individual stance (Clayman & Heritage, 2002). *Splits* refer to disagreements with political allies; *forks*, to questions which invite selection from a number of undesirable alternatives; and *contrasts*, to questions which compare the politician's record to that of an ally. Through such techniques, interviewers may maintain a stance of neutrality, while their interviews may still be highly adversarial. Thus, they may accomplish what Clayman (1992, p. 196) calls "the complex journalistic requirement [. . .] of being interactionally *adversarial* while remaining officially *neutral*". Notably, through their potential to cast politicians in a bad light, all of these techniques can be seen to be face-threatening.

Perhaps the most elaborate form of hostile questioning, according to Clayman and Heritage (2002), involves placing interviewees as at odds either with their political allies or their political position. Adversarial questioning creates pressures on politicians towards evasiveness. Clayman and Heritage distinguish between *overt* and *covert* techniques for evasion. Overt techniques may involve explicitly requesting that the interviewer shifts the agenda, justifying any agenda shift or even blatantly refusing to answer. Covert techniques may include repeating the words of the question (without answering it) or modifying the question in such a way as to facilitate and conceal an agenda shift.

In the context of evasion, Clayman and Heritage (2002) surprisingly made no reference to equivocation theory (Bavelas et al., 1990). This theory and relevant research have already been described and evaluated in detail in Chapter 5. It also formed the theoretical basis for three empirical studies of political interviewers reported in this chapter. The first two (Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996) were based on 18 interviews with the three main party leaders during the 1992 General Election [Prime Minister (PM) John Major, Leader of the Opposition (LO) Neil Kinnock, and Liberal Democrat Paddy Ashdown]. The third study (Bull, 2003) was based on six interviews with the three main party leaders (PM Tony Blair, Conservative LO William Hague, and Liberal Democrat Charles Kennedy) during the 2001 General Election.

In Chapter 3, a typology was presented of 19 different ways in which questions can threaten face in political interviews (Bull et al., 1996). In the first two studies reported in what follows (Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996), the face-threat typology was applied to the interview performance of five interviewers from the 1992 General Election campaign (Robin Day, David Dimbleby, David Frost, Jeremy Paxman, and Brian Walden). Data collected from a sixth interviewer (Jonathan Dimbleby) were omitted from these analyses, because he asked relatively few direct questions (only 24) in his interviews. Hence, given that the data were analysed in terms of percentages, with such a small sample, modest differences can become artificially exaggerated, thereby distorting any statistical analysis.

The overall aims of these two studies were, firstly, to identify different features of interviewer style through an assessment of face threats posed in questions and, secondly, to compare interviewers in terms of neutrality and toughness.

Face-threats posed in political interviews[1]

In this first paper (Elliott & Bull, 1996), an overall analysis was conducted of the types of face-threat posed by the five interviewers, followed by an analysis of the face-threats posed individually by each individual. Full details of all the 19 face-threat categories (Bull et al., 1996) were provided in Chapter 3.

In the overall analysis, by far the most frequently occurring type of face-threat was *Difficulty confirming personal or party beliefs, statements, aims, principles, etc.*, which occurred in 86% of questions, followed by *Create or confirm a negative statement/impression about the party, its policies, actions, statements, aims, principles, etc.* (58% of questions). Other notable forms of face-threat were *Unsupportive of the electorate* (25%), *Lose credibility* (24%), and *Create or confirm a negative statement or impression about personal competence* (21%).[2]

Notably, the least frequently occurring categories of face-threat were *Fail to present a positive image of the party if offered the opportunity* and *Fail to present a positive image of self if offered the opportunity* (both <1%). Arguably, this was because, in adversarial interviewing, politicians are given very few opportunities to present a positive image either of themselves or of the party they represent.

A second set of analyses were conducted on face-threats associated with conflictual questions. *Difficulty in confirming personal or party beliefs, statements, aims, principles, etc.* was associated with every conflictual question, followed by *Lose credibility* (77% of conflictual questions), and *Not supporting a significant body of electorate opinion (where opinion is divided)* (69%). There were also quite high proportions for *Not supporting a colleague* (54%), *Supporting a positive view of opponents* (54%), and *Personal difficulties in the future* (54%).

Overall, the data obtained from conflictual questions were similar in pattern to the total corpus of questions. Correlations between the face-threat categories for the conflictual questions and the total corpus for the five interviewers were: Day, .89; David Dimbleby, .92; Frost, .86; Paxman, .81; Walden, .97. Thus, if an interviewer had a high proportion of questions associated with a particular type of face-threat, this tended to occur not only for conflictual questions but also for the sample of questions as a whole. The way in which these face-threats were used in conflictual questions is illustrated in the following analysis for each of the five interviewers and related to the toughness of their questioning.

ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWERS

Walden came out highest on the face-threats of *Create or confirm a negative statement/impression about the party, its policies, actions, statements, aims, principles, etc.* (78%) and *Lose credibility* (68%). In almost half of his conflictual questions

(49%), these face-threats occurred in combination, when he posed highly criti-
cal questions which could not easily be rebutted because they contained some
obvious truth but could not be confirmed because they put the politician's
party in a negative light. For example, in connection with the poll tax,[3] Walden
asked Major:

> What did you choose to do? You chose to have a tax where everybody
> except the very poor had to pay at exactly the same level – the dustman
> and the duke alike – and moreover of course you were wildly out in your
> estimates of what the bills would be. Even your own reckoning showed
> that they'd be comfortably over £200, you told the House of Commons
> that it was going to be £224 per person. Now people say that is a mon-
> strously uncaring thing to do, isn't it?

If Major confirmed this statement, he would have been making a negative
statement about his party (i.e., it was "monstrously uncaring"); conversely, it
would be hard to deny this statement without losing credibility. This type of
question poses real problems, since the politician wishes neither to make dam-
aging statements about his or her own party nor to lose credibility in the eyes
of the electorate.

Day came out highest on questions which posed the threat of *Create or con-
firm a negative statement/impression about personal competence* (34%), *Create or con-
firm a negative statement/impression about one's own public persona* (22%), *Supporting
a positive view of opponents* (20%), and *Not supporting a sub-group of one's own party*
(24%).

A good example of how these face-threats can operate together is illustrated
by a question from Day to Major as to whether he would be prepared to debate
the health service on television with Kinnock. This created a classic conflict for
Major. In the UK at that time, there was no tradition of such televised debates.
Such an encounter, it was generally acknowledged, would be to the advantage
of the LO, since it would give him comparable status to the incumbent PM.
Hence, if Major agreed to this proposal, he would be lending support to the
face of a negatively valued other. However, if Major declined to participate,
he might be seen as fearful of such an encounter, thereby damaging both his
perceived professional competence and his public persona. If he equivocated,
he might still be seen as fearful, as well as evasive.

In the event, although Major did not actually give a direct reply to the ques-
tion, he equivocated quite skilfully, claiming that he already regularly debated
with Kinnock on television: "I'm happy to debate it at any time and we debate
I debate it with Mr. Kinnock in the House of Commons twice a week". The
PM's response here was a reference to their encounters at Prime Minister's
Questions, which, at that time, were held twice each week.

Paxman came out highest on questions which posed the face-threat of *Not
supporting a significant body of electorate opinion (where opinion is divided)* (70%),
Future difficulties for the party (30%), and *Personal difficulties in the future* (28%).

These threats can be illustrated by the following question to Major concerning the Anglo-Irish agreement:[4] "Are you prepared to give a guarantee that under no circumstances will [the Anglo-Irish agreement] be abandoned, redrafted, renegotiated, that it stands for the entirety of a fourth Conservative term?" If Major gave the requested guarantee, he would offend both unionists and republicans in Northern Ireland opposed to the agreement. If the Anglo-Irish agreement could not be upheld in changed circumstances, Major might also fail to defend both his personal and his party's negative face. However, if Major declined to give the guarantee, he might offend supporters of the Anglo-Irish agreement in Northern Ireland (notably, the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the cross-community Alliance Party), as well as the Republic of Ireland (i.e., the face-threat *Not supporting a friendly country*). If he failed to answer, he might simply be seen as evasive, and Paxman could insist that the public had a right to know where he stood on this particularly divisive issue.[5]

David Dimbleby came out highest on none of the face-threat categories, but his most frequent face-threat was that of *Create or confirm a negative statement/ impression about the party its policies, actions, statements, aims, principles, etc.* (70%), typically combined with the face-threat of *Lose credibility* (51%), which was also Dimbleby's second-most-frequent type of face-threat (59%). So, for example, Dimbleby asked Major, "Well you'd have lost [the election], lost it by a wide margin if you hadn't abolished the poll tax, wouldn't you?". If Major confirmed this statement, he would be making a negative statement about his own party (i.e., that the Conservatives had to abolish the poll tax). A denial would have lacked credibility, given the extreme unpopularity of this tax, which had led to widespread rioting in British towns and cities, especially in central London. If Major failed to answer, he would appear evasive, with the added implication that what Dimbleby said was correct but that Major was not prepared to come out and say so.[6] Thus, Dimbleby posed the same kind of problems as Walden, although his overall proportion of conflictual questions was much lower (34%, as opposed to 49% for Walden).

Frost came out highest on the personal face-threat of *Contradict past statements, policies, etc.* (35%). This seemed to be due at least in part to his tendency to check on the politician's responses by asking the same question in a slightly different way, which did not necessarily pose any serious problems, providing the politician could justify the original assertion.

However, there were occasions on which Frost created more serious problems through this type of face-threat. This was particularly true of his interview with Kinnock, where he challenged the Labour Party leader with reference to statements he had made earlier in his political career. For example, at one time, Kinnock was opposed to Britain's membership of what was then known as the European Economic Community (EEC);[7] whereas, by the time of the 1992 General Election, the Labour Party supported continued EEC membership. With reference to this policy change, Frost asked, "Do you admit that you were wrong then, or were you right? Do you still say you were absolutely right

then?". This put Kinnock in a classic communicative conflict. If he continued to support EEC withdrawal, then that would contradict his party's current policy. However, if he acknowledged he was wrong in the past, then he would suffer the face-threats of *Contradict past statements* as well as *Create or confirm a negative statement or impression about personal competence* (by demonstrating poor judgement). If he failed to answer, he would be seen as evasive, with the added implication that, although he thought his earlier judgement was wrong, he was not prepared to say so.[8] Clearly, these face-threats were extremely serious, since they threatened Kinnock's perceived personal competence, and so his aspiration to become PM. Thus, although, in general, Frost used a softer approach than the other interviewers, he could be just as threatening when using conflictual questions to full effect.

The results presented in the foregoing analysis showed different ways in which each interviewer posed tough and challenging conflictual questions. In Chapter 5, it has already been shown that politicians tend to equivocate in response to such questions. On this basis, it was proposed that the relative proportion of conflictual questions in an interview could be used as a measure of toughness. This could also be compared across interviews with politicians from different parties to assess interviewer neutrality. Thus, if an interviewer asks more conflictual questions to members of one political party rather than another, this might be indicative of interviewer bias (Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996). This measure – referred to as *level of threat* – was investigated in the study reported in the following analysis.

Level of threat[9]

The set of 18 interviews from the 1992 General Election (Bull et al., 1996) again formed the basis for this study (Bull & Elliott, 1998). The purpose was to evaluate interviewers in terms of toughness and neutrality – two key dimensions on which all political interviewers can be seen to vary. Toughness was measured according to the proportion of conflictual questions posed by each interviewer – the higher that proportion, the tougher the interviewer and the greater the level of threat. Neutrality was measured by assessing the relative proportion of conflictual questions posed by each interviewer to each party leader.

In addition, a questionnaire was administered to investigate perceptions of the interviewers (in terms of toughness and impartiality) and any possible relationships between those perceptions and the behavioural analyses of conflictual questions as outlined previously. This questionnaire was completed by 30 undergraduates, balanced for gender (15 males, 15 females, aged between 18 and 21) and for political allegiance (ten Conservative voters, ten Labour voters, and ten Liberal Democrats voters; five males and five females in each group). All the participants were selected on the basis that they reported watching televised political interviews at least once a month. Thus, they were not actually asked to watch the 18 interviews from the 1992 Election but to make assessments on the

basis of their knowledge of political interviews acquired through regular view-ing. The questionnaire comprised two sets of six 7-point scales, one in which the participants rated all six interviewers in terms of toughness (from *very tough* to *not very tough*), the other in terms of impartiality (from *very impartial* to *not impartial*). Furthermore, if the participants considered any of the interviewers to favour any one political party, they were asked to indicate that party against the interviewer's name.

TOUGHNESS

In terms of the behavioural analysis, Walden emerged as the toughest in terms of level of threat – almost half of his questions (49%) were conflictual. The results for the remaining four interviewers were: Day (43%); Paxman (43%); David Dimbleby (34%); Frost (29%). Thus, Walden asked almost twice as many conflictual questions as Frost. Observer ratings of toughness (7 being the high-est rating, 1 the lowest) showed that Paxman was perceived as the toughest (6.57), followed by Walden (5.27), David Dimbleby (5.00), Day (4.93), Jona-than Dimbleby (4.70), and Frost (4.27). There was also a highly significant main effect of interviewer ($p < .001$). Paxman was perceived as a significantly tougher interviewer than the other four and Walden, as significantly tougher than Frost ($p < .050$). These observer ratings correlated very closely with the behavioural analysis in terms of the proportion of conflictual questions (.89, $p < .050$), providing good validating evidence in support of the concept of level of threat.

Overall, Frost emerged as the *softest* interviewer, in terms both of the low-est proportion of conflictual questions and of the types of face-threat he posed (one characteristic being frequent checking). Observer ratings also showed Frost was perceived as the least tough of the five interviewers.

In consideration of these toughness findings, a word of caution is required. Precisely because of this gentler style of interviewing, when Frost did ask a tougher question, there was the potential for greater impact because the poli-tician can be somewhat unguarded. Such a view was expressed explicitly by Labour politician John Prescott (who went on to become Deputy PM in the government led by Blair): "I find Frost one of the most deadly myself, because he talks to you in such an easy manner but then slips in the difficult question – the one which gets you into trouble if you're not watching out for it" (Wain-wright & Elliott, 1995).

According to the observer ratings, the toughest interviewer was Paxman. Although he was perceived as significantly tougher than all the other five interviewers, in the behavioural analysis, he was only one of the three tough-est interviewers. However, question difficulty is likely to be only one feature which affects perceptions of toughness; others, for example, might be interrup-tion rate, aggressive intonation, or hostile nonverbal style. So perhaps too close a relationship should not be expected between the two measures of toughness used in this study.

NEUTRALITY

An initial behavioural analysis was conducted of level of threat in the overall questions received by the three party-leaders. Results showed that incumbent PM Major received the toughest interviews (49% of his questions were conflictual), followed by Kinnock (42%), then Ashdown (32%).

A second behavioural analysis was conducted to compare level of threat in questions directed to each party leader by each individual interviewer. Four of the interviewers conformed to the trend of giving Ashdown what might be judged the easiest interview in terms of this particular criterion, and giving Major the most difficult. The one exception to this trend was Frost – only 17% of his questions to Major were conflictual; whereas, to Kinnock, it was 29% and to Ashdown, it was 38%.

Analysis of the observer ratings of neutrality showed no significant effects. Remarkably little variation was perceived between the interviewers. The mean ratings (7 being the highest rating for impartiality, 1 the lowest rating) were: Frost, 4.80; Paxman, 4.67; Day, 4.37; David Dimbleby, 4.43; Walden, 4.37; and Jonathan Dimbleby, 4.33. Most participants did not identify any interviewers as favouring any political party but, for those who did, their identifications were somewhat consistent with the behavioural analysis presented previously. That is to say, David Dimbleby, Paxman, and Walden were all identified as favouring Labour (Dimbleby, N = 3; Paxman, N = 3; Walden, N = 4) and perceived to have given a tougher interview to Major than they did to Kinnock. Conversely, Frost was identified by two participants as favouring the Conservatives, and gave his softest interview to Major. Thus, although only a minority of participants identified individual interviewers as favouring a particular party, these results were consistent with the behavioural analysis and thereby provided further validating evidence in support of the concept of level of threat.

These results on neutrality can be interpreted in a variety of ways. The overall trend of giving the easiest interviews to Ashdown (the leader of the smallest of the three parties) could be interpreted as more sympathetic treatment for the underdog, or may perhaps indicate that the interviewers did not take the Liberal Democrats too seriously. Conversely, Major might have been given the toughest interviews, because he had the record of the government to defend. Alternatively, it is conceivable that Conservatives may have claimed that these findings supported the view of anti-government bias amongst television interviewers, whilst Opposition politicians might have claimed that the atypicality of the Frost interviews reflected a pro-Conservative bias.

Previous research on interviewers has been focused principally on the devices used to sustain neutrality (Clayman, 1992; Clayman & Heritage, 2002). However, in this chapter, it has been argued that the research on face threats in political interviews (as reported in Chapters 3 and 5) can be used to analyse interviewer toughness and neutrality in terms of the concept of level of threat. In a further study reported (Bull, 2003), the distinction between conflictual and non-conflictual questions was used to make comparisons between interviewers and members of the general public.

Professional interviewers and members of the public:
a comparison of questions[10]

This study (Bull, 2003) took advantage of a novel development in political interviewing in the UK during the 2001 General Election campaign. Traditionally, the questioning of party leaders at such times was limited to the one-to-one interview with a professional political interviewer. Growing dissatisfaction with this arrangement led to an experiment with a different format by the broadcast organisation ITV (Independent Television) during the 1997 General Election campaign. This provided members of the public with the opportunity – alongside professional interviewers – to put questions directly to the leaders of the three main political parties. In the 2001 campaign, the BBC also adopted this new procedure.

The then novel format provided an excellent opportunity to further test the hypothesis that equivocation by politicians reflects the kinds of questions posed in political interviews. This is because members of the general public may differ from professional interviewers in the kinds of questions which they ask. In particular, members of the public might be expected to ask fewer conflictual questions – given their more complex structure – than do interviewers. Again, whereas interviewers might seek to highlight inconsistencies in policy, voters might be more concerned to establish simply where a party stands on a particular issue. Consequently, if members of the public ask a smaller proportion of conflictual questions, then politicians might be expected to give them significantly more answers.

Accordingly, analyses were conducted of six sessions, in which questions were posed by members of the general public and by two professional interviewers (David Dimbleby and Jonathan Dimbleby) to the leaders of the then three main political parties at that time: Blair (Labour PM), Hague (Conservative), and Kennedy (Liberal Democrat). There were three specific hypotheses: politicians will answer significantly more questions from the general public; members of the general public will pose significantly fewer conflictual questions; there will be significant correlations between conflictual questions and equivocation, and between non-conflictual questions and answers.

On the basis of the procedures for analysing face threats described in Chapter 3 (Bull et al., 1996), questions were dichotomised according to whether or not they were considered to pose communicative conflicts, while responses to questions were dichotomised into answers or equivocations. Politicians were found to answer significantly more questions from members of the public (73%) than from interviewers (47%). Notably, this latter figure is almost identical to the 46% reply-rate reported in a previous analysis of 33 political interviews (Bull, 1994), as reported in Chapter 5. Interviewers were also found to use a significantly higher proportion of conflictual questions (58%) than members of public (19%). Finally, a significant correlation ($p = .050$) was found between the proportion of conflictual questions and equivocal responses for the interviewers (.76). The comparable correlation for members of the public was non-significant, at .70.

   Thus, the results of this study provided further evidence that equivocation by politicians occurs in response to the high proportion of conflictual questions posed by political interviewers. Conversely, members of the public were found to ask a much smaller proportion of such questions, and the politicians' reply-rate was significantly higher.

   Notably, the concept of level of threat as devised by Bull and Elliott (1998) has been utilised in research on broadcast political interviews in several different cultures. A series of studies of Italian interviews have been conducted by Gnisci and colleagues, comparing the impact of conflictual and non-conflictual questions (Gnisci, 2008; Gnisci, van Dalen, & Di Conza, 2014; Gnisci, Zollo, Perugini, & Di Conza, 2013). In one study, it was found that Italian and British interviewers were comparably tough in terms of the proportion of conflictual questions posed (Gnisci et al., 2013).

   In contrast, in a Japanese study, the approach of the interviewers was found to be relatively gentle and friendly – most of the questions posed were not regarded as tough (Feldman & Kinoshita, 2017). Similarly, in an analysis of interviews in Saudi Arabia, interviewer questions on the state-owned television channel *Al-Ekhbariya* were also found not to be tough (Alfahad, 2016). Two strategies were identified whereby interviewers avoid creating communicative conflicts: namely, posing a large number of open-ended questions and designing speaking turns in such a way as seemingly to be conversing with guests rather than questioning them. The interviewee reply-rate in the Saudi Arabian study, at over 90%, is considered to be the highest ever recorded in a study of broadcast interviews.

   Overall, this research has demonstrated how it is possible to make systematic comparisons of interviewer toughness between journalists from different cultures in terms of the relative proportion of conflictual questions. Thereby, validating evidence has been provided in support of the concepts of level of threat and the face-threatening structure of questions, which has contributed to a developing international perspective on our understanding of broadcast political interviews.

News broadcasts

Broadcast political interviews have played a leading role in political communication in the UK for over 50 years (Bull, 2012). However, for many people, they are not the sole or even the principal source of information about political events; this is typically broadcast television news (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). This medium provided the focus for the fourth empirical study of political journalism (Bull et al., 2014) reported here. Prior to that is a detailed review of some very relevant research of political journalistic practices from beyond the UK.

   According to a substantive body of research (e.g., Ekström, 2001; Eriksson, 2011; Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012), journalistic practice has shown a marked shift away from a fact-based to a more interpretive style of television news. In particular, this is characterised by a "greater emphasis on the *meaning* of news

beyond the facts and statements of sources" (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012, p. 145). In old-style news journalism, politicians were "set up to talk more directly to the viewer" (Eriksson, 2011, p. 66), such that viewers were able to formulate their own judgements about political utterances. Today, "viewers are given ready-made packages of ideas of what is going on in politics and how this should be understood" (Eriksson, 2011, p. 66). Despite an ongoing debate about what interpretive journalism actually means in practice (e.g., Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012), the interpretive view of contemporary television news is now widely held.

This view has been clearly supported by studies of Swedish news broadcasts, conducted over a 25-year period by Ekström (2001) and Eriksson (2011). Eriksson's research was based on news bulletins broadcast in 1978, 1993, and 2003; Ekström's studies were based on the news programmes as broadcast in 1998 and 1999. In this research, analysis included only edited news stories involving interviews with leading politicians.

Most of the clips in the studies by Ekström (2001) and Eriksson (2011) originated from events such as news conferences, speeches, or interviews. However, before their inclusion in the news bulletin, the clips had been extracted from their original source (typically an interview). These edited segments – referred to as *short-form interviews* (Eriksson, 2011) – typically omit the interview question that prompted the answer and the initial context for the interview. Furthermore, the politicians' original answers could be cut and mixed with other voices, such as those of a reporter, expert, or layperson. These visual clips may be further edited, combined with other images, and integrated into the overall narrative. As a result, the clip becomes merely a sound bite or utterance that contributes to the journalist's representation of the story. These short-form interviews and their incorporation into new stories can be regarded as essential aspect of contemporary news journalism.

Three further significant dimensions or techniques in contemporary news journalism were distinguished by Eriksson (2011), termed *narrative structure*, *visual structure*, and *framing discourse techniques*. Each of these is detailed in what follows.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

A news story consists of different voices mixed together in a particular structure. Typically, the story starts with a presentation from the announcer. Then, there are journalistic commentaries (often in the form of a voice-over from a reporter), combined with answers cut from interviews with politicians or experts. How these different sequences or elements of talk are organised in news stories is referred to as narrative structure.

VISUAL TECHNIQUES

This relates to how cameras operate and how the stories, especially the interviewee responses, are visually cut. Three main techniques are identified: choice

of *shot distance, camera angle and focus*, and *cut*. Shot distance refers to how much of a politician is shown (e.g., head and shoulders or close-up shots showing every detail of a politician's face). Camera angle relates to how the camera view may be eye-level, high, or low; and focus refers to how the camera is positioned in relation to the subject. Finally, the cut refers to the relationship between talk (what the interviewee says) and what is seen. All of these choices involve reporter, cameraman, and picture editor and are routine processes in news production.

FRAMING DISCOURSE TECHNIQUES

The original questions may be replaced by a presenter's commentary, which *frames* the politician's response. Thereby, a clip can be removed from its original context (de-contextualised), and set in a new one (re-contextualised) by the broadcast journalist. Thus, the viewer is reliant on the journalist to make sense of the politician's utterance as it relates to the news story. In essence, a journalist can re-contextualise virtually any utterance from a politician.

   To accomplish re-contextualisation, four different journalistic strategies were identified by Ekström (2001). Firstly, the original question posed by an interviewer may be reformulated by the reporter in the form of a voice-over. This may be used to support the journalistic goals of the story. Secondly, the reporter may attribute underlying thoughts and emotions to the politician. Thirdly, reporters may oversimplify and generalise to keep a story moving forward. Finally, *imaginary dialogues* may be created by putting together responses from different interviews. These may involve either different politicians or the same politician from different interviews, and this is by far the most drastic form of re-contextualisation. Given the sophistication of modern technology, this makes cuts and edits almost impossible for viewers to detect, so they cannot tell whether what they are seeing is a genuine dialogue or an edited creation.

   In the context of this Swedish research (Ekström, 2001; Eriksson, 2011), it is important to appreciate the impact of recent technological changes within news journalism on re-contextualisation. In those news bulletins broadcast in 1978, answers were fully synchronised with pictures of the politician, so that viewers could observe the answer from start to finish. However, through advancements in technology, news journalism has greater power than ever before over what constitutes an answer. The aim of such news journalism *was*, primarily, to present political arguments to the general public. Conversely, in these later periods, news journalism functions more as an interpreter (explaining what is going on in politics) and as a critical interrogator (seeking out hidden agendas and underlying motives behind politicians' decisions and proposals).

   From this perspective, Eriksson (2011) has developed the concept of the news broadcasts as a narrative, defined as the way "different sequences or elements of talk are organised in news stories" (Eriksson, 2011, p. 54). These elements of talk are the narrators – usually the anchor or a journalist – and different characters, such as politicians and other interviewees. Narratives comprise edited

clips from different news events that are fitted into the broadcast, together with a narration that provides the overall framework for a coherent news story.

The research described in the preceding analysis was conducted in the context of news journalism in Sweden (Ekström, 2001; Eriksson, 2011). To investigate to what extent this analysis would hold up in the context of news journalism in the UK, Bull et al. (2014) conducted a study of news coverage from 2009 of what became known as the *British parliamentary expenses scandal*.

News coverage of the British parliamentary expenses scandal[11]

The expenses scandal of 2009 was triggered by the leak and subsequent publication in the national newspaper *The Daily Telegraph* of expenses claims made over several years by MPs and peers from the House of Lords. These claims were deemed to show blatant misuse for personal advantage of the expenses system by parliamentarians across all parties, including both government and shadow cabinet ministers. Associated stories dominated British media reporting for several weeks. Over a three-week period (11 May – 3 June), it made headlines on all the major television news channels, notably the *BBC Ten O'Clock News*, *Sky News at Ten*, and *Channel 4 News*.

Central to these allegations were claims for tax allowances on second homes; allegedly, some politicians had played this system for their own financial advantage. In addition, there were some claims that were considered ridiculous. According to *The Daily Telegraph*, Conservative MP Sir Peter Viggers received more than £30,000 for gardening expenses over three years, including £1,645 for what was identified as a "floating duck island" (a dwelling for his ducks!). This infamous duck house became an iconic emblem of the expenses scandal.

In the study, Bull et al. introduced an innovative methodological approach to the analysis of news editing. Specific audio-visual clips were identified, which had been utilised by more than one news channel. Thereby, analysis could be conducted of how identical audio-visual content (or parts thereof) were interpreted by different news organisations. Furthermore, televised recordings of House of Commons debates were compared with the Hansard record to assess the extent to which these audio-visual recordings were selectively edited prior to broadcast. The overall aim was to investigate the extent to which techniques of de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation – as reported in the studies of Swedish news broadcasts – could also be identified in British news coverage of the 2009 parliamentary expenses scandal.

This British study was based on 53 news bulletins that were broadcast during the height of the parliamentary expenses scandal (11 May-3 June 2009) on either the BBC, Sky, or Channel 4. All the bulletins included items on the scandal, and these were fully transcribed. From these 53 bulletins, nine scenarios were identified where the same clip of film was utilised by more than one news channel, providing 23 clips in total.

The breakdown of the scenarios was as follows. In one scenario, questions from a journalist could be heard, so the scenario could be regarded as

an interview. A second scenario appeared to be from an interview, although no questions from a journalist were broadcast. Two further scenarios could be identified from subsequent newspaper reports as press conferences, although in neither case was the source acknowledged on the news bulletin. The remaining five scenarios were identified from Hansard as House of Commons debates; also from cues such as the Speaker in his traditional attire, shouts of "Hear, hear" from MPs, or the backdrop of the parliamentary chamber. In only one of these five scenarios was the location explicitly acknowledged, when the news anchor referred to "a packed House of Commons". Thus, with one solitary exception, all 23 clips were considered to be de-contextualised (i.e., neither their source nor location was acknowledged).

Editorial comments by the anchor and/or journalist from all 23 clips was then content analysed. The five scenarios of parliamentary debates were checked against Hansard to assess whether any video–editing had taken place. A fourfold typology of editing techniques was devised on the basis of these analyses, which was applied to each of the nine scenarios. Each of these is detailed in what follows.

1. CONTEXTUALISATION BEFORE AND AFTER THE UTTERANCE

Contextualisation was provided for each of the 23 clips by the journalist or news anchor providing an introduction before the utterance. In most cases, a further comment was provided by the narrator afterwards, taking the form either of a summary or interpretation of subsequent events.

As an illustrative example, the following analysis is presented of a scenario involving the then Labour MP, Hazel Blears. She reportedly made a £45,000 profit on the sale of a London flat but had failed to pay the appropriate capital gains tax of £13,332. She subsequently volunteered to pay the tax and appeared on Sky and BBC News (twice), showcasing a cheque (for the full amount).[12] Each of the news reports clearly drew on the same video material.

Of the three broadcasts, the Sky bulletin showed Blears responding to questions in an interview (although the initial question was omitted). Neither of the BBC reports showed any questions, so the Sky bulletin showed how Blears's responses had been de-contextualised. In the first BBC report, Blears's extensive justification for her cheque was broadcast. She appeared to identify and sympathise with her constituents to maintain their support. In the second BBC report, even this justification was cut; she was simply to be seen brandishing her cheque. Given that this bulletin was broadcast after her resignation, it made her look as if she had engaged in a rather pathetic attempt to win back public support.

2. INTERPOLATION

To explain or interpret what is happening on screen, the narrator acts as a storyteller through interpolations at various points within the extract. This was

utilised six times by the BBC and Sky (but not by Channel 4) in relation to four of the scenarios and was the second most frequently used technique. In each of these six instances, the narrator provided commentary in the form of a voiceover between various extracts of a longer scene.

The following extract is discussed in relation to an apology made by the former Speaker of the House of Commons, Michael Martin. When the expenses scandal broke, instead of addressing the issue of whether MPs' expenses claims were justified, he initially directed blame towards MPs for talking to the press. Because of the public outcry and criticisms of his response from other MPs, Martin then made a public apology in the House, which was broadcast the same day on all three television channels (18 May). The next day, Martin announced his resignation as Speaker.

In the following extract, the BBC journalist (Nick Robinson) talked through the extract. Notably, this process of interpolation takes contextualisation and re-contextualisation one stage further. Through this technique, the journalist acted more as a narrator, telling the story of the MPs' hostility and the Speaker's inability to control the House (Robinson's interpolations are in italics):

Robinson-1:	*It is one of the highest offices in the land. People doff their hats to the Speaker, they don't criticise him in public, they don't expect him to apologise, until now that is.*
Speaker:	Order, Please allow me to say to the men and women of the United Kingdom that we have let you down very badly indeed. We must all accept blame and to that extent I have – that I have contributed to the situation I am profoundly sorry.
Robinson-2:	*He did not utter a single word about his future, others certainly did.*
MP Prentice:	A motion of no confidence in you Sir will appear on the order paper tomorrow. Am I right in thinking it will be debated tomorrow and voted upon?
Speaker:	Order, this is not a point of order.
MP Prentice:	Oh yes it is.
Robinson-3:	*Not in order maybe, but it was the mood of the Commons.*
MP Carswell:	When will members be allowed to choose a new speaker with the moral authority to clean up Westminster and the legitimacy to lift this House out of the mire?
Robinson-4:	*Faced by the man who has tabled the motion to remove him, the Speaker struggled to explain.*
Clerk:	It's a motion on the remaining orders.
Speaker:	It's a motion on the remaining orders.
Robinson-5:	*At times seemed to struggle why it could not be heard.*
Speaker:	It's a remaining order on the remaining orders.
Robinson-6:	*If that wasn't clear, what followed certainly was.*
MP Winnick:	Your early retirement Sir would help the reputation of the House.

3. ELIMINATION OF TEXT FROM THE UTTERANCE

There was one example of this technique in the nine scenarios analysed. On 11 May, Labour MP Kate Hoey was publicly rebuked by the Speaker for criticising his handling of the expenses scandal. This sequence was broadcast by Sky on two separate occasions (11 and 19 May). On the first occasion (11 May, version 1), the Speaker's response to Hoey was broadcast, including an extensive justification for his rebuke by drawing attention to the need to protect private information. On the second occasion (19 May, version 2), following the announcement of Martin's resignation, the Speaker's rebuke of Hoey was broadcast again. Journalist Glen Oglaza began with the following voiceover, which accompanied various clips of Martin during his years as Speaker:

> Twelve days of exposure and confessions, but how did it come to this? The first Speaker to be forced out of office since 1695. Michael Martin was ultimately responsible for approving and paying MPs' expenses, which he tried to keep secret. He called in the police to investigate not suspected fraud but to find out who'd leaked the information to *The Telegraph*. MPs were shocked when he slapped down anyone who dared to question his judgement.

Oglaza's introduction was followed by a replay of the Hoey scene from 11 May. However, only the end of Hoey's criticism was broadcast followed by a highly edited version of Martin's response:

> Let me answer the honourable lady. It's easy to say to the press, this should not happen. It's a wee bit more difficult when you just don't have to give, how do you say, quotes to *The Express*[13] or, or to, to the press rather, not *The Express* but the press, but, and do nothing else. Some of us in this House have other responsibilities just than talking to the press.

It can be shown from the Hansard record that a huge chunk of Martin's response in the middle of this speech had been deleted, where the Speaker extensively justified his criticism of Hoey. Only Martin's attack on Hoey (as quoted previously) was broadcast. Thereby, the extract seemingly justified Oglaza's statement that Martin "slapped down anyone who dared to question his judgement", although Martin's original statement was much more nuanced than that.

Because the broadcasts did not have any obvious cuts, it was virtually impossible for the viewer to discern the editing of Martin's speech. This elimination of text from the utterance brings de- and re-contextualisation to a different level from that illustrated in subsections 1 and 2. To the viewer, what is broadcast is seemingly what actually occurred but what, in effect, has been created is an entirely new utterance.

4. EDITING THE ORDER OF UTTERANCES

Extracts from different speakers may be presented in one order on one chan-nel and in a different order on another channel, thereby in effect creating an entirely imaginary dialogue. This represented the most drastic form of edit-ing. This aspect of framing appeared only once – specifically, in exchanges between Gordon Brown (the then PM), David Cameron, and Nick Clegg. These exchanges were broadcast by both Channel 4 and the BBC (on 3 June). The debate between the three party-leaders as presented on both channels can be shown from the Hansard record to be entirely fictitious. Not only was it based on edited extracts selected from different points in one debate, their actual order varied between channels (elements common to both broadcasts are in italics). On the BBC, the sequence was broadcast as follows:

Brown: On all sides of the House the events of the last few weeks have been difficult.
Cameron: *Get down to the palace, ask for a dissolution, call that election.*
Clegg: *The country doesn't have a government, it has a void.* Labour is finished.

   In the order as shown earlier, it appeared that Brown had the first say in acknowledging the hardships of the House, Cameron rebutted him, then Clegg supported Cameron's statement. On Channel 4, the sequence was broadcast as follows:

Cameron: *Get down to the palace, ask for a dissolution, call that election*
Clegg: *The country doesn't have a government, it has a void*
Brown: I think it would be unfair for us to pass this question time without acknowledging that in each parts of the House people have found it difficult with the pressures upon them.

This format suggested that the two opposition leaders were arguing directly with Brown, who appeared to refute their claims, given that his statement appeared last. Thus, not only was an imaginary dialogue created between dif-ferent individuals, the politician who had the first and last word varied between the two TV channels. Notably, when the order changes, the argument itself changes, thereby making it seem as if a different politician had the upper hand.

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the results of this study strongly corroborated the analysis of Swedish news broadcasts (Ekström, 2001; Eriksson, 2011) and the interpretive view of contemporary news journalism (Salgado & Strömbäck, 2012). Not only were the editing techniques of British news journalism comparable to those in Sweden, they were, if anything, even more pronounced. In all nine sce-narios, the politicians' remarks were de-contextualised, and re-contextualised by the journalists' introductory and summary comments, while some video

clips were re-cycled and further re-contextualised for later broadcasts. Inter-polation went beyond this kind of contextualisation – the journalist acting as a narrator, telling the story in the form of a voice-over through the interpreta-tion of events. Finally, there were incidents of video-editing, such that, in one instance, a novel utterance was created by editing out a large chunk of the Speaker's speech; in another, where an entirely imaginary dialogue was created between three political leaders.

The foregoing analysis sits well with Eriksson's (2011) concept of the news bulletin as narrative. The analysis also sits well with the concept of interpretive journalism, delineating specific techniques whereby journalistic interpretation is accomplished, including video cuts and editing which are not discernible to the viewers.

Discussion and conclusions

In this chapter, four empirical studies of political journalism have been presented – three based on televised political interviews (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996), the fourth on television news (Bull et al., 2014). The substantive evidence reviewed in the foregoing analysis demon-strates ways in which adversarialism is practised in political journalism through the concepts of the face-threatening structure of questions and through inter-pretive journalism.

Threats to politicians' face can occur through conflictual questions, accusatory questions, and questions that embed negative formulations, as well as through editorial techniques – both de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation – on television news broadcasts. In the context of broadcast interviews, interview-ers arguably have the upper hand, setting the agenda and the domain in which interviewees can act (Ekström, 2001). However, it is in news broadcasts that threats to politicians' face can be most severe; through judicious editing, poli-ticians' answers may be de-contextualised and re-contextualised without any immediate right of reply. Politicians need access to the media to promote their political causes but, as Lloyd (2004) notes, this occurs on terms that are increas-ingly unfavourable to the politicians.

On the other hand, there is also the expectation that it is the responsibility of journalists to ensure that the government remains honest and working in the public interest – popularly known as *the watchdog theory of the press* (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). For example, journalists may be expected to guard against the influence of special interests, such as large corporations, who are viewed as more powerful and organised than the general public. In addition, they may view secrecy or deals made behind the scenes as working against the public interest; consequently, they may seek to expose those who work in secrecy, opening up their practices to public scrutiny, or indeed, those who siphon off public money to pay their own expenses.

From this perspective, what has been termed *face-aggravation* (e.g., Bull & Fetzer, 2010) may be seen as a necessary and intrinsic part of journalistic

activity. Elsewhere, in an analysis of impoliteness, Culpeper (1996) argued that, in some contexts (e.g., army training and literary drama), impoliteness is not a marginal activity but can be key to an ongoing interaction. Adversarial political journalism may be another such context, but to what extent this is justifiable is of course the nub of the issue.

The problem is that, rather than edifying or instructing the public about politics, the practice of adversarial journalism may result in widespread political disenchantment and cynicism about both politicians and the whole political process. If politicians are widely regarded as intrinsically untrustworthy and that you cannot believe a single word they say, then why bother to turn out to vote for them? Voter apathy and declining voter turnout are now widely recognised as major problems for a democracy. The last time over 70% of the electorate voted in a UK general election was in 1997, although, at just 71.4%, that was then the lowest turnout in the post-war period. Of recent national polls, only the referendum of 2016 on whether the UK should stay a member of the European Union – with a turnout of 72.2% – bucked this declining trend.

The concept of the face-threatening structure of questions in televised political interviews is of particular relevance to the practice of political interviewing. Adversarial questioning techniques reduce dialogue in politics, creating instead a culture of confrontation and hostility: "The irony here is increasingly obvious: a technique to elicit information and increase clarity produces the smoke of battle and the fog of war" (Lloyd, 2004, p. 14). The substantive evidence presented in this chapter strongly supports the view that adversarialism has become the norm in contemporary UK political journalism.

The blame for equivocal communication is typically laid at the door of politicians; it is often claimed that they are the sort of slippery, devious, dishonest people who will never give a straight answer to a straight question. But are the questions so straight? The studies reported here (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996) repeatedly demonstrate how equivocation occurs in response to particular kinds of questions which create communicative conflicts. From this viewpoint, equivocal communication can also be ascribed to political journalists who ask impossible questions. In contrast, when members of the UK public were given the opportunity to question politicians directly, the majority of their questions were answered (73%) (Bull, 2003). From this perspective, equivocal and evasive discourse from politicians also needs to be understood in the wider context of the questions that are asked, not simply condemned as due to the intrinsic slipperiness of individual politicians.

Notes

1 This subsection is based on the study by **Elliott and Bull (1996)**.
2 Illustrative examples of a number of these types of face threat are given in the following analysis of individual interviewers.
3 Formally known as the Community Charge, this tax was introduced in 1990 by Margaret Thatcher's government. It provided for a single flat-rate per-capita tax on every adult; it was abolished and replaced before the 1992 General Election by the Council Tax – a graduated tax on property.

4 The Anglo-Irish Agreement, signed in 1985 between the UK and the Republic of Ireland, gave the Irish government an advisory role in the government of Northern Ireland, while confirming that there would be no change in Northern Ireland's constitutional position unless a majority of its people agreed to join the Republic.

5 In fact, Major responded by slightly modifying the question. Rather than stating whether or not he would guarantee the continuation of the Anglo-Irish agreement, he stated that he would not immediately expect it to be abandoned.

6 In his response, Major avoided directly addressing Dimbleby's question but nevertheless explicitly acknowledged that he had abolished the poll tax, thereby implicitly accepting its unpopularity. However, he also claimed that the tax was replaced with a far better alternative [the Council Tax], thereby talking up himself and his party.

7 The EEC was a forerunner to the European Union (EU).

8 Kinnock responded by saying that circumstances changed after the 1975 referendum [in favour of staying in the EEC]. After that result, he decided it was preferable to make the best of retaining membership of the EEC, rather than exiting.

9 This subsection is based on the study by **Bull and Elliott (1998)**.

10 This subsection is based on the study by **Bull (2003)**.

11 This subsection is based on the study by **Bull, Negrine, and Hawn (2014)**.

12 Despite this attempt by Blears to appease her constituents, she subsequently resigned her government position as Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (3 June 2009).

13 *The Daily Express* is another national newspaper in the UK.

Part III

8   Summary and conclusions

Contemporary politics is mass–communication politics: politicians communicate with each other, the media, and the electorate, especially through television or, more recently, cyberspace. Politicians are not only seen and heard, they are seen and heard in close-up; their spoken words – and indeed their every action – are open to close scrutiny. It is not enough for a politician to be a good orator, good conversational skills are also essential. Furthermore, what matters is not just what is said but how it is said: demeanour, tone of voice, facial expression, and body movement may all contribute to how they are perceived by the public.

   The aim of this book has been to present political communication research achieved through the approach of *microanalysis*: the detailed analysis of both speech and nonverbal behaviour from recordings (predominantly video) and transcriptions. This book is organised in three main sections. Part I deals with an overview of the development of microanalysis, including the relevant concepts and methods, and an outline of key theoretical and methodological approaches adopted in this book. Part II presents the results of empirical studies of particular types of political communication in four distinctive contexts: speeches, televised interviews, parliamentary debates (i.e., Prime Minister's Questions), and the media (political journalism). The research on political speeches is of a broad cultural basis – not just the UK but including other European nations (France and Norway), the USA, and as far afield as South Korea and Japan. The research on interviews and parliamentary debates is predominantly based on UK politics but, for further pertinent cross-cultural comparisons, we occasionally draw on data from the growing body of international political communication research. In this third and final section of the book, we present a summary of the main findings and consider their wider implications. Each chapter is summarised.

Part I: Concepts and methods

Chapter 1. The microanalysis of political communication

During the 20th century, research on interpersonal communication was transformed by technological innovation. Through the use of sound and vision

recording, face-to-face communication could be subjected to detailed scrutiny and critical analysis. Researchers became able to repeatedly examine any recorded interaction – if necessary, in slow motion or even frame by frame. Communication thus became an object of study in its own right – the video-recorder, the means whereby it could be dissected and scrutinised in the finest of detail (Bull, 2002). Notably, these techniques can be applied to any form of interpersonal communication, but they have proved particularly applicable to that by politicians. Thus, in this book's opening chapter, the main principles of the microanalytic approach were described and their relevance to political communication considered.

Chapter 2. Theoretical approaches

Within the broad framework of microanalysis, two theoretical approaches have been particularly influential on the research reported in this book. These are the social skills model (e.g., Argyle & Kendon, 1967; Hargie, 2006a) and theories of face and facework (e.g., Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987; Goffman, 1955, 1967).

The social skills model

According to Argyle and Kendon (1967), social behaviour can be considered a form of skill, involving processes akin to those involved in motor skills, such as playing a game of tennis or driving a motor vehicle. Since its proposal, the model has been subjected to detailed updates and revisions, with particular emphasis on communication skills and how people may enhance such skills via appropriate forms of training (e.g., Hargie, 1997, 2006a, 2006b; Hargie & Marshall, 1986). Undoubtedly, politicians with good communication skills are at a distinct advantage in contemporary politics. Constant media attention exposes politicians to close scrutiny, and the ability to communicate effectively in the spotlight can be an invaluable political asset; hence, the focus in this book on communication skills in politics.

Face and facework

The term *face* can be somewhat difficult to define but, in effect, it can be seen to relate to human qualities like reputation, honour, and prestige (i.e., how an individual is viewed by others). Theories of face and facework are concerned with the many ways in which face may be maintained, upheld, threatened, or lost during social interaction. Hence, such theories are highly relevant to the world of politics, given that, in democratic societies, politicians must win voter support through skilled reputation management. Particular attention is given to Goffman's (1955) seminal work on face and facework and to the connected and highly influential theory of politeness, as proposed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). Notably, neither the theories of face and facework nor the social

skills model were devised initially for the analysis of political discourse, but both have proved readily applicable in the context of politics (Bull & Feldman, 2012). In Chapter 2, both theoretical approaches were described in some depth and their relevance to political discourse was considered.

Chapter 3. Techniques of analysis

The research reported herein is based on video-recordings of political speeches, televised interviews, Prime Minister's Questions, and news broadcasts. In each case, recorded interactions are typically transcribed verbatim by one or more researchers. Under these circumstances, no attempt is made at regularising speech – in the case of speech errors and hesitations ("um", "er", etc.), these form part of the transcriptions. In the case of political speeches, audience responses are also included in the transcript. So, for example, in line with the notation used previously (e.g., Atkinson, 1984a; McIlvenny, 1996), applause is indicated by a string of appropriately positioned crosses (xxxxxx); other audience responses (i.e., laughter, cheering, booing, chanting, etc.) are also symbolised by specific notational forms.

In the case of broadcast interviews, techniques have been developed for identifying different types of question. This is important, because it provides criteria whereby we can assess whether or not a politician has answered the question (Bull, 1994). Not replying to a question can take many different forms, and an equivocation typology has been devised which identifies at least 43 different forms of what are termed *non-replies* (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016).

Another important aspect of questions is the way in which they may constrain a politician's response by creating what are termed *threats to face*. Face-damaging responses are those which may cast the politician in a bad light or constrain their future freedom of action. A typology of face-threats in questions has been proposed (Bull et al., 1996) which identifies 19 different ways in which a question may pose a threat to face. These procedures for analysing both questions and responses have also been extended to the analysis of Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) (e.g., Bull & Strawson, 2020).

Each of the foregoing techniques of analysis – which provides the methodological basis for much of the empirical research reported in Part II – was described in some detail in Chapter 3.

Part II. Empirical studies of political discourse

The second section of the book presents the main body of empirical research conducted by the authors and colleagues. Each chapter focuses on a different aspect of political discourse: the interactions between speaker and audience in political speeches (Chapter 4), equivocation in televised interviews (Chapter 5), and adversarial exchanges between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition in PMQs (Chapter 6). It is also important to consider what

is said to and about politicians; hence, the focus of the final empirical chapter is specifically on political journalism (Chapter 7). Each of these chapters is summarised in the following pages.

Chapter 4. Claps and claptraps: how political speakers and audiences interact

In this chapter, research on speaker–audience interaction is reviewed. In the first section, a description is given of the ground-breaking research conducted by Atkinson (e.g., 1984a) on how applause may be invited through rhetorical devices, such as three-part lists and contrasts. His analyses have proved remarkably enduring and have provided some fascinating insights into the stage management of political speeches. However, these studies were first published in the 1980s and since then a great deal of additional research has been conducted.

Subsequent studies are reviewed in the second section of this chapter, which is focused on various factors that can affect speaker–audience interaction, such as the actual content of speech (i.e., what is said) and the way it is delivered (i.e., the nonverbal behaviour of the speaker). Whereas Atkinson's research on applause invitations was based exclusively on British speeches, speech-making in different cultures is also considered: specifically, France (Ledoux & Bull, 2017), Norway (Iversen & Bull, 2016), the USA (Bull & Miskinis, 2015; Goode & Bull, 2020), Japan (Bull & Feldman, 2011; Feldman & Bull, 2012), and South Korea (Choi & Bull, 2021; Choi et al., 2016). In addition to applause, the reported research includes other audience responses, such as laughter, cheering, chanting, and booing. Further analyses are also based on the extent to which displays of both audience affiliation and disaffiliation may occur uninvited as well as invited.

In the third and final section of this chapter, drawing on all of this research, a new theoretical model was presented of how speakers interact with audiences in set-piece political speeches. This is based on two main premises. Firstly, speaker–audience interaction needs to be understood in a cross-cultural context. The unique cross-cultural perspective presented in this chapter based on original research by the authors and colleagues has enabled us to develop new insights into speaker–audience interaction. Secondly, whereas political speech-making has traditionally been regarded as monologic, it needs to be understood rather as a form of dialogue between speakers and audiences, akin to the way in which people take turns in conversation (Atkinson, 1984a).

Chapter 5. Being slippery? Equivocation in political interviews

Equivocation, according to a dictionary definition, is when people "deliberately use vague language in order to deceive people or to avoid speaking the truth" (Collins, 2022). The research reported in this chapter is based principally on broadcast interviews with the leaders of UK-based political parties, including the appearance of Nick Griffin (the former leader of the far-right British

National Party) on the popular BBC political debate programme *Question Time*. For the purposes of comparison, studies of equivocation by Japanese politicians (Feldman et al., 2015) and Belgian politicians (Simon-Vandenbergen, 2008) are also included. Results show that the widely held view that politicians are characteristically evasive is not just a social stereotype, there is much empirical evidence that goes quite some way in support of that view. Furthermore, at least 43 different ways in which politicians equivocate have been identified through an equivocation typology devised by the authors and colleagues (Bull, 2003; Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull & Strawson, 2020; Waddle & Bull, 2016).

Equivocation is conceptualised primarily in terms of a theory proposed by Bavelas et al. (1990). According to the theory – arguably, somewhat in defence of politicians' propensity for apparent evasiveness – people typically equivocate when posed a question to which all of the possible replies have potentially negative consequences but where, nevertheless, a reply is still expected. This phenomenon is sometimes referred to as the situational theory of communicative conflict (STCC) (e.g., Hamilton & Mineo, 1998).

Furthermore, a modified version of the STCC is discussed (Bull et al., 1996), according to which questions in political interviews create threats to face (i.e., responses likely to make the politician look bad or constrain their future freedom of action). A communicative conflict is created when all the principal forms of response are potentially face-threatening but, nonetheless, the politician is required to make a response. It has been shown that politicians equivocate more to conflictual questions and are more likely to answer non-conflictual questions.

A number of modifications to the STCC have been proposed, which can be summarised as follows:

1   *Threats to face* are the prime reason as to why communicative conflicts occur in political interviews.
2   Equivocation needs to be understood in terms of its *consequences* as well as its causes.
3   In certain contexts, equivocation can be seen as a *form of deception*.
4   There is a qualitative difference between equivocation through *implicit messages* and other forms of equivocation.
5   Equivocation is not just a response to situations that create communicative conflicts but may also be seen as a *cultural norm*, for example, in the case of both Japanese political culture and Japanese society as a whole (Feldman et al., 2015).

Nevertheless, the STCC has made a notable and invaluable contribution to our understanding of equivocation. Although politicians have an unenviable reputation for evasiveness, it is not just politicians who avoid answering questions. Under certain circumstances, we all equivocate, and it has been the significant contribution of the STCC to identify some of the distinctive circumstances under which this occurs.

Chapter 6. The Westminster Punch and Judy Show? Leaders' exchanges at Prime Minister's Questions

PPMQs is the UK Parliament's primary regular debating event. On each occasion, the Prime Minister (PM), or an official stand-in, takes and responds to verbal questions on governmental issues, which, via an official selection process, can be asked by any Member of Parliament. Questions come alternately from opposition and government MPs, but this alternate pattern is interrupted by six consecutive questions from the PM's main opponent – the Leader of the Opposition (LO) – and two consecutive questions from the leader of the third largest party at Westminster (currently, the Scottish National Party). Thus, only these leaders of these two main opposition parties are afforded the opportunity to follow up on a preceding question in a subsequent turn – thereby, they are able to challenge an equivocal response by the PM.

PMQs is notorious for its adversarial discourse, especially for the gladiatorial encounters between LO and PM. Analyses of these encounters form the principal basis of this chapter, based on nine empirical studies of PMQs conducted by the authors and colleagues. Firstly, we present an overview of adversarialism in PMQs, then an analysis of the way in which face-threatening questions are posed to the PM and the means by which the PM counters those face-threats (Bull & Wells, 2012). We then identify and analyse a further four distinctive aspects of PMQs discourse: (1) personal attacks (Waddle & Bull, 2020a; Waddle et al., 2019; 2023 supplement); (2) the use of quotations (Bull & Waddle, 2019; Fetzer & Bull, 2019); (3) equivocation by the PM (Bull & Strawson, 2020); (4) forms of address to the Speaker (Bull et al., 2020). Finally, a further study is presented, intended to assess whether PMQs discourse is no more than political point scoring, or whether it plays a more significant role as a distinctive and functional form of political opposition (Bull, 2013).

PMQs has been operating in Westminster, in one form or another, for close to three centuries; it has gained a reputation as an occasion characterised by disingenuous, evasive, and boorish behaviour (e.g., see Allen et al., 2014). Our own data show that questions receiving an unambiguous, direct reply are somewhat rare (Bull & Strawson, 2020), while exchanges between PM and LO couched in personal antagonism are a salient feature of the weekly showdowns (Waddle et al., 2019). However, at the same time, questions of a particular origin (Bull & Waddle, 2019) or on certain political topics (Waddle & Bull, 2020a) are shown to be associated with far more personal respect. Furthermore, the case for PMQs as a channel for accountability and an opportunity to instigate necessary political change is strongly arguable from the analysis of PMQs exchanges on the phone-hacking scandal (Bull, 2013).

PMQs has been described as a kind of political *marmite* (Allen et al., 2014) – people either love it or hate it. Hence, there are some who want to abolish PMQs, some who seek its reform, and some who cherish it as it is. In this context, the emergence of this substantive research literature can enhance our deeper understanding of PMQs or possibly even pinpoint and suggest ways in which it might be changed or improved.

Chapter 7. Political journalism

In Chapter 7 we firstly report on findings from a book considered the first of its kind. Therein, Coen and Bull (2021) presented an overview of a range of psychological processes related to the production and consumption of news. Although the focus of *The psychology of journalism* was not so much on specific roles played by political journalists, nevertheless, particular attention was given to several political issues. So, for example, one chapter (Meredith, 2021) presented an analysis of headlines associated with Brexit and the particular significance of words during the Brexit referendum campaign, such as *pledge*, *vow*, and *aspiration*. Another chapter (Lido et al., 2021) was concerned with public attitudes and media bias towards refugees and the terms used to describe refugees (for example, either asylum seekers or illegal immigrants). A third chapter was focused on visual communication and the importance of photojournalism in affecting social and political attitudes (Bull, 2021).

Here, we examined political journalism in two specific contexts: broadcast interviews and television news bulletins. Four empirical studies of political journalism in the UK have been conducted by Bull and colleagues: three focused on broadcast interviews (Bull, 2003; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996); the fourth, on television news (Bull et al., 2014). The substantive evidence reviewed demonstrates ways in which adversarialism is practised in political journalism through the concepts of the face-threatening structure of questions and through interpretative journalism.

Threats to politicians' face can occur through conflictual questions, accusatory questions, and questions that embed negative formulations (Clayman & Heritage, 2002), as well as through television news editorial techniques of both de-contextualisation and re-contextualisation (Eriksson, 2011). The concept of the face-threatening structure of questions in televised political interviews (Bull, 2008) is of particular relevance to the practice of political interviewing. Adversarial questioning techniques can reduce dialogue in politics, creating instead a culture of confrontation and hostility (see Lloyd, 2004). However, it is arguably through televised news programmes that threats to the politicians' face are most severe; through judicious editing, politicians' answers may be de-contextualised and re-contextualised without any immediate right of reply (Eriksson, 2011).

On the other hand, there is also the expectation that it is the responsibility of journalists to ensure that the government remains honest and working in the public interest – popularly known as *the watchdog theory of the press* (Johnson-Cartee, 2005). From this perspective, what has been termed *face aggravation* (e.g., Bull & Fetzer, 2010) may be seen as a necessary and intrinsic part of journalistic activity. The problem is that, rather than edifying or instructing the public about politics, the practice of adversarial journalism may result in widespread political disenchantment and cynicism about both politicians and the whole political process. If politicians are widely regarded as intrinsically untrustworthy, if the belief is widespread that you cannot believe a single word they say, then people may be compelled to disengage with the political process and voter turnout may suffer.

The blame for equivocal communication is typically laid at the door of politicians – that they are the sort of slippery, devious, dishonest people who never give a straight answer to a straight question. But are the questions so straight? Studies reported herein (Bull, 2003, 2008; Bull & Elliott, 1998; Bull et al., 1996; Elliott & Bull, 1996) repeatedly demonstrate how equivocation occurs in response to particular kinds of questions – those which create communicative conflicts. From this viewpoint, equivocal communication can also be ascribed to political journalists who ask such challenging questions. In contrast, it was shown that, when members of the UK public were given the opportunity to question politicians directly, the majority of their questions (73%) were answered (Bull, 2003). From this perspective, equivocal and evasive discourse from politicians also needs to be understood in the wider context of the questions that are asked – not simply condemned as due to some intrinsic slipperiness of individual politicians. This has important implications for the practice of political journalism and broadcasters; and perhaps may provoke consideration of alternative formats in how leading politicians are questioned.

Conclusions

In this final chapter, the main conclusions of the empirical studies reported herein have been summarised, together with an overview of the theoretical perspective and methodological techniques underlying this research. The practical significance of this research can be considered from at least three different perspectives (those of politicians, political journalists, and the electorate as a whole).

For politicians, communication skills are becoming ever more important, given the extensive contemporary mediatisation of political discourse. Communication skills training for politicians is sometimes cynically regarded as just training in more effective spin, but an alternative view is that improving such skills is essential to sustaining and promoting effective dialogue with the electorate.

For political journalists, adversarialism has become very much the norm but it is open to question how well the public is served by this approach. Arguably, the challenge to contemporary political journalism is to devise forms of discourse which, while maintaining their role as watchdogs of democracy, might also lead to greater rather than less public engagement with politics.

For the electorate, microanalytic research arguably engenders heightened perception and understanding about the political process and the behaviour of those involved. Spectators of any sport need to understand the rules of the game to understand and appreciate the flow of events. Democratic politics can be seen as somewhat similar. To gain a better understanding of political discourse, it is necessary to appreciate the constraints and conventions under which it operates. Politicians do not just talk about politics, they *do* politics through their spoken words. Furthermore, it is clear that what matters is not only *what* politicians say but also *how* they say it. Arguably, it is through microanalytic research on political communication that we acquire a deep and detailed understanding of the processes of politics and the practices of politicians.

References

Alfahad, A. (2016). Equivocation in Arabic news interviews. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *35*(2), 206–223.

Allen, B., Fox, R., Geis-King, I., Gibbons, V., Korris, M., Pavlova, P., & Raftery, M. (2014). *Tuned in or turned off? Public attitudes to Prime Minister's Questions*. London: Hansard Society.

Argyle, M., & Kendon, A. (1967). The experimental analysis of social performance. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *3*, 55–98.

Aristotle. (2006). *On rhetoric: A theory of civic discourse* (G. A. Kennedy, Trans., 2nd ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 4th century BCE).

Atkinson, M. (1984a). *Our masters' voices: The language and body language of politics*. London: Methuen.

Atkinson, M. (1984b). Public speaking and audience responses: Some techniques for inviting applause. In J. M. Atkinson & J. C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies on conversation analysis* (pp. 370–409). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Atkinson, M. (2004). *Lend me your ears: All you need to know about making speeches and presentations*. London: Vermilion.

Austin, J. L., & Urmson, J. O. (1962). *How to do things with words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (J. O. Urmson, Ed.). London: Oxford University Press.

Bates, S. R., Kerr, P., Byrne, C., & Stanley, L. (2014). Questions to the Prime Minister: A comparative study of PMQs from Thatcher to Cameron. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *67*(2), 253–280.

Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Bryson, L., & Mullett, J. (1988). Political equivocation: A situational explanation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *7*, 137–145.

Bavelas, J. B., Black, A., Chovil, N., & Mullett, J. (1990). *Equivocal communication*. Newbury Park, CA: SAGE.

BBC. (2008, April 29). Cameron 'unable to keep PMQs vow'. *BBC News*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/7372660.stm

BBC. (2010, July 6). 'Abusive' PMQs needs reviewing, says Speaker Bercow. *BBC News*. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/news/10532233

BBC. (2017). Andrew Marr interview with Theresa May MP, Leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister. *The Andrew Marr Show*. Retrieved from http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/shared/bsp/hi/pdfs/30041701.pdf

BBC. (2019, September 24). Supreme Court: Suspending Parliament was unlawful, judges rule. *BBC News*. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-49810261

BBC. (2022a). *Editorial guidelines*. Retrieved from www.bbc.com/editorialguidelines/guidelines/

BBC. (2022b). Transcripts. *The Andrew Marr Show*. Retrieved from www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/articles/3hshxFhHM4dKd3px6Q3NzRF/transcripts

Beattie, G. W. (1982). Turn-taking and interruption in political interviews: Margaret Thatcher and Jim Callaghan compared and contrasted. *Semiotica*, *39*(1/2), 93–113.

Bertram, T. (2019, November 19). I advised Gordon Brown in the run-up to the 2010 TV debates. Here's what to look out for. *The New Statesman*. Retrieved from www.newstatesman.com/politics/elections/2019/11/i-advised-gordon-brown-run-2010-tv-debates-heres-what-look-out

Bolinger, D. (1978). Yes-no questions are not alternative questions. In H. Hiż (Ed.), *Questions* (pp. 87–105). Dordrecht: D. Reidel.

Bousfield, D., & Locher, M. A. (Eds.). (2008). *Impoliteness in language: Studies on its interplay with power in theory and practice*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1978). Universals in language usage: Politeness phenomena. In E. N. Goody (Ed.), *Questions and politeness: Strategies in social interaction* (pp. 56–289). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brown, P., & Levinson, S. C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Bull, P. (1986). The use of hand gesture in political speeches: Some case studies. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *5*, 103–118.

Bull, P. (1994). On identifying questions, replies, and non-replies in political interviews. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *13*(2), 115–131.

Bull, P. (1997). Queen of hearts or queen of the arts of implication? Implicit criticisms and their implications for equivocation theory in the interview between Martin Bashir and Diana, Princess of Wales. *Social Psychological Review*, *1*, 27–36.

Bull, P. (2000a). Do audiences applaud only 'claptrap' in political speeches? An analysis of invited and uninvited applause. *Social Psychology Review*, *2*, 32–41.

Bull, P. (2000b). Equivocation and the rhetoric of modernization: An analysis of televised interviews with Tony Blair in the 1997 British general election. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *19*(2), 222–247.

Bull, P. (2002). *Communication under the microscope: The theory and practice of microanalysis*. Hove: Routledge.

Bull, P. (2003). *The microanalysis of political communication: Claptrap and ambiguity*. London: Routledge.

Bull, P. (2006). Invited and uninvited applause in political speeches. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *45*, 563–578.

Bull, P. (2008). "Slipperiness, evasion, and ambiguity": Equivocation and facework in non-committal political discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 27*(4), 333–344.

Bull, P. (2009). How to analyse political interviews. In G. Álvarez-Benito, G. Fernández-Díaz, & I. Ma Íñigo-Mora (Eds.), *Discourse and politics* (pp. 215–229). Newcastle-upon-Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

Bull, P. (2012). Adversarialism in British political interviews. In P. Amey & P. Leroux (Eds.), *L'échange politique à la television: Interviews, débats et divertissements politiques* (pp. 179–190). Paris: L'Harmattan.

Bull, P. (2013). The role of adversarial discourse in political opposition: Prime Minister's questions and the British phone-hacking scandal. *Language and Dialogue, 3*(2), 254–272.

Bull, P. (2015). Follow-ups in broadcast political discourse: Speeches, interviews, and parliamentary questions. In E. Weizman & A. Fetzer (Eds.), *Follow-ups in political discourse: Explorations across contexts and discourse domains* (pp. 3–24). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Bull, P. (2016a). Claps and claptrap: The analysis of speaker-audience interaction in political speeches. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 4*(1), 473–492.

Bull, P. (2016b, October 24). Theresa May has a very special technique for avoiding questions. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/theresa-may-has-a-very-special-technique-for-avoiding-questions-67424

Bull, P. (2021). Visual communication through body movement. In S. Coen & P. Bull (Eds.), *The psychology of journalism* (pp. 277–303). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bull, P., & Elliott, J. (1998). Level of threat: A means of assessing interviewer toughness and neutrality. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *17*, 220–244.

Bull, P., Elliott, J., Palmer, D., & Walker, L. (1996). Why politicians are three-faced: The face model of political interviews. *British Journal of Social Psychology*, *35*(2), 267–284.

Bull, P., & Feldman, O. (2011). Invitations to affiliative audience responses in Japanese political speeches. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *30*(2), 158–176.

Bull, P., & Feldman, O. (2012). Theory and practice in political discourse research. In R. Sun (Ed.), *Grounding social sciences in cognitive sciences* (pp. 157–182). Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Bull, P., & Fetzer, A. (2006). Who are we and who are you? The strategic use of forms of address in political interviews. *Text & Talk*, *26*(1), 3–37.

Bull, P., & Fetzer, A. (2010). Face, facework and political discourse. *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale, 23*(2/3), 155–185.

Bull, P., Fetzer, A., & Kádár, D. Z. (2020). Calling Mr Speaker 'Mr Speaker': The strategic use of ritual references to the Speaker of the UK House of Commons. *Pragmatics*, *30*(1), 64–87.

Bull, P., & Mayer, K. (1988). Interruptions in political interviews: A study of Margaret Thatcher and Neil Kinnock. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 7*(1), 35–46.

Bull, P., & Mayer, K. (1991, December). *Is John Major as unremarkable as he seems? A comparison of three political leaders*. Paper presented at the British Psychological Society Conference, London.

Bull, P., & Mayer, K. (1993). How not to answer questions in political interviews. *Political Psychology*, *14*(4), 651–666.

Bull, P., & Miskinis, K. (2015). Whipping it up! An analysis of audience responses to political rhetoric in speeches from the 2012 American presidential elections. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *34*(5), 521–538.

Bull, P., Negrine, R., & Hawn, K. (2014). Telling it like it is or just telling a good story?: Editing techniques in news coverage of the British parliamentary expenses scandal. *Language and Dialogue, 4*(2), 213–233.

Bull, P., & Noordhuizen, M. (2000). The mistiming of applause in political speeches. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *19*, 275–294.

Bull, P., & Simon-Vandenbergen, A.-M. (2014). Equivocation and doublespeak in far right-wing discourse: An analysis of Nick Griffin's performance on BBC's Question Time. *Text & Talk*, *34*(1), 1–22.

Bull, P., & Strawson, W. (2020). Can't answer? Won't answer? An analysis of equivocal responses by Theresa May in Prime Minister's Questions. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *73*(2), 429–449.

Bull, P., & Waddle, M. (2019). "Let me now answer, very directly, Marie's question": The impact of quoting members of the public in Prime Minister's Questions. *Journal of Language Aggression and Conflict*, *7*(1), 56–78.

Bull, P., & Waddle, M. (2021). Speaker-audience intercommunication in political speeches: A contrast of cultures. *Journal of Pragmatics, 186*, 167–178.

Bull, P., & Wells, P. (2001). *Quality of applause and the art of oratory*. Annual conference of the Social Psychology Section of the British Psychological Society, University of Surrey.

Bull, P., & Wells, P. (2002). By invitation only? An analysis of invited and uninvited applause. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *21*, 230–244.

Bull, P., & Wells, P. (2012). Adversarial discourse in Prime Minister's Questions. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *31*(1), 30–48.

Burns, T. (1992). *Erving Goffman*. London: Routledge.

Cameron, D. (2005). Leadership acceptance speech, 2005. *British Political Speech*. Retrieved from http://britishpoliticalspeech.org/speech-archive.htm?speech=315

Campbell, A. (2007, June 24). Wit, oratory – and evasion: A master debater at work. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/books/2007/jun/24/politics.houseofcommons

Carvel, J. (2000, June 8). Heckled, jeered, booed – Blair bombs at the WI. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/politics/2000/jun/08/uk.labour3

Chance, M. R. A. (1962). An interpretation of some agonistic postures: The role of "cut-off" acts and postures. *Symposium of the Zoological Society of London*, *8*, 71–89.

Chilton, P. (1990). Politeness, politics and diplomacy. *Discourse & Society*, *1*(2), 201–224.

Chilton, P. (2004). *Analysing political discourse: Theory and practice*. London: Routledge.

Choi, H., & Bull, P. (2021). Speakers' verbal behavior and collective audience responses in Korean political oratory. *Language and Dialogue*, *11*(2), 271–299.

Choi, H., Bull, P., & Reed, D. (2016). Audience responses and the context of political speeches. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *4*(2), 601–622.

Chorley, M. (2013, December 4). 'Buffoons, morons and braying donkeys': What voters REALLY think about MPs' antics at Prime Minister's Questions. *Mail Online*. Retrieved from www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2517966/Buffoons-morons-braying-donkeys-What-voters-REALLY-think-MPs-antics-Prime-Ministers-Questions-revealed.html

Cicero, M. T. (2001). *On the orator* (J. M. May & J. Wisse, Trans.). Oxford: Oxford University Press. (Original work published 55BCE.)

Clark, N. (2007, September 20). How Jim Callaghan changed the world. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2007/sep/20/howjimcallaghanchangedthe

Clarke, H. D., Sanders, D., Stewart, M. C., & Whiteley, P. F. (2004). *Political choice in Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Clarke, T. (2011, December 6). Bodleian treasures: Robert Hooke's Micrographia. *Channel 4 News*. Retrieved from www.channel4.com/news/bodleian-treasures-robert-hookes-micrographia

Clayman, S. E. (1992). Footing in the achievement of neutrality: The case of news-interview discourse. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at work* (pp. 163–198). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clayman, S. E. (1993). Booing: The anatomy of a disaffiliative response. *American Sociological Review*, *58*, 110–130.

Clayman, S. E. (2001). Answers and evasions. *Language in Society*, *30*(3), 403–442.

Clayman, S., & Heritage, J. (2002). *The news interview: Journalists and public figures on the air*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Clayman, S. E., Heritage, J., Elliott, M. N., & McDonald, L. L. (2007). When does the watchdog bark? Conditions of aggressive questioning in presidential news conferences. *American Sociological Review*, *72*(1), 23–41.

Coen, S., & Bull, P. (2021). *The psychology of journalism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Cohen, J. (1960). A coefficient of agreement for nominal scales. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, *20*(1), 37–46.

Collett, P. (2003). *The book of tells: How to read people's minds from their actions*. London: Doubleday.

Collins. (2022). *Collins English dictionary*. Retrieved from www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/equivocate

Crines, A. (2017). Rhetoric of the 2017 general election campaign. In E. Thorsen, D. Jackson, & D. Lilleker (Eds.), *UK election analysis 2017: Media, voters and the campaign* (p. 74). Bournemouth: Centre for the Study of Journalism, Culture & Community.

Culpeper, J. (1996). Towards an anatomy of impoliteness. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *25*, 349–367.

Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using language to cause offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Darwin, C. (1859). *On the origin of species*. London: John Murray.

Darwin, C. (1872). *The expression of the emotions in man and animals*. London: John Murray.

Day, R. (1989). *Grand inquisitor* (Paperback ed., 1990). London: Pan Books.

Del Vento, A., Bavelas, J. B., Healing, S., Maclean, G., & Kirk, P. (2009). An experimental investigation of the dilemma of delivering bad news. *Patient Education and Counseling*, *77*(3), 443–449.

Dittman, A. T., & Llewellyn, L. G. (1967). The phonemic clause as a unit of speech decoding. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *6*, 341–349.

Donaldson, I. M. L. (2010). Robert Hooke's Micrographia of 1665 and 1667. *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians Edinburgh, 40*, 374–376.

Dragojevic, M., & Giles, H. (2014). Language and interpersonal communication: Their intergroup dynamics. In C. R. Berger (Ed.), *Interpersonal communication* (pp. 29–51). Berlin: De Gruyter Mouton.

Duncan, S. (1972). Some signals and rules for taking speaking turns in conversations. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *23*, 283–292.

Duncan, S., & Fiske, D. W. (1977). *Face-to-face interaction: Research, methods and theory*. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.

Duncan, S., & Fiske, D. W. (1985). *Interaction structure and strategy*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.

Ekman, P., & Friesen, W. V. (1969). Nonverbal leakage and clues to deception. *Psychiatry*, *32*, 88–105.

Ekman, P., & O'Sullivan, M. (1991). Who can catch a liar? *American Psychologist*, *46*(9), 913–920.

Ekman, P., & O'Sullivan, M. (2006). From flawed self-assessment to blatant whoppers: The utility of voluntary and involuntary behavior in detecting deception. *Behavioral Sciences & the Law*, *24*(5), 673–686.

Ekström, M. (2001). Politicians interviewed on television news. *Discourse & Society*, *12*(5), 563–584.

Ekström, M. (2009). Announced refusal to answer: A study of norms and accountability in broadcast political interviews. *Discourse Studies*, *11*(6), 681–702.

Elliott, J., & Bull, P. (1996). A question of threat: Face threats in questions posed during televised political interviews. *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, *6*(1), 49–72.

Eriksson, G. (2011). Adversarial moments: A study of short-form interviews in the news. *Journalism*, *12*, 51–69.

Feldman, O., & Bull, P. (2012). Understanding audience affiliation in response to political speeches in Japan. *Language and Dialogue*, *2*(3), 375–397.

Feldman, O., & Kinoshita, K. (2017). Expanding factors in threat to face: Assessing the toughness/equivocation connection in Japanese televised political interviews. *Language and Dialogue, 7*(3), 336–359.

Feldman, O., Kinoshita, K., & Bull, P. (2015). Culture or communicative conflict? The analysis of equivocation in broadcast Japanese political interviews. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *34*(1), 65–89.

Fetzer, A. (2008). "And I think that is a very straightforward way of dealing with it": The communicative function of cognitive verbs in political discourse. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 27*(4), 384–396.

Fetzer, A. (2010). Small stories in political discourse: The public self goes private. In C. R. Hoffmann (Ed.), *Narrative revisited: Telling a story in the age of new media* (pp. 163–184). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Fetzer, A., & Bull, P. (2012). Doing leadership in political speech: Semantic processes and pragmatic inferences. *Discourse & Society, 23*(2), 127–144.

Fetzer, A., & Bull, P. (2019). Quoting ordinary people in Prime Minister's Questions. In A. Fetzer & E. Weizman (Eds.), *The construction of 'ordinariness' across media genres* (pp. 73–102). Amsterdam: John Benjamin.

Finer, S. E. (Ed.). (1975). *Adversary politics and electoral reform*. London: Anthony Wigram.

Gaertner, S. L., & Dovidio, J. F. (2000). *Reducing intergroup bias: The common ingroup identity model*. Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

Gibson, S., & Booth, R. (2018). "An Australian-style points system": Individualizing immigration in radical right discourse in the 2015 UK general election campaign. *Peace and Conflict: Journal of Peace Psychology, 24*(4), 389–397.

Gimson, A. (2012). PMQs: That's the way to do it! *British Journalism Review, 23*(3), 11–13.

Gnisci, A. (2008). Coercive and face-threatening questions to left-wing and right-wing politicians during two Italian broadcasts: Conversational indexes of par condition for democracy systems. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 38*(5), 1179–1210.

Gnisci, A., Van Dalen, A., & Di Conza, A. (2014). Interviews in a polarized television market: The Anglo-American watchdog model put to the test. *Political Communication, 31*(1), 112–130.

Gnisci, A., Zollo, P., Perugini, M., & Di Conza, A. (2013). A comparative study of toughness and neutrality in Italian and English political interviews. *Journal of Pragmatics, 50*(1), 152–167.

Goffman, E. (1955). On face-work: An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction. *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes, 18*(3), 213–231.

Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Goffman, E. (1961). *Encounters: Two studies in the sociology of interaction*. Indianapolis, IN: Bobbs-Merrill.

Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction ritual*. Chicago, IL: Aldine.

Goffman, E. (1971). *Relations in public: Microstudies of the public order*. London: Penguin Press.

Goode, E. J. K., & Bull, P. (2020). Time does tell: An analysis of observable audience responses from the 2016 American presidential campaigns. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology, 8*(1), 368–387.

Goodman, S., & Burke, S. (2010). 'Oh you don't want asylum seekers, oh you're just racist': A discursive analysis of discussions about whether it's racist to oppose asylum seeking. *Discourse & Society, 21*(3), 325–340.

Greatbatch, D. L. (1992). On the management of disagreement between news interviewees. In P. Drew & J. Heritage (Eds.), *Talk at work: Interaction in institutional settings* (pp. 268–301). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Hague, W. (2002, April 26). What I learned about Tony – the hard way. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/apr/26/fiveyearsoflabour.labour

Hamilton, M. A., & Mineo, P. J. (1998). A framework for understanding equivocation. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 17*(1), 3–35.

Hargie, O. D. W. (1997). Interpersonal communication: A theoretical framework. In O. D. W. Hargie (Ed.), *The handbook of communication skills* (2nd ed., pp. 29–63). London: Routledge.

Hargie, O. D. W. (2006a). Skill in practice: An operational model of communicative performance. In O. D. W. Hargie (Ed.), *The handbook of communication skills* (3rd ed., pp. 37–70). London: Routledge.

Hargie, O. D. W. (2006b). Training in communication skills: Research, theory and practice. In O. D. W. Hargie (Ed.), *The handbook of communication skills* (3rd ed., pp. 553–565). London: Routledge.

Hargie, O. D. W. (Ed.). (2006c). *The handbook of communication skills* (3rd ed.). London: Routledge.

Hargie, O. D. W., & Marshall, P. (1986). Interpersonal communication: A theoretical framework. In O. D. W. Hargie (Ed.), *The handbook of communication skills* (1st ed., pp. 22–56). London: Croom Helm.

Harris, S. (1991). Evasive action: How politicians respond to questions in political interviews. In P. Scannell (Ed.), *Broadcast talk* (pp. 76–99). London: SAGE.

Harris, S. (2001). Being politically impolite: Extending politeness theory to adversarial political discourse. *Discourse and Society*, *12*(4), 451–472.

Heritage, J. C. (1989). Current developments in conversation analysis. In D. Roger & P. Bull (Eds.), *Conversation: An interdisciplinary perspective* (pp. 21–47). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters.

Heritage, J., & Greatbatch, D. (1986). Generating applause: A study of rhetoric and response at party political conferences. *American Journal of Sociology*, *92*, 110–157.

Hoggart, S. (2009, April 22). Gordon Brown on YouTube: A certain smile – random, and a bit scary. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2009/apr/22/hoggart-brown-expenses-video-smile

Hoggart, S. (2011, December 14). Prime Minister's Questions – or an unpleasant football match? *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/politics/2011/dec/14/prime-ministers-questions-football-match

Hope, C. (2019, May 1). Theresa May is most evasive Tory leader in past 50 years, scientific study finds. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2019/04/30/theresa-may-evasive-tory-leader-past-50-years-scientific-study/

House of Commons Information Office. (2010a). *Parliamentary questions*. (Factsheet P1, Procedure Series). Retrieved from www.parliament.uk/documents/commons-information-office/p01.pdf

House of Commons Information Office. (2010b). *Some traditions and customs of the House* (Factsheet G7, General Series). Retrieved from www.parliament.uk/globalassets/documents/commons-information-office/g07.pdf

Ilie, C. (2001). Unparliamentary language: Insults as cognitive forms of ideological confrontation. In R. Dirven, R. Frank, & C. Ilie (Eds.), *Language and ideology: Volume 2: Descriptive cognitive approaches* (pp. 235–262). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Ilie, C. (2004). Insulting as (un)parliamentary practice in the British and Swedish parliaments: A rhetorical approach. In P. Bayley (Ed.), *Cross-cultural perspectives on parliamentary discourse* (pp. 45–86). Philadelphia, PA: John Benjamins.

Institute for Government. (2022). *Sue Gray investigation*. Retrieved from www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/explainers/sue-gray-investigation

ITV. (2015, August 14). Jeremy Corbyn promises 'new kind of politics' as he unveils 10-point policy plan. *ITV Report*. Retrieved from www.itv.com/news/2015-08-14/jeremy-cor- byn-promises-new-kind-of-politics-as-he-unveils-10-point-policy-plan/

Iversen, S., & Bull, P. (2016). Rhetorical devices and audience responses in Norwegian political speeches. *Politics, Culture & Socialization*, 7(1–2), 97–118.

Jefferson, G. (1984). On the organisation of laughter in talk about troubles. In J. M. Atkinson & J. C. Heritage (Eds.), *Structures of social action: Studies in conversation analysis* (pp. 347–369). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Jefferson, G. (1990). List-construction as a task and resource. In G. Psathas (Ed.), *Interaction competence* (pp. 63–92). Lanham, MD: University Press of America.

Johansson, M. (2008). Presentation of the political self: Commitment in electoral media dialogue. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 27*(4), 397–408.

John, P., Bertelli, A., Jennings, W., & Bevan, S. (2013). *Policy agendas in British politics*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Johnson-Cartee, K. S. (2005). *News narratives and news framing: Constructing political reality*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.

Jucker, A. H. (1986). *News interviews: A pragmalinguistic analysis*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Kasper, G. (1990). Linguistic politeness: Current research issues. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *14*(2), 193–218.

Kendon, A. (1982). Organization of behaviour in face-to-face interaction. In K. R. Scherer & P. Ekman (Eds.), *Handbook of methods in nonverbal behaviour research* (pp. 440–505). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Kentish, B. (2018, January 17). Tory MP tears into Boris Johnson over 'disgraceful, entirely deliberate deception' on £350m NHS claim. *The Independent*. Retrieved from www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/boris-johnson-nhs-brexit-claim-deception-tory-conservative-sarah-wollaston-ps350-million-funding-a8164101.html

Kienpointner, M. (1997). Varieties of rudeness: Types and functions of impolite utterances. *Functions of Language*, *4*(2), 251–287.

King, J. (2022, September 6). A look back at Boris Johnson's biggest gaffes as Prime Minister. *Metro*. Retrieved from https://metro.co.uk/2022/09/06/a-look-back-at-boris-johnsons-biggest-gaffes-as-prime-minister-2–17299683/

Krauss, R. M., Geller, V., & Olson, C. (1976, September). *Modalities and cues in the detection of deception*. Paper presented at the meeting of the American Psychological Association, Washington, DC.

Lakoff, G., & Johnson, M. (1980). *Metaphors we live by*. Chicago, IL: Chicago University Press.

Landis, J. R., & Koch, G. G. (1977). The measurement of observer agreement for categorical data. *Biometrics*, *33*, 159–174.

Lashley, K. S. (1951). The problem of serial order in behavior. In L. A. Jeffress (Ed.), *Cerebral mechanisms in behavior* (pp. 112–136). New York, NY: John Wiley.

Laud, G. (2019, September 24). John Bercow prorogation statement in full: Speaker revels as Supreme Court rules unlawful. *Express*. Retrieved from www.express.co.uk/news/politics/1181962/John-Bercow-prorogation-statement-in-full-supreme-court-case-unlawful-boris-johnson

Ledoux, S., & Bull, P. (2017). Order in disorder: Audience responses and political rhetoric in speeches from the second round of the 2012 French presidential election. *Pragmatics & Society*, *8*(4), 520–541.

Lee, J. R. (1977). Rallying around the flag: Foreign policy events and presidential popularity. *Presidential Studies Quarterly, 7*(4), 252–256.

Lees, C. (2015). The saint in the bear pit: Reviewing Jeremy Corbyn's first PMQs. *The Conversation*. Retrieved from https://theconversation.com/the-saint-in-the-bear-pit-reviewing-jeremy-corbyns-first-pmqs-47510

Lido, C., Swyer, A., & De Amicis, L. (2021). Social psychology of identity and stereotyping in the media: The case of refugee media bias. In S. Coen & P. Bull (Eds.), *The psychology of journalism* (pp. 168–199). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lloyd, J. (2004). *What the media are doing to our politics*. London: Constable & Robinson.

Locher, M. A. (2004). *Power and politeness in action: Disagreements in oral communication*. Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.

Lowe, N. (2017). *Mastering modern British history* (5th ed.). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Lutz, W. D. (1987). Language, appearance, and reality: Doublespeak in 1984. *Et cetera: A Review of General Semantics*, *44*(4), 382–391.

Lyons, I. (2022, April 20). How much Boris Johnson was fined and what the law says about Covid fixed penalty notices. *The Telegraph*. Retrieved from www.telegraph.co.uk/politics/2022/04/20/how-much-boris-johnson-fined-partygate-lockdown-parties/

Mair, P. (2008). The challenge to party government. *West European Politics*, *31*(1–2), 211–234.

Marey, E. J. (1895). *Movement*. New York, NY: D. Appleton.

McIlvenny, P. (1996). Heckling in Hyde Park: Verbal audience participation in popular public discourse. *Language in Society*, *25*, 27–60.

Meredith, J. (2021). Discursive psychology and journalism. In S. Coen & P. Bull (Eds.), *The psychology of journalism* (pp. 256–276). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Monty Python Wiki. (n.d.). Monty Python and the Holy Grail. *Monty Python Wiki*. Retrieved from https://montypython.fandom.com/wiki/Monty_Python_and_the_Holy_Grail

Morris, D. (1977). *Manwatching: A field guide to human behaviour*. London: Jonathan Cape.

Morris, D. (1985). *Bodywatching: A field guide to the human species*. New York, NY: Crown.

Mueller, J. E. (1970). Presidential popularity from Truman to Johnson. *The American Political Science Review*, *64*(1), 18–34.

Muybridge, E. (1899). *Animals in motion* (Reprinted, 1957). New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Muybridge, E. (1901). *The human figure in motion* (Reprinted, 1957). New York, NY: Dover Publications.

Norton, P. (1993). Introduction: Parliament since 1960. In M. Franklin & P. Norton (Eds.), *Parliamentary questions* (pp. 1–22). Oxford: Clarendon Press.

O'Gorman, V., & Bull, P. (2021). Applause invitations in political speeches: A comparison of two British party political leaders (Theresa May and Jeremy Corbyn). *Parliamentary Affairs*, *74*(2), 354–377.

Potter, J., & Wetherell, M. (1987). *Discourse and social psychology: Beyond attitudes and behaviour*. London: SAGE.

Quintilian. (2015). *Institutes of oratory* (C. Dozier & L. Honeycutt, Eds., & J. S. Watson, Trans.). Scotts Valley, CA: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform. (Original work published c.95CE.)

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., & Svartvik, J. (1985). *A comprehensive grammar of the English language*. Harlow: Longman.

Reid, C. (2014). Rhetoric and parliamentary leadership – Prime Minister's Questions. In J. Atkins, A. Finlayson, J. Martin, & N. Turnbull (Eds.), *Rhetoric in British politics and society* (pp. 45–57). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sacks, H. (1992). *Lectures on conversation: Volume I* (G. Jefferson, Ed.). Cambridge, MA: Blackwell.

Sacks, H., Schegloff, E. A., & Jefferson, G. (1974). A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. *Language*, *50*, 696–735.

Salgado, S., & Strömbäck, J. (2012). Interpretive journalism: A review of concepts, operationalizations and key findings. *Journalism, 13*(2), 144–161.

Schopenhauer, A. (1896). *The art of controversy* (T. B. Saunders, Trans.). (Original work published 1831). Retrieved from https://ebooks.adelaide.edu.au/s/schopenhauer/arthur/controversy/complete.html

Sedgemore, B. (1980). *The secret constitution*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Simon-Vandenbergen, A.-M. (2008). "Those are only slogans": A linguistic analysis of argumentation in debates with extremist political speakers. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *27*, 345–358.

Sivenkova, M. (2008). Expressing commitment when asking multiunit questions in parliamentary debates: English-Russian parallels. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 27*(4), 359–371.

Stewart, M. C., & Clarke, H. D. (1992). The (un)importance of party leaders: Leader images and party choice in the 1987 British election. *The Journal of Politics, 54*(2), 447–470.

Summers, D. (2009, May 5). Gordon Brown has worst smile in world, says John Prescott. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/politics/blog/2009/may/05/brown-smile-prescott

Thatcher, M. (1993). *The Downing Street years*. London: HarperCollins.

The Guardian. (2010, October 14). Editorial: In praise of . . . prime minister's questions. *The Guardian*. Retrieved from www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2010/oct/14/in-praise-of-prime-ministers-questions

The Independent. (1998, November 17). Three new looks for old as politicians smartened up in search of votes. *The Independent*. Retrieved from www.independent.co.uk/news/three-new-looks-for-old-as-politicians-smartened-up-in-search-of-votes-1185431.html?amp

Tracy, K. (1990). The many faces of facework. In H. Giles & W. P. Robinson (Eds.), *Handbook of language and social psychology* (pp. 209–226). Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.

UK Parliament. (2022a). *Hansard*. Retrieved from https://hansard.parliament.uk/

UK Parliament. (2022b). *MPs' guide to procedure*. Retrieved from https://guidetoprocedure.parliament.uk/mps-guide-to-procedure

UK Parliament. (2022c). Proceedings on the naming of a Member. *Erskine May* (Paragraph 21.50). Retrieved from https://erskinemay.parliament.uk/section/4901/proceedings-on-the-naming-of-a-member/

Urwin, R., & Hellen, N. (2020, October 4). BBC journalist Martin Bashir 'misled Diana's brother' to secure bombshell interview. *The Sunday Times*. Retrieved from www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bbc-journalist-martin-bashir-misled-dianas-brother-to-secure-bombshell-interview-2x6nj28jm

Van Dijk, T. A. (1997). *Discourse as structure and process. Discourse studies: A multidisciplinary introduction* (Vol. 1). London: SAGE.

Waddle, M. (2018). *Playing the man, not the ball: Personalisation in political discourse* (Doctoral thesis, University of York, York). http://etheses.whiterose.ac.uk/id/eprint/22456

Waddle, M., & Bull, P. (2016). Playing the man, not the ball: Personalisation in political interviews. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *35*(4), 412–434.

Waddle, M., & Bull, P. (2020a). Curbing their antagonism: Topics associated with a reduction in personal attacks at Prime Minister's Questions. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *73*(3), 543–564.

Waddle, M., & Bull, P. (2020b). "Of course I'm going to ask about that": The politics of opposition during a national crisis. *British Psychological Society Political Psychology Bulletin* (Summer 2020).

Waddle, M., & Bull, P. (2020c). "You're important, Jeremy, but not that important": Personalised responses and equivocation in political interviews. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, *8*(2), 560–581.

Waddle, M., Bull, P., & Böhnke, J. R. (2019). "He is just the nowhere man of British politics": Personal attacks in Prime Minister's Questions. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, *38*(1), 61–84.

Wainwright, M., & Elliott, C. (1995, February 6). Birt calls 'rabbit-punching' pack back from politicos: Attack on terrier interviewers finds little support among subjects who can look after themselves. *The Guardian*, p. 22.

Walker, M. B. (1982). Smooth transitions in conversational turn-taking: Implications for theory. *The Journal of Psychology*, *110*, 31–37.

Walters, S., & Carlin, B. (2015, January 11). Alastair Campbell tells Miliband: You will ruin Britain (but only because he's posing as David Cameron to coach Labour leader for TV election debates). *Mail Online*. Retrieved from www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-2905002/Alastair-Campbell-tells-Miliband-ruin-Britain-s-posing-David-Cameron-coach-Labour-leader-TV-Election-debates.html

Warren, G., Schertler, E., & Bull, P. (2009). Detecting deception from emotional and unemotional cues. *Journal of Nonverbal Behaviour*, *33*(1), 59–69.

Watzlawick, P., Bavelas, J. B., & Jackson, D. D. (1967). *Pragmatics of human communication: A study of interactional patterns, pathologies, and paradoxes*. New York, NY: W. W. Norton.

Weakland, J. H. (1967). Communication and behaviour: An introduction. *American Behavioural Scientist*, *10*, 1–4.

Weigand, E. (2000). The dialogic action game. In M. Coulthard, J. Cotterill, & F. Rock (Eds.), *Dialogue analysis VII: Working with dialogue* (pp. 1–18). Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag.

Weigand, E. (2010). *Dialogue: The mixed game*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company.

Wheatcroft, G. (2005). *The strange death of Tory England*. London: Penguin Books.

Wodak, R. (Ed.). (1989). *Language, power and ideology*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Wodak, R., de Cillia, R., Reisigl, M., & Liebhart, K. (2009). *The discursive construction of national identity* (2nd ed.). Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

YouTube. (2022). *YouTube*. Retrieved from www.youtube.com

Zuckerman, M., DePaulo, B. M., & Rosenthal, R. (1981). Verbal and nonverbal communication of deception. *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, *14*, 1–59.

Author index

Subject index