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LA EVASIÓN EN *THE HOUSE OF COMMONS* Y EL CONGRESO DE LOS
DIPUTADOS: UN ESTUDIO INTERCULTURAL

TESIS DOCTORAL

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To my very dear son, Juan José.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this dissertation is to carry out an analysis of political discourse used by politicians in the House of Commons in the United Kingdom and *El Congreso de los Diputados* in Spain. This analysis will consist of a comparative study of question and answer sessions in the British and Spanish Parliaments, with the idea of comparing and contrasting linguistic and cultural differences between the two nations mentioned, the United Kingdom and Spain. We find this initiative to be very interesting, since we expect that it will shed a great deal of light on what could still probably be considered a fairly unexplored field: an analysis of the differences in attitudes in the political arenas of two countries or nations. For example, it could help us to ascertain whether Spanish politicians are more evasive than their British counterparts, or whether the reverse is the case. The corpus on which our doctoral thesis is based consists of question and answer sessions of the Treasury Select Committee in the House of Commons, and La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda in El Congreso de los Diputados. I have chosen two Committees which deal with economics because of the knowledge obtained on this matter in the preparation of my investigation project.

The main idea of the dissertation is, to some extent, based on the concept of “face”, an idea proposed by Goffman (1955, 1967), and subsequently developed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), and other authors such as R. Lakoff (1973), Leech (1983), and Fraser (1990). This notion of face will be applied to political discourse. It will be seen how, according to Bull, Elliott, Palmer and Walker (1996), politicians need to safeguard three types of face: their own self-image, that of their political party, and that of significant others (smaller groups within the party, people, institutions, or even countries with whom they maintain important links.)

In the political world, politicians are, more often than not, confronted with face-threatening questions, and find themselves with the necessity to defend or safeguard the types of image mentioned previously. One of the strategies employed to this effect is equivocation, which is the focal point of this dissertation.

Various books and articles have been written on the concept of equivocation, the most important of which is *Equivocal Communication*, the work of Bavelas, Black, Chovill and Mullett (1990). In this book, the authors explain the basic principles of equivocation theory, and make references to its use in political discourse. A detailed examination of these principles will be made in our thesis, after which, they will be applied to our corpus.

The phenomenon of equivocation is present in a number of everyday situations, when people find themselves in a position where telling the truth could be hurtful and unnecessary, and telling a blatant lie could also be inappropriate. Bavelas et al. (1990) provide us with a few examples of this, such as thanking someone for a useless present, writing a letter of recommendation for a person with questionable skills, or even making a promise which would be difficult to fulfill. Moreover, these authors point out that knowing how to avoid revealing certain types of information, and

learning how others do so, is a fundamental factor in our understanding of effective communication. Furthermore, they emphasize that, when an individual deliberately indulges in the evasive use of language, it is due to a communicative situation. Bavelas et al. state 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." (1990:170). Politicians, simply because of the nature of their profession, often appear to be vague and evasive. The reason why this is so is that they are very often confronted with a situation which Bavelas et al. (1990) term an avoidance avoidance conflict, where all of the alternatives have negative consequences. This, they argue, is precisely what induces politicians to equivocate. The reasons for this are obvious. As we mentioned before, political representatives frequently find themselves in situations where they are required to answer difficult or awkward questions in political interviews. Saying the wrong words could offend millions of voters and thus be detrimental to their party's chances of coming into power. Bavelas et al. (1990), who appear to feel some sympathy for politicians, propose the view that the nature of political interviews is what forces them to resort to evasion. Wilson (1990) also seems to share the same feeling: "... politicians manipulate language for their own ends, yes! But the manipulations are frequently no different from those employed in everyday interaction ... "

Specific types of equivocation have also been identified by other authors, such as agenda shifting, a concept which is developed by Greatbatch (1986), and reformulations of questions, discussed by Clayman (1993). These techniques will also be examined in some detail, since they bear direct relevance to the analysis of our corpus.

It can be seen, therefore, that this dissertation pursues various objectives. We shall begin by trying to give an explanation of what is meant by the term political discourse in chapter 2. An insight into the types of political discourse will then be provided, with special reference being made to the views of Van Dijk (1997), who has made significant contributions to this field. Moreover, pragmatic elements related to discourse and political discourse in particular, will be examined. Since the aim of the representative of a political party is to obtain the approval of the general public, he or she will need to use many of the language resources at his or her disposal to achieve this. One of these concepts is implicature. This concept affords politicians the possibility of flirting with different interpretations of the answers given. In connection with implicature, Grice's Cooperative Principle (1975) will also be commented on. Other elements of pragmatics, such as metaphor, speech acts, deixis, presupposition, entailment and the use of the passive voice, will also be discussed. However, although all of these pragmatic phenomena play their part in political discourse to a certain extent, it should be emphasized that the concept of personal deixis deserves special attention. The reason for this is that politicians quite frequently make strategic use of the vague or indeterminate meaning of pronouns in order to equivocate when

answering questions in political interviews. This is sometimes done to elude responsibility for a certain course of action adopted. An excellent example of pronoun ambiguity occurs in the use of the pronoun “you”, which, as we will observe, can have a number of different meanings in political discourse. Wilson (1990) makes some valid points in this regard. On the subject of pronoun ambiguity, an article written by Bull and Fetzer (2006), where they make some noteworthy observations, will be examined. Mention will also be made of Iñigo Mora (2004), who has made a useful contribution to this subject with a discussion about the pronoun “we”.

This will be followed in chapter 3 by an examination of Bavelas et al.’s work on equivocation theory (1990), with special emphasis being placed on strategies used by interviewees in the British and Spanish Parliaments. Subsequently, the concepts of face and face management will be explained, and mention will be made of Brown and Levinson’s work (1978, 1987).

In the first section of Chapter 4 we will try to establish what can be defined as a question, and to determine what will constitute an acceptable reply. As far as defining a question is concerned, we will examine ideas put forward by Bull (1994, 2003), Weber (1993), Jucker (1986), and Quirk et al. (1985). In the second section of chapter 4, the typology on equivocation published by Bull and Mayer in 1993, and updated by Bull in 2003, will be carefully examined. The typology proposed by these authors is, without doubt, the most significant contribution to our study, since the analysis of our corpus is based on the theory presented. Nevertheless, although the typology is very thorough and adequate, we have also found it necessary to include an additional type and sub-type of language evasion, since we observed evidence of these in our corpus. They will therefore be presented together with the ideas expressed by Bull and Mayer (1993) and Bull (2003), and examples will be given in each case. Finally, we will mention some of our own general impressions about the equivocation typology. One of these is that these authors have failed to distinguish between what could be considered deliberate equivocation, and non-deliberate equivocation. By this we mean that, there are instances where an interviewee deliberately equivocates in order to avoid giving a reply to a particular question. However, at certain times, the hearer may be unable to provide a suitable answer due to genuine ignorance, rather than a deliberate attempt to equivocate. We have found evidence of this in our corpus, and examples will be quoted towards the end of chapter 4 to support this opinion.

Chapter 5 will provide some background information about how the British and Spanish parliamentary committees operate, after which the functioning of the Treasury Committee of the House of Commons, and *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* of *El Congreso de los Diputados* will be discussed.

Chapter 6 deals with the analysis of our corpus, which consists of parliamentary sessions that have taken place in the Treasury Committee and *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*. It is important to point out that these sessions differ from a standard political interview in that it is the MPs who formulate the questions to

representatives of certain groups. As opposed to what occurs in a normal political interview, where the political analyst asks the MPs questions, in the parliamentary sessions it is the MPs who play the part of the interviewers, while the group representative takes on the role of interviewee.

The analysis of the corpus will be followed in chapter 7 by a contrastive study of the equivocation strategies used in the dialogues of the sessions examined, and reference will be made to some of the pragmatic elements included in the methodology used. The equivocation strategies chosen by the interviewees in the British and Spanish Houses of Parliament will also be compared and contrasted. This constitutes the principal aim of this dissertation.

In the final chapter of our work we shall focus on the conclusions obtained from the results of our analysis, in which we shall highlight the main criteria analysed. At the end of the dissertation, an appendix will be attached which will include graphs showing the percentages of equivocation occurring in the answers to the questions, of the different strategies employed, and of the question types chosen. Other appendices will provide a list of the Members of Parliament who actively participated in the parliamentary sessions, and a glossary of terms used in English and Spanish will be presented. Finally, a fourth appendix will contain the corpus on which this study is based. It is hoped that this dissertation will provide an alternative study on how equivocation is used in discourse on political matters.

CHAPTER 2: THE PRAGMATIC ANALYSIS OF POLITICAL DISCOURSE

2.1 Political discourse

2.1.1 What is political discourse?

Van Dijk (1997:12) undoubtedly makes a valid point when he suggests that, in order to carry out political discourse analysis, it is necessary, first of all, to be able to define this concept. In this regard, he comments that:

The easiest, and not altogether misguided, answer is that political discourse is identified by its actors or authors, viz., politicians. Indeed the vast bulk of studies of political discourse is about the text and talk of professional politicians or political institutions, such as presidents and prime ministers and other members of government, parliament or political parties, both at the local, national and international levels.

He goes on to point out that it is necessary to understand what “politics” means, and emphasizes that, from an interactional point of view of discourse analysis, other participants in political communicative events, such as the public, the people, and the citizens, should be included in the domain of politics. Verba et al. (1993) suggest that the political arena should involve even involve members of pressure groups, demonstrators and dissidents. From these observations, therefore, we are able to realize that defining the word *politics*, or indeed, to determining what can be considered to be of a political nature, is extremely complex. With regard to this, Chilton (2004:4) presents two possible definitions of *politics*:

On the one hand, politics is viewed as a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it. ... On the other hand, politics is viewed as cooperation, as the practices and institutions that a society has for resolving clashes of interest over money, influence, liberty, and the like.

Fairclough & Fairclough (2012:34) partly agree with this view when they observe that:

Politics is about arriving cooperatively, and through some form of (collective) argumentation (deliberation), at decisions for action on matters of common concern, it is about what to do in response to public disagreement and conflict ...

These authors seem to suggest that although politics is a struggle to obtain power, as Chilton (2004) states, where political parties compete with each other in elections in

order to obtain the right to rule a country, there is also a democratic side to this concept, where people's wants and needs have to be taken into consideration. This is important since many of us would agree that resources are scarce in practically all societies, a situation which undoubtedly causes disagreement and conflict. For this reason, politics is necessary because political decisions need to be made in order to decide how resources are to be distributed, and what action needs to be taken in a given situation. Hay (2007) makes an important point when he mentions that political action occurs only in situations where alternative choices might be made. If there are no alternatives, he observes, there is no politics.

Moreover, in order to define political discourse, it is essential to analyse how discourse and politics interact. Chilton and Schäffner (1997:211) observe that, "The task of political discourse analysis is to relate the fine grain of linguistic behavior to what we understand by 'politics' or 'political behaviour'." It is also important for us to realize that *discourse* and *politics* are two phenomena that are inextricably linked, as these same authors point out (2002:3):

What is clear is that political activity does not exist without the use of language. It is true that other behaviours are involved: for instance physical coercion. But the doing of politics is predominantly constituted in language.

In addition, it could be said that one of the most important (if not *the* most important) ingredients of politics is communication, which is used by politicians as a means of persuasion. For this reason, it is clear that politics cannot exist without language. This view is shared by R. Lakoff (1990:13):

Language drives politics and determines the success of political machinations. Language is the initiator and interpreter of power relations. Politics is language.

Any debate on politics and language would not be complete without reference being made to Aristotle's observations on the relationship between these two phenomena. Aristotle seems to imply that man is the only animal endowed with the power of speech, simply because of his political nature (Aristotle 1992):

But obviously man is a political animal in a sense in which a bee is not, or any other gregarious animal. Nature, as we say, does nothing without some purpose; and she has endowed man alone among the animals with the power of speech.

Aristotle then goes on to distinguish 'speech' from 'voice', and subsequently expresses human speech in functional terms:

Speech is something different from voice, which is possessed by other animals also and used by them to express pain or pleasure. ... Speech, on the other hand,

serves to indicate what is useful and what is harmful, and so also what is just and what is unjust. For the real difference between man and other animals is that humans alone have the perception of good and evil, just and unjust, etc. It is the sharing of a common view in these matters that makes a household and a state.

It could be assumed here that Aristotle's reference to the perceptions of "good and evil" or "just and unjust" are an indication of some of the ideals which are an essential aspect of the political world.

In addition, Aristotle's observations on rhetoric could also be considered relevant to the discussion on political discourse. Three genres of rhetoric are distinguished, each depending on the objective to be pursued:

- (i) *Deliberative* rhetoric: what to do and what not to do, pursue or avoid a course of action.
- (ii) *Forensic* rhetoric: this is oriented towards past events, and its aim is to defend or condemn an action.
- (iii) *Epideictic* rhetoric: related to praising or discrediting a person's actions.

The most important genre is deliberative rhetoric because it is the one concerned primarily with the political world, and is orientated towards whether a course of action could be considered useful or harmful. Moreover, as Fairclough and Fairclough (2012:26) observe: "Because politics is concerned with decision-making, political discourse is inherently deliberative."

2.1.2 Types of political discourse

Having defined to a certain extent what is meant by political discourse, it is essential to understand that there are a variety of types of this genre. Although, political discourse primarily involves formal written and spoken communication, it is important to point out that it is not necessarily limited to these formats. It could also include activities such as demonstrations which, nevertheless, do possess spoken or written discourse in the form of banners, chants, and short speeches. There is also *media discourse*, where politicians or political personnel make speeches on important issues in parliamentary debates and press conferences. In this type of discourse, moreover, political parties may campaign through televised advertisements or video-clips. In addition to this, political communication could be made by means of advertising banners in streets, websites, and telephone and text messages. Other types are *foreign policy discourse*, which is directed at politicians of another country, and *international political discourse*, which occurs through diplomatic exchanges, or an international body such as the United Nations.

This dissertation is basically concerned with one of the most familiar types of political discourse, which involves discussion and debate in the congress or parliament

of a nation, specifically the Treasury Committee of the House of Commons in the British Parliament, and *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* (the Finance and Treasury Committee) of *El Congreso de los Diputados* in the Spanish Parliament. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

2.2 Politics and language

2.2.1 Language as a means of persuasion

As has been mentioned, politics and language are inseparable. One fundamental aspect of language, and therefore, of politics, is argumentation. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012:23) observe that: "Argumentation is ... a verbal, social *activity*, in which people attempt to criticize or justify claims; it is a *complex speech act* whose intended perlocutionary effect is convincing an interlocutor to accept a standpoint." The purpose of a political speech, therefore, may be to persuade and/or convince the public that a certain course of action is necessary, or that a particular point of view is correct. In order to achieve these ends, politicians must use appropriate language, which should be reinforced by solidly based arguments. Fairclough and Fairclough define an argument as "... a set of statements (explicit or implicit), one of which is the conclusion (claim) while the others are the premises." (2012:36). In other words, the premises, or reasons, are put forward to support a conclusion, which is the main argument. Therefore, with the use of language, argumentation is used to convince people, and change their beliefs if necessary, with regard to what should be done in a given situation.

There are, evidently, different types of argument. However, for the purposes of this study we shall concentrate on two types, *deductive* arguments and *inductive* arguments. In a *deductive* argument, the conclusion necessarily follows from the premises. If the premises are true, the conclusion must necessarily be true. For example:

Premise 1: All men are mortal.

Premise 2: Socrates was a man.

Conclusion: Socrates was mortal.

In an *inductive* argument, if the premises are true, it is highly probable that the conclusion will be true, as can be seen in the following example:

Premise 1: Socrates was Greek.

Premise 2: Most Greeks eat fish.

Conclusion: Socrates ate fish.

In the latter type of argument, however, it is possible for the conclusion to be false because it cannot be said with an absolute degree of certainty that Socrates ate fish. The difference between *deductive* and *inductive* arguments, therefore, is that in the former the two premises are sufficient to support the claim or conclusion, whereas the latter requires several premises, and even if that were the case, the conclusion cannot be said to be one hundred per cent true.

Thus, in order to make political decisions, politicians need to weigh the pros and cons of a certain course of action, which will give rise to arguments. Consequently, by means of various linguistic devices, they will use these arguments in order to obtain public support and approval for the policies which they adopt.

Nevertheless, it should not be forgotten that, in everyday life, it is generally felt that many politicians and political institutions use language in a persuasive or manipulative manner in order to gain public sway. What is also important is that the use of certain terms such as 'democracy', 'equality', or 'freedom' can be ambiguous, basically because different nations have different political structures, and therefore the understanding of these terms can vary. In their article on discourse and politics, Chilton and Schäffner (1997:209-210), while commenting on studies made on the French approach to political linguistics, observe that the use of different lexical terms could reflect a difference in political ideology: "... one study shows how the relative frequency of the words *travalleur* and *salarié* varies significantly between French trade unions, reflecting different political ideologies ...". A further example of this is given by these authors when they mention that political language was related to fascism in Germany, and also to the subsequent division of the country into two states. In addition, in this section mention is made of the strategic use of certain political terms in order to achieve specific political aims. Examples of this are: (i) using opponents' political vocabulary to give a term a new meaning, and (ii) linking a basic value to one's political party (e.g. 'solidarity' or 'freedom') in such a way that the party will be identified with that value.

In the following subsections, we will examine different linguistic strategies used by political agents in discourse, and how they enable them to persuade or convince the listening public.

2.2.2 Implicature in politics

Before we discuss the concept of *implicature*, it would be useful to point out that successful communication depends to a great extent on cooperation between the participants. It is generally assumed that speakers in a conversation will provide an appropriate amount of information, tell the truth, be relevant, and try to speak as clearly as possible. In this regard, Grice (1975) established the Cooperative Principle:

Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction or the talk exchange in which you are engaged.

He also elaborated a set of 'maxims': quantity, quality, relation and manner. Each one of these maxims is, in turn, divided into more specific sub-maxims, which may be summarized as follows:

1. Maxim of Quantity.

- (i) Make your contribution as informative as required (for the current purposes of the exchange).
- (ii) Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.
- 2. Maxim of Quality. Try to make your contribution one that is true.
 - (i) Do not say what you believe to be false.
 - (ii) Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.
- 3. Maxim of Relation. Be relevant.
- 4. Maxim of Manner. Be perspicuous.
 - (i) Avoid obscurity of expression.
 - (ii) Avoid ambiguity.
 - (iii) Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity).
 - (iv) Be orderly.

It should be noted that Grice did not intend these maxims to be considered strict rules of behaviour, but rather a series of descriptive principles which should be generally observed in conversational communication. With regard to political discourse, politicians quite frequently flout these maxims in order to put forward a certain point of view, or to equivocate, as will be seen in the analysis of our corpus. The maxims may also be flouted where political agents use conversational implicatures in discourse, which requires the addressees to work out the intended meaning of the speakers.

Implicature is an important facet of language, and, there is little doubt that it plays an important role in political discourse. This is the pragmatic term given to the additional meaning of an utterance which is neither expressed nor explicitly stated. In this case, a speaker normally intends to communicate more than what is actually said, and expects the hearer or hearers to work out the intended meaning on the basis of common knowledge. Generally speaking, in political communication, whether written or spoken, much of what is 'meant' is implicit, and the addressees need to make an effort to interpret what may have been intended.

There are, obviously, different types of implicature. Grice made a distinction between what he termed *generalized* and *particularized* implicature. In *generalized* implicature, no special knowledge is required for the hearer to be able to calculate the additional meaning, as in the following example: "Are you going to invite Jane and Mary to the party?" "I'm going to invite Jane." If we are to assume that the second speaker is adhering to the maxim of Quantity, we may suppose that, as Mary was not mentioned in the response, the speaker is inferring that Mary will not be invited to the party. *Particularized* implicature, which is more relevant to the theme of political discourse, does, in contrast, require the hearer to possess some background knowledge in order to calculate what is meant. The following exchange is an example of this kind of implicature: "Is John coming to the meeting?" "His car broke down." In order for the response to the question to be relevant, the first speaker has to draw on some assumed knowledge that he or she could be reasonably expected to have. It is to

be supposed that, as John's car has broken down, he would have problems which would make it difficult or impossible for him to attend the meeting.

In the following example, taken from our English corpus, a witness, Hector Sants¹, in answer to a question posed by the Chairman of the Treasury Committee of the House of Commons, does not give a direct answer. However, his views are undoubtedly implied in the reply given:

Q8 Chairman: Hector, if you answer for the FSA can you take in question one as well? Was your influence over the past few years significant in ensuring the change in wording the Memorandum of Understanding?

Mr Sants: We certainly do believe that currently the process functions well. I think, in terms of supporting that, what is definitely key, from our point of view, is the type of feedback that we get through both some of the actual events that have occurred and, more critically (because they in a way have been more demanding hypothetical incidents), the actual testing that we have done. We do get extensive feedback from the market. Obviously we are speaking to firms on regular basis, so we are not just getting feedback through our lessons learned exercises and documentation around our tests, but we are also getting informal feedback from our one-on-one conversations with market participants, and the general flavour that we get from that is a perception that we are doing a good job. In terms of the MoU from the FSA's point of view, I think we do feel, both through the MoU and, in a way, echoing some of the earlier comments, more importantly, through regular interaction with the Bank and the Treasury—particularly through the tests, though, critically, we do all understand better what our relevant roles are and, particularly at the operational level, how it would all fit together in the event of a crisis—that testing it all works is actually the real way to get into the guts of whether it is functioning properly rather than the particulars of the memorandum; and the fact that we have done tests in the last year or two which previously had not been done, I think, is critical to us feeling that it works better.

Hector Sants does not answer directly “yes” or “no”, but does make his views clear in the following phrases: “We certainly do believe that currently the process functions well.”, and “... and the general flavour that we get from that is a perception that we are doing a good job.” Replies to yes/no or polar questions will be examined in the discussion on replies to questions in section 4.5.3.

Gastil (1992) suggests that rhetorical questions are a common form of implicature, and cites the following example given by Richardson (1985:30) from a speech by Margaret Thatcher²:

¹ Managing Director, Wholesale, Financial Services Authority.

² Former Prime Minister of Great Britain.

If in the 1930s nuclear weapons had been invented and the allies had been faced by Nazi SS20s and Backfire Bombers, would it then have been morally right to have handed to Hitler total control of the most terrible weapons that man has ever made?

Richardson explains that this question "... is redundant and therefore violates the Quantity maxim." (1985:31). If Thatcher is adhering to the maxim of Quantity, he argues, it is reasonable to suppose that there is an implicit meaning in this "rhetorical" question. By means of this implicature, Gastil suggests that Thatcher is making a point, which "appears to be that the British unilateralists are mistaken in advocating unilateral disarmament in the 1980s, just as they would have been in the 1930s." (1992:481)

The use of implicature in political discourse, however, does have its drawbacks. As has been mentioned, the interpretation of implicit meaning requires a great cognitive effort on the part of the hearer which can often give rise to misunderstandings or unintended inferences. It can be said with some degree of certainty that the meaning of implicature depends, to a great extent, on the hearer's interpretation, and that not all hearers interpret implicatures in the same way. Wilson (1990: 26-27) gives an example of an inference made by a government official in a parliamentary session in the House of Commons, which seems to be unintended. In this session it was suggested that the US government was guilty of hypocrisy, since it bombed Libya as a consequence of international terrorist activities, while the Americans themselves continued to support the Nicaraguan Contras, who had apparently indulged in terrorist activity. Wilson (1990:26) quotes the following dialogue between Dennis Healey, a British Labour Party politician, and Tim Eggar, a government official:

Mr Healey: Did the Government remind President Reagan at the Tokyo summit that his proposals for military aid to the Contras involved the United States in a most blatant form of state terrorism, because the Contras have engaged in horrifying atrocities, including torture and mutilation, against innocent women and children ... Does the hon. Gentleman agree that, so long as President Reagan supports such activities he has no right whatsoever to claim to be an opponent of state terrorism (Hansard, 1986d: p.136)

Mr Eggar: I think the right hon. Gentleman is trying to draw a parallel between the United States action in Libya and its action in Nicaragua, which simply does not stand up to any examination. Gadaffi has committed the Libyan Government to organizing and directing a worldwide campaign of terrorist violence against innocent people outside Libya. In Nicaragua, the Contras and the Nicaraguans

have resorted to armed struggle against their own government. *The Contras do not seek to advance their cause by terrorist acts in third countries.*³

Wilson argues, quite correctly, that Tim Eggar's claim that the Contras do not carry out terrorist activities "in third countries" seems to imply that they do perform such acts in their own country. It is reasonable to assume that this was not the government official's intended meaning, which reinforces the point that implicatures could often be misinterpreted.

If the use of implicature in political discourse risks misunderstanding, "... why would political speakers choose to use implicature instead of speaking directly?" asks Gastil (1992:481). The main reason seems to be that politicians are able to use this tool as a kind of subtle evasion when presented with awkward questions in political interviews. Moreover, as has been mentioned, implicit meaning depends to a great extent on the listener's interpretation. In this regard, a political speaker will always be afforded the possibility of denying an alleged implication by placing the responsibility on the hearer by using words such as "That's not exactly what I meant to say", or "You have misinterpreted what I said."

2.2.3 The use of metaphor as a political strategy

An important concept which serves as a mechanism in political discourse is *metaphor*. As has been mentioned, the aim of politicians is to influence listeners' train of thought, make their ideas clear and comprehensible to people, and to convince them that they are sensitive to their emotions, desires and needs. As Edelman (1971:65) suggests that, "Metaphor and myths are devices for simplifying and giving meaning to complex and bewildering sets of observations that evoke concern." In this regard, Wilson (1990:104) gives an example of a metaphor used by Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1938: "And constantly I seek to look beyond the doors of the White House, beyond the officialdom of the national capital, into the hopes and fears of men and women in their own home." By using this metaphor, Roosevelt shows his concern for basic problems which individuals need to confront. Similarly, there is little doubt that, with the help of carefully selected metaphors, political agents are able to render complex issues understandable, and thus make important matters relevant to the general public. Stone (1988:118) makes a comparison between metaphors and stories when she observes that:

Metaphors are important devices for strategic representation in policy analysis. On the surface, they simply draw a comparison between one thing and another, but in a more subtle way, they usually imply a whole narrative story and a prescription for action.

³ Italics added by Wilson

The following is another example of the use of metaphor, taken from our corpus:

Q49 John Thurso⁴: Mr Smith, when you were responding to the Chairman in his questions you said that one of your key objectives was more for less, I think it was. How can you ensure, in doing that, that the quality of service to tax payers is maintained?

Mr Smith⁵: Actually what I said was more value for less, and I think that is the key. I think people's understanding of procurement is that it is buying: it is buying commodities and there is a standard commodity. It is not. Procurement covers a range of goods and services. If I can give you one example from my own experience: my daughter this year went off and worked in the care industry looking after people in their homes, people that had various physical disabilities, people that were old, people that could not do things. She worked in the care industry and the quality of service of the people she worked for was appalling. That is not value. Lowest cost is not value. It is about what service comes from that value and also right across the lifecycle. If you are talking about a car, it is not about the purchase price of a car.

In answer to the question posed by John Thurso, the witness uses the comparison with a car to emphasize his point that cost is not the same as value.

Moreover, if the intention of politicians is to manipulate listeners' opinions as a means of maintaining their power, metaphor is one of the most prominent strategies which can be used as persuasion. Since politicians are generally rewarded for how convincingly they present their arguments, metaphoric language is a useful tool for them to emphasize what they consider to be important issues, as well as divert attention from those which could be of a controversial nature. Paivio (1979: 150) appears to agree with this view, suggesting that: "Metaphor is a solar eclipse. It hides the object of study and at the same time reveals some of its most salient and interesting characteristics when viewed through the right telescope." Furthermore, as Chilton and Schäffner (1997:222) suggest, "From the interactive perspective, metaphors enable speakers to avoid direct (face-threatening and over revealing) references." Issues relating to the aspect of *face* will be discussed in Chapter 4, section 4.4.

Sometimes politicians may use metaphors to criticize or ridicule a rival group. A very good example of this is given by Chilton and Schäffner (1997:222) in the following extract from a speech made by John Major:

What the Labour Party has done is to study our instincts and attitudes, and then go away and **market test** them ... But it is one thing for the Labour Party to commit grand larceny on our language. It is one thing for them to say what

⁴ Liberal Democrats MP.

⁵ Chief Executive of the Office of Government Commerce.

market research has told them people would like to hear. But it is quite another to **deliver** it ...

Buying Tory policy from Labour is like **buying a Rolex on the street corner**. It may bear the name. But you know it's **not real**. Our task is to **promote** the **real thing** and expose the **counterfeit** ... As for this **new, biologically improved** Labour Party. It may well **wash blander**. But I'd give it a **shelf life** of under three years.⁶

Chilton and Schäffner mention that the words in bold type are related to buying and selling. The intended message of this metaphor is to accuse the Labour Party of stealing the Conservative Party's use of language, which is a commodity owned by the latter. These authors also point out, quite correctly, that the general public's understanding of this metaphor requires a certain amount of background knowledge, such as what a Rolex is, and its economic value.

Thus, as with implicature, the interpretation of metaphor could require some background knowledge. Moreover, as has been seen regarding the use of implicature, care needs to be taken when choosing metaphors in political discourse because it could give rise to unintended interpretations. Gastil (1992:488) seems to agree with this view when he observes that: "The use of metaphors shares the same liability as implicature: the listener may derive different meanings than those intended by the speaker." Gastil quotes the following example from a speech made by a former Brazilian president who said: "When I came into office, we were on the brink of disaster. Since that time, we have taken a great step forward." Gastil mentions that the audience agreed with the politician, but interpreted a different meaning of the metaphor from the one intended. It is quite probable that, in this case, the politician's intended meaning was that the present situation in his country was excellent. However, it is possible that the audience understood it to mean that the situation of the country was still a disaster, but perhaps less than before. This further reinforces the view that, as with implicature, the risk of misinterpretation can also exist with the use of metaphor.

2.2.4 Deixis, presupposition and entailment in political discourse

An important characteristic of discourse is what is given the term *deixis*. *Deixis* refers to the relationship between the speaker and hearer, their physical location, the point in time of the utterance, and to where they are at the moment of discourse. *Deictic* expressions or *indexicals* are linguistic resources used to perform *deixis*, of which there are various types:

1. *Person deixis* (personal pronouns, e.g. *I*, *we*, *our* are involved in the utterance)

⁶ Bold type added by Chiton & Schäffner

For example: *We'll win the election.*

2. *Social deixis* (this refers to the social relationship between speaker and hearer, as in T/V forms of address)

For example: *Ahora es usted quién miente.* (Now you're the one who's lying.)

3. *Spatial deixis* (where the utterance takes place, involving the use of the adverbs *here* and *there*, and the verbs *come* and *go*)

For example: The Prime Minister is not *here* now.

4. *Temporal deixis* (this refers to the time of the utterance, and could involve verb tenses, or the adverbs *now* and *then*)

For example: *Now* is the time to take a step forward.

5. *Discourse deixis* (reference to a portion of a discourse relative to the speaker's current location in the discourse)

For example: We spoke about this at our *previous* meeting.

These pragmatic phenomena do have particular importance in political discourse. With regard to *person deixis*, first person plural pronouns, *we*, *us*, and *our* can be used by political agents to identify a certain group. *We* could refer to a coalition, the party in question, or even the whole country. The second person pronoun, *you*, is very elastic and can refer to an even wider range of people. Moreover, it should be noted that politicians use the indeterminate meaning of pronouns strategically as a means of equivocating when required to answer awkward questions in political interviews. This will be discussed in more detail in section 2.8.

As far as *social deixis* is concerned, Brown & Gilman (1960) observed that forms of address are observed with the expression of power and solidarity. These include the use of first names, surnames, a title, and indexical expressions, such as pronouns. With regard to the latter, it is important to point out that certain languages possess T/V forms of address, which is simply the use of deferential pronouns to indicate distance between the speaker and the hearer, for example, *vous* (French), *usted* (Spanish), or *Sie* (German), and non-deferential pronouns, *tu* (French), *tú* (Spanish), or *du* (German). These six pronouns are the equivalents of the second person pronoun *you* in English, which is used both deferentially and non-deferentially. The deferential pronouns in the languages mentioned could be said to correspond to the use of Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms combined with a surname in English. A good example of deference occurs in our English corpus where the Chairman of the Treasury Committee addresses Sir John Gieve⁷ as "Sir John"⁸, whereas he uses first names when requiring the attention of the other witnesses.

⁷ Deputy Governor of the Bank of England.

⁸ "Sir" is an honorific address used in a number of situations in many Anglophone cultures. The term can be used as a formal prefix, especially in the Commonwealth, for males who have been given certain honours or titles (such as knights or baronets), where usage is strictly governed by law and custom. (Wikipedia).

Spatial deixis, that is, the use of the adverbs *here* or *there*, or the verbs *come* and *go*, give a reference of political space. Thus, the meaning of the word *here* in a political speech could be understood as in the House of Commons, in England, or in Europe, etc. *Temporal* indexicals also need to be interpreted in a political speech. The use of the word *today* may mean “with the new government in power”, or “after the Franco regime.”

As has been seen, in addition to implicature, *deixis* or *indexical* expressions are pragmatic devices used in language to convey information which may not be explicitly stated. Another such linguistic device is *entailment*. *Entailment* is the technical term given to the relationship between two sentences where, if one sentence is true, the other must also necessarily be true. For example, the sentence “The president was assassinated” entails “The president is dead.” It should be added that, if one of the sentences is false, the other must also be false.

The pragmatic concept *presupposition*, like *entailment*, is connected with a relationship between two sentences. However, in contrast to *entailment*, the former, as its name suggests, presupposes or makes an assumption relating to an utterance, the truth of which is taken for granted. For instance, the sentence “The king of Spain visited Huelva today” presupposes that Spain has a king. In the same way as with *entailment*, it is also possible for a presupposition to be false.

Wilson observes that the difference between *presupposition* and *entailment* can be seen in a negative sentence and gives the following example presented by Levinson (1983:178):

- (a) John managed to stop in time.
- (b) John tried to stop in time.
- (c) John stopped in time.
- (d) John didn't manage to stop in time.

Wilson argues, quite correctly, that if sentence (a) is true, then sentences (b) and (c) will also be true. However, he adds, if we negate sentence (a) as seen in sentence (d), then sentence (c) will not be true, but sentence (b) may still be true. Thus, he says, sentence (c) is an *entailment*, while sentence (b) is a *presupposition*.

To conclude this section, it could be mentioned that *entailment* and *presupposition*, in the same way as *implicature* and *metaphor*, contain meaning in an utterance which is implied rather than explicitly stated. However, while we have observed that the former are linguistic devices deliberately used by speakers to convey meaning or to emphasize a point, it could be argued that the latter are phenomena that arise unconsciously from speech. For this reason, political speakers need to take extra care to avoid the possibility of misinterpretation or unintended meaning on the part of the hearer, as seems to occur in the example given by Wilson (1990) in section 2.3 above. Nevertheless, the interpretation of an utterance will always be the

responsibility of the listener, as Wilson observes: “An ‘implication’ is an inference type not a fact, and as such, in many cases, it can be cancelled or denied.”

2.3 Speech acts and political interaction

While people use language as a means of communication, it should be noted that the former is not limited to a series of utterances containing grammatical structures and words. Actions can also be performed via those utterances, and such actions are given the pragmatic term *speech acts*. As Chilton and Schäffner (2002:9) observe:

Speech acts are part of social and political interaction. Only in and through language can one issue commands, ask questions, make offers and promises. And only through language tied into social and political institutions can one declare war, declare guilty or not guilty, prorogue parliaments, or indeed raise or lower taxes ...

Searle (1969) distinguished the following speech acts:

- (1) *declaratives* (speech acts which change the world via their utterance and could include announcing an election, declaring war, etc.):
For example, Prime Minister: The next general election will be brought forward to May.
- (2) *representatives* (speech acts which state what the speaker believes to be true):
For example: “The new government has created more jobs.”
- (3) *expressives* (speech acts which state what the speaker feels, and could include praising, blaming, apologizing, etc.)
For example: “Well done!”
- (4) *directives* (speech acts which are used to get someone to do something, and could include commands, requests, etc.)
For example: “Could you provide free electricity for the poor?”
- (5) *commissives* (speech acts which commit the speaker to a future action, and could include promises, threats, refusals, etc.)
For example: “We will not allow further immigration right now.”

In addition, Searle also makes reference to what he terms *illocutionary act* or *force*, which is the communicative force of an utterance. The purpose of the illocutionary act may be to issue a command, request information, or offer an apology. He also introduced the notion of the *perlocutionary act* or *effect*, which is the intended effect the *illocutionary act* produces on the hearer. This concept is important, both in everyday conversation and political discourse, because we obviously expect the listener to react in some way to an utterance. For example, if a warning is issued, the intention may be to frighten the hearer out of doing a particular action.

Furthermore, it is important to note that not every individual is in a position to perform any kind of *speech act*. A number of speech acts are specifically assigned to people with certain social roles, or even with a particular type of power status. Searle (1969) introduced the concept of *felicity conditions*, which is the pragmatic term given to the appropriate circumstances under which certain speech acts can be carried out. An example of this can be seen in the following utterance: “I sentence you to six months in prison.” In this case, the performance of the speech act cannot be recognized as intended unless the utterance is made by a person in authority, for instance, a judge in a courtroom. With regard to political speeches, the power or status of the speaker would have a bearing on the effectiveness of the speech act. A declaration of war, for example, can only be carried out effectively by the head of state of the country in question.

Many, if not all, of the speech acts mentioned above have a direct relevance to political discourse, because a number of them are performed through language in order to achieve various political aims. One type of *speech act* used as a device in political speeches is *representatives*, where politicians may use simple statements or assertions in order to make a truth claim. An example of this occurs in a speech made by José María Aznar, an ex-president of Spain, when he remarked that “España va bien. (Spain is doing well.)”⁹ This assertion, whether based on concrete evidence or not, could be a type of strategy used to convince the electorate that the politician’s party is doing a proper job. *Commissives* are also an important part of political discourse, especially with regard to promises or future commitments. As politicians undoubtedly have to answer innumerable questions on various aspects of everyday life, promises have to be made regarding assurances for the future. With regard to our corpus, which consists of parliamentary debates and discussions, *directives* play an important role mainly in the form of requests, as a number of questions are asked requiring information. The following is an example taken from our English corpus. Peter Viggers¹⁰ makes a request to a witness, Nigel Smith¹¹, for information, to which the latter complies:

Q20 Peter Viggers: The Office of Government Commerce has been described by a newspaper as a shadow of its former self. It had a very grand mission statement to improve efficiency across government and now it is a buying department. Can you summarise for us the key activities for which the OGC will now be responsible?

Mr Smith: Yes. Really there are three major areas. The first is getting better value government procurement spend from third parties. That totals about £125-150 billion. Of that about £75 billion is on common goods and services

⁹ Comment made in a political speech in Avila, Spain, 1997.

¹⁰ Conservative MP.

¹¹ Chief Executive of the Office of Government Commerce.

and, obviously, one of the key roles of OGC is to drive the move towards collaboration in terms of procurement right across government, the second area is within the project space, making sure the right projects are there, they are delivered on time and to budget, and the third area is the better utilisation of the Government property estate.

However, it should be mentioned that, although Nigel Smith provides the information required by giving an adequate answer to the question posed, this is not always the case. It will be seen in the analysis of the corpus that witnesses occasionally only comply partly with a request, or not at all, in order to equivocate.

2.4 Impersonalization and ambiguity in politics

2.4.1 Pronoun ambiguity in political discourse

According to Pennycook (1994:175): “There are two main characteristics that define pronouns: (1) they are always political in the sense that they always imply relations of power; and (2) they are always involved in struggles over representation.” For this reason, pronouns such as *I, me, my, you, your, we, us, our, they, them* and *their* are considered to be an important resource used in political discourse. Wilson (1990) emphasizes that the scope of pronouns can vary depending on the speaker’s intention, and is a major tool of persuasion used by politicians. Iñigo Mora, in an article based on the use of the pronoun *we* in communities, observes that (2004:37):

Politicians use the pronoun system to indicate their solidarity-inclusion within and, at the same time, their opposition-exclusion from specific ideological groups or political parties.

However, it is also essential to ascertain, first of all, *who* is being referred to when certain pronouns are used. Bull and Fetzer (2006) observe that: “The meaning of personal pronouns is context dependent and retrievable only by inference, and is therefore less determinate.” The reason for this is that some pronouns entail a wider scope than others. For example, the pronoun *I* can only refer to one person, the speaker. *They* could mean the opposition, or a foreign country or countries. The use of the pronoun *we*, however, is rather more complex. This could refer to members of the speaker’s political party, the government, the whole country, or even a combination of any or all of these. Wilson (1990:62) also argues that the pronoun *we* could even have a political significance outside of one’s own country, and gives the following example, which is an extract from a speech made by Margaret Thatcher:

I am prepared to defend to the utmost the things in which *I* believe and *I* wish to hand on to our children as our forefathers handed them on to us. Of course *I* want to see nuclear disarmament. Indeed *I* should like to see general disarmament as well. *Wouldn’t we all. I* shrink from the horrors of war ... Should *we* more easily get the Soviet side to the table if *we* had already renounced our nuclear weapons? Of course not.¹²

Wilson observes that Thatcher uses the first person pronoun to express her sincerity and personal belief in freedom and dignity. He then points out that there is a pronoun shift from the personal “*I*” to the institutionalized “*we*”, and states that the use of the latter is ambiguous. Wilson argues that Britain’s nuclear capability is not strong enough

¹² Italics by Wilson

to bring the Soviets to the negotiating table, and therefore, it seems likely that Thatcher's use of "we" does not refer to Britain, but rather, the West, or the Allies.

Furthermore, with regard to the pronoun "we", an important point is made by Iñigo Mora (2004:34) when she mentions that:

Two of the main uses of the personal pronoun "we" are the exclusive "we" and the inclusive "we". Whereas the first one excludes the hearer (so "we" = "I" + my group), the second includes it (so "we" = "I" + you).

Sánchez Macarro (2002) and Pennycook (1994) seem to agree with her when they say that *we* is the only personal pronoun that can be inclusive and exclusive at the same time. In this case, the use of the pronoun "we" by a politician in an interview could include the interviewer and the hearers, or could exclude them and allude to the politician and his group.

The use of the pronoun *you* is even more complicated. This pronoun, depending on the intention of the speaker, could refer directly to one person (the interviewer or the politician), or to a group of people, (the politician's political party, the government, or the listening public). In addition, it should not be forgotten that the pronoun *you* can be used as a generic reference, where it means 'people in general'. Wilson (1990) states that the use of *you* is so elastic that it can embrace the whole of humanity. Bull and Fetzer (2006) appear to agree with him when they observe that:

In referring to *Tony Blair*¹³, *Prime Minister*, or even *the Right Honourable Member for Sedgefield*, the particular individual is unambiguously singled out and identified both for himself and the audience. This is not necessarily the case with the personal-pronoun reference *you*, whose conceptual meaning is polyvalent as it can, in principle, refer to any human being in the local and global linguistic contexts.

Moreover, Wilson (1990:56) notes that the pronoun *you* can even refer to the first person, and gives as an example the following extract of a speech made by Margaret Thatcher: "But isn't it amazing how when *you* bring down inflation to a level far below what they said was possible they take it for granted that *anyone* could have done it."¹⁴ Wilson argues that Thatcher is describing her own achievements, although she avoids using the first person pronoun *I*, and draws our attention to the fact that the employment of 'anyone' suggests that she used the pronoun 'you' to refer to herself.

There is no doubt that Wilson has made a valid point, but what is also of particular importance to our study is the observation by Bull and Fetzer (2006) that politicians make strategic use of the vagueness of pronouns as a means of equivocating when answering awkward questions in political interviews. The purpose of this could be to accept, deny or distance themselves from certain political activity.

¹³ Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom and Leader of the Labour Party.

¹⁴ Italics by Wilson

With regard to politicians' use of pronouns for equivocating, the English pronoun *you* is worthy of serious consideration. In T/V languages such as Spanish, French, or German, there are two different pronouns for the second person singular and plural in each of these languages, as we mentioned earlier in this chapter in section 2.2.4. Furthermore, in German and Spanish, there are additional second-person pronouns, which are used for distant forms of address. In German, the pronoun *Sie* is used for deference, while Spanish contains not only one, but *two* other pronouns to express distance between speakers, *usted* in the singular and *ustedes* in the plural. Since the English language only possesses one pronoun, *you*, as the equivalent of all of the second person pronouns of the other languages, politicians are able to make use of the resulting ambiguity to equivocate in political interviews conducted in English. An example of this can be seen in an extract of the following interview presented by Bull and Fetzer (2006:18):

(Tony Blair/David Dimbleby 1997)

DD: Mr Blair in this election you're asking the electorate to put their trust in you *the the new Blair* isn't there a problem that there is an old Blair who believed quite different things which makes it rather difficult for people to trust the new one?

TB: No I don't agree at all I mean we have been through a big process of change and modernization in the Labour Party that is absolutely true but it's been a process of change that I think has been well worth undertaking and as you probably know throughout my time in the Labour Party I've wanted to move the Labour Party on from positions it's held in the past in order to get the proper modernized Labour Party that we have today New Labour is very much what I believe in it's very much my own creation

In this extract, the pronoun "you" refers to Tony Blair personally, as the interviewer addresses him as "Mr Blair". However, Blair equivocates intentionally because the "we" in his answer obviously involves the Labour Party.

Bull and Fetzer (2006:34) conclude their study by analyzing why politicians make use of pronominal shifts in order to equivocate, and put forward the following reasons:

- (1) To avoid personal criticism.
- (2) To avoid awkward choices.
- (3) To avoid appearing immodest.

With regard to the first reason, in the extract cited above between Blair and David Dimbleby, the Prime Minister avoids charges of hypocrisy and inconsistency by using the collective pronoun "we", thereby involving the Labour Party or the government to justify his actions.

The second reason is highlighted in the following interview between William Hague¹⁵ and Jonathan Dimbleby (2001):

JD: Let me come back to the question just put to you. Margaret Thatcher says memorably 'never, never, never'. John Major today says that he's never been a never man. Do you agree with her or him?

WH: Well, clearly *they* are both able to support the policy we are putting forward in this election.

JD: yeah, of course we

WH: keep the pound for next parliament

JD: Well that's irrelevant. I'm asking you whether you agree with her or whether you agree with him?

WH: Well, I agree with keeping the pound. And so I don't put it in either of those terms

In response to the question about whether the United Kingdom should agree to implement the Euro, which could be understood as being directed at him personally, William Hague uses the collective pronoun "we": "... they are both able to support the policy we are putting forward ...", thus involving the Conservative Party as a whole. He also equivocates by failing to say whether he agrees with the opinion of Margaret Thatcher, or John Major. The interviewer then repeats the question in order to force the politician to choose an alternative: "I'm asking you whether you agree with her or whether you agree with him?" However, Hague, although he changes the type of footing by using a first person pronoun, continues to equivocate because he still does not provide an answer to the question posed: "... I agree with keeping the pound." In this way, he avoids the choice of agreeing with the views of his party predecessors on the European currency.

The third reason proposed by Bull and Fetzer (2006:34) as to why politicians use the ambiguity of pronouns as a means of equivocation is to avoid appearing immodest. This can be seen in the following extract, where Paddy Ashdown is being interviewed by Jeremy Paxman¹⁶ (1997):

JP: But in nineteen ninety-two you were able to present yourself as a fresh reasonably vigorous king of erm alternative that role's now been taken by Labour Party new young leader talks about a young Britain a young Britain a new Britain where do you fit in?

PA: Well we fit in because we've got the policies that this country needs ...

¹⁵ Former Leader of the Conservative Party and former Leader of the Opposition.

¹⁶ English broadcaster and journalist.

There is little doubt that the question is directed to Paddy Ashdown personally, with the use of the reflexive pronoun “yourself”. However, the politician evades giving an answer through a pronominal shift with the use of “we”, which is seen as referring to the Labour Party as a whole.

In conclusion, while Bull and Fetzer (2006) have undoubtedly made an accurate analysis of how political agents often make use of the ambiguity of the first person plural and the second person pronouns in order to equivocate, it is arguable that this is not always necessarily the case. The following example is taken from our corpus, where a witness, Jon Cunliffe¹⁷, responds to a question posed by Peter Viggers:

Q14 Peter Viggers: Can I ask the lead witness from each of your groups, how would you define, in simple terms, financial stability? What are you seeking with financial stability?

Mr Cunliffe: I think you are seeking to ensure that the financial system can operate, can play the role that it needs to play in the economy as a whole.

It could be assumed with a reasonable degree of certainty that the pronoun “you” in the question is used to refer to the witnesses personally. In his answer, Jon Cunliffe uses a pronominal shift, as he changes this pronoun to the impersonal “you”. Nevertheless, there is no attempt to equivocate, as a satisfactory response is given.

2.4.2 The passive voice: a strategy used to decline responsibility.

The passive voice is a syntactical device which can be used by speakers to shift a listener’s attention and responsibility attributes. As opposed to the active voice, the passive allows the possibility of omitting the agent or doer of the action. In normal language, there is a tendency to omit the agent if it is obvious, unknown or unimportant, as in the following examples:

- (1) Violent demonstrators were arrested. (The agent is obvious: the police).
- (2) Important documents have been stolen. (The agent is unknown).
- (3) Strawberries are grown in Lepe. (The agent is unimportant).

As far as political discourse is concerned, political speakers may use the passive voice with the omission of the agent in order to avoid giving or taking blame or responsibility for an action. Shifts in the focus of responsibility in a political speech could be said to be carried out for the following reasons:

- (1) To avoid being personally responsible for any action taken.
- (2) Instead of placing blame on any one person, this could be extended to the party or the government as a whole.

¹⁷ Managing Director, International Finance, at the Treasury

The typical passive sentence “Mistakes were made”, where a speaker acknowledges that a certain situation was not handled correctly, but tries to evade personal responsibility, could serve to illustrate the first reason. Some politicians, notably President Nixon¹⁸, use this expression to evade the responsibility of wrongdoings made by their respective governments. The following extract from our corpus is an example of the second case:

Q2 Chairman: We have got double vision for each institution, but if one person from your institution can answer the questions, that will comply with our target of finishing by half past eleven at the latest. The Memorandum of Understanding has recently changed. What were the main changes and why were they brought about?

Mr Cunliffe: It was changed, I think, to bring it more up-to-date with the operating experience of the years since 1997 and the changing circumstances.

The Chairman of the Treasury Committee uses the passive voice in the question posed to the witness, John Cunliffe: “What were the main changes and why were they brought about?” The witness also uses the same structure in his reply: “It was changed, I think ...”, and thus does not incriminate anyone with the responsibility for changes carried out in the Memorandum.

In this chapter, we have examined various strategies used by political speakers to avoid answering awkward questions in parliamentary sessions and debates. We shall now proceed to examine in some detail the principles of equivocation in discourse.

¹⁸ Former President of the United States of America.

CHAPTER 3: EQUIVOCAL COMMUNICATION, THE THEORY OF FACE, AND FACE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Equivocal communication

3.1.1 What is equivocation?

In this section, we will attempt, first and foremost, to define *equivocal communication*, or, in other words, the vague or imprecise use of language. Goss and Williams (1973) state that: "Equivocation is deliberate vagueness. It is a rhetorical device used purposefully." Hamilton and Mineo seem to agree with them when they define equivocation as "... the intentional use of imprecise language." (1998:3). Bavelas et al. (1990:28) observe that "equivocation is non-straightforward communication; it appears ambiguous, contradictory, tangential, obscure or even evasive." These authors also propose that:

... although an individual equivocates, he or she is not the cause of equivocation. Rather, equivocation is the result of the individual's communicative situation. Equivocation is avoidance; it is the response chosen when all other communicative choices in the situation would lead to negative consequences. (1990:54)

In other words, people tend to equivocate because they find themselves immersed in what Bavelas et al. (1990) term an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*, (referred to by Bull 2008 as a *communicative conflict*), in which they are confronted with a question to which all the possible replies may have negative consequences, but where, nevertheless, a reply is expected.

Bavelas et al. use Haley's model (1959) as a means of measuring equivocation. According to this principle, a message should contain four basic elements of interpersonal communication: *I* (sender) am saying *this* (content) to *you* (receiver) in this *situation* (context). Bavelas et al. (1990:33) explained these elements as follows:

- (1) Sender: To what extent is the message *the speaker's own opinion*?
- (2) Content: How clear is the message in terms of *what is being said*?
- (3) Receiver: To what extent is the message *addressed to the other person*?
- (4) Context: To what extent is this a *direct answer to the question*?

Equivocation is assumed to occur when one or more of these elements is/are incongruent or their meaning is obscured. In terms of *Sender*, a message could be equivocal if it is not clear whether the response can be understood as being the speaker's own opinion, as in the following exchange between a lecturer and a university student¹⁹:

¹⁹ Example taken from personal experience.

Student: What did you think of my paper?

Lecturer: The tribunal said that it contained a few errors, but it was generally acceptable.

In this example, the lecturer does not give her personal opinion, but indeed that of the tribunal as a whole, of which she is a member. With regard to *Content*, a response may be contradictory, vague or obscure, as in the following piece of dialogue:

Mary: What are you doing tonight?

John: Well, I might watch the football on tv, ah well, there's a good film on at the cinema, maybe I'll go ...

In this case, the second speaker's response is vague because he does not decide clearly between two alternatives. The reply is therefore equivocal in terms of clarity. However, a response can still be equivocal even though a clear answer to the question is given. The element in question here is the fourth point, *Context*. This sometimes occurs in political interviews where a politician's reply may be coherent, but may be in response to a totally different question posed by the interviewer. This can be seen in the following humorous example, which occurs during breakfast between two people who have met for the first time:

Man: Do you believe in free love?

Woman: I prefer bacon and eggs ... to rolls, I mean.

Man: You're not answering my question.

The woman obviously equivocates in order to escape from a potentially embarrassing situation. Finally, in terms of *Receiver*, an utterance may be equivocal if it is not clear who the addressee is, for example:

Politician: It is possible that mistakes may have been made ...

Interviewer: So what are you going to do about it?

In the interviewer's question, it is not clear whether the pronoun "you" refers to the politician, his political party, or both.

Bavelas et al. (1990), by means of a series of experiments in which communicative conflicts were described, showed that conflictual situations received a significantly greater number of equivocal responses than non-conflictual situations. Bull and Meyer (1993) also conducted a similar study, where they distinguished thirty different ways in which politicians failed to give a satisfactory reply to a question. A typology was developed which will be examined in detail in Chapter 4.

3.1.2 Why does equivocation occur?

Ambiguity or vagueness in the use of language is often present in everyday communication, and can be seen to occur in private conversations, publicity campaigns, and, more importantly for the purposes of this study, political discourse. As we mentioned in the previous sub-section of this chapter, equivocation is brought about in a situation referred to by Bavelas et al. (1990: 56) as an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*, a context in which an individual is forced to make a choice between two unpleasant alternatives. Such a conflict arises in certain common everyday situations where we need to choose between giving a response which is false but kind, and another which is true but hurtful. For example, when we receive an unwanted or unsuitable present, we want to avoid hurting a person's feelings, and at the same time look appreciative and happy about the gesture. A suitable comment here could be: "Thank you, that was really thoughtful", which serves the dual purpose of being appreciative and not making a negative comment. Another case could be when a teacher is asked to write a recommendation for a student who may be a very affable person, but whose standard of work is questionable. This creates a conflict between doing one's duty and being helpful to the student. The teacher may write something of an uncompromising nature such as, "Mr X was involved in many difficult situations", a comment which also evades negative remarks. In the political sphere, a politician could find himself or herself in a situation where the answer to a certain question will please some voters but alienate others. He or she would then be required to use equivocation in order to emerge from the conflict unscathed. Thus, it can be seen that equivocation is a phenomenon which evades giving direct answers with the aim of avoiding negative consequences which could arise in a given situation.

Equivocal language occurs in many commonplace situations such as the home, the workplace, the street, a hospital, or, in a more complex one, for example, the political arena. Hamilton and Mineo (1998:5) observe that:

Equivocation has become a popular communicative strategy for several reasons. We live at a time of heightened sensitivity, vast interconnectedness, and rampant apprehension: Our threshold for taking offense has dropped; a message can be instantly disseminated to millions of people; and uttering the wrong words can lead to hyperlitigation, explosive discontent, or even intercontinental humiliation. ... The major advantage of precise language is that it enhances the clarity of the message by increasing comprehension of message content. Consequently, linguistic specificity and message clarity allow receivers to more easily identify the source's position on an issue. But what can be advantageous in some context may be disadvantageous in others.

Hamilton (1998) suggests that an ambiguous message can enhance moderation and soften opinion in situations where source and receiver disagree. Moreover, imprecise

language may enable the source to deceive a receiver, where a clear message might reveal the source to be dishonest. Also, vague language can facilitate a polite exchange between source and receiver, where a precise message may be face-threatening. There is little doubt that the concept of *face*, which will be discussed in some detail in section 3.2 of this chapter, is in many cases inextricably linked to the equivocation phenomenon. More importantly, for the purposes of this dissertation, it is of central importance in political interviews, because it is frequently, if not always, the source of the *avoidance-avoidance conflicts* identified by Bavelas et al. (1988, 1990).

3.1.3 Equivocation in the political context

3.1.3.1 How politicians equivocate

As we mentioned in the previous section, equivocal messages help to enhance values accepted by most human beings in everyday situations, such as avoiding both lying and causing harm to relationships between people. On the other hand, it is important to point out that, in the political world, many (if not all) politicians deliberately use the equivocation phenomenon for their own self-interest and that of their political party. Nevertheless, as we observed in section 3.1.1, political representatives are frequently placed in an *avoidance-avoidance conflict*, where, although all possible replies to a particular question may have negative consequences, a reply is still expected. Another difficult situation for politicians is the pressure of time limits. If a political agent is required to give a brief answer to a complex question, he or she is faced with the dilemma of having to choose between giving a short but incomplete answer, and appearing long-winded and evasive. Another complicated situation could arise if, for instance, a politician is asked to comment on an issue, and by doing so would reveal confidential information. In this case, an awkward position arises where he or she would either have to reveal a secret or conceal the information, both of which could have negative consequences. Furthermore, an interviewee could be asked a question for which he or she lacks adequate knowledge. In this circumstance, the politician may find it preferable to invent an answer, rather than acknowledge ignorance. Taking all of this into account, although politicians often tend to appear slippery and evasive, or never able to give a straight answer or say clearly what they mean, it is, in the many cases, arguable that they indulge in equivocation because they are confronted with a high proportion of conflictual questions in political interviews. This circumstance gives support to the view expressed by Bavelas et al. (1990) that, while it is individuals who indulge in equivocation, it is important to take into account the situational context in which the equivocation occurs. Bavelas et al. argue that the nature of the political interview is precisely what creates the pressure which forces politicians to equivocate.

With regard to political interviews, there is no doubt that historical changes have led to a shift in the balance of power between interviewers and politicians. In the early 1950s, before the full-scale use of television, politicians controlled the agenda of political interviews. Questions were agreed on beforehand, and this allowed political agents the possibility of making statements on policy, while at the same time avoiding being confronted with awkward questions. However, by the late 1950s, as a result of the tremendous increase in television audience, it was the politicians who wanted to make use of media coverage in order to influence voters. This allowed interviewers more authority to set the agenda and pose challenging questions. Sir Robin Day (1989), the television interviewer, notes that in the 1980s the political interview underwent a further change. He maintained that political interviews again became a source of

propaganda for politicians, but this time because they had become very skilled in avoiding difficult questions.

Earlier in this section we stated that there is a general public opinion that politicians are evasive, and are often unable to give a straight answer to a straight question, and there does seem to be a great deal of empirical evidence to support this view. A study conducted by Bull and Meyer (1993), which involved the analysis of eight political interviews from the 1987 British General Election showed a high rate of equivocation by the politicians interviewed. Margaret Thatcher gave a satisfactory reply to only 37% of the interviewer's questions, while Neil Kinnock replied to only 39%. Harris (1991) carried out a similar analysis of interviews involving the same politicians with comparable results, where direct answers to questions posed formed only 39% of the politicians' responses. Harris's study also included an analysis of other types of question/answer sequences such as court discourse, police/suspect interrogation, medical discourse, and police/member of the public interaction, and she discovered that the rate of indirect answers from politicians was about 37%, more than double the percentage of any of the other respondent groups. Other studies have been carried out which demonstrate that politicians employ various kinds of strategies to avoid answering face-threatening questions. In the following two subsections we shall examine two of the main strategies used in this regard, *agenda shifting* and *reformulations*.

3.1.3.2 Agenda-shifting procedures

Greatbatch (1986) discusses in some detail the system of turn-taking in British political interviews, where interviewers have considerable control over the agenda of the interview. According to this system, the interviewer asks the questions, and the interviewee should limit himself or herself to answering them. Moreover, Clayman (1989) points out that the termination of news interviews is also affected by the pattern of turn-taking. Since interviewees should speak only when required to do so, an interview could be terminated in unilateral fashion by the interviewer. However, during an interview, politicians may resort to what Greatbatch (1986) refers to as *agenda-shifting* procedures, which enable the interviewee to change the topic of conversation either before or after giving a reply to the question posed. With regard to this, he identifies the following:

AS1²⁰ **Pre-answer agenda-shifting:** Interviewees produce *violative talk* prior to answering an interviewer's question. In other words, the interviewee directs the conversation in such a way that it allows him or her to talk about an issue which is irrelevant to the interviewer's question. For example (Greatbatch 1986: 442-443)²¹:

Int: So in fact that clause has now {got two words}

JN: {Now says serious}s

Int: {se} rious and substan{tia:l}

JN: {Yes} {Yes} that's right.

Int: *hhh Onna what implications from your point of view

OM: mhm

Int: does that make

OM: 1 -> I'd like to make my own position clear first of all.

2-> I support the '67 act. *hhhh And abortion to be allowed on those particular grounds. *h I don't believe we have abortion on request, still less do we have abortion on demand.

3-> *hhh The implications of the words serious and substantially *hhh are very grave indeed ... (continues with answer)

²⁰ Each agenda shifting procedure is given a code number, in the same order in which they appear in Greatbatch's article (1986)

²¹ In the examples taken from Greatbatch's article (1986), speakers are designated as follows: "Int" for interviewer, followed by the initials of the public officials.

Greatbatch explains that OM begins by producing an object (arrow 1), then indulges in violative talk (arrow 2), and finally indicates that she will produce an answer to the question posed (arrow 3).

AS2 Post-answer agenda-shifting: Interviewees produce violative talk in second position. This shifting may be accomplished *overtly* or *covertly*. In accomplishing an agenda-shift overtly, interviewees project the production of violative talk, and then establish a topical agenda for that talk. For example (Greatbatch 1986:444):

Int: = Roy Hattersley from your point of view – Arthur Scargill
you can come back in a *moment* if you want to er about
what Neil Kinnock said. = But from *your* point of view
Roy Hattersley *hhh *is* it right to interpret this as
the beginning of a move back to the right. = This
er victory by such a narrow margin of {Dennis Healey}

RH: 1 -> { *hh No } I
don't believe it i:s. In some ways I wish I could say
that. *hhh But I don't believe it i:s. I *believe* it's
a *mo:ve* back *hhh to the broad based *tolerant* representative
Labour Part(h)y, *hhh the Labour Party in which Neil Kinnock and I: who
disagree on a number of policy issue:s
*hh can argue about them *hh without accusing each other of treachery:, *hhh
without suggesting that one
or the other of us is playing into the Tories *ha:nds*. *hhh
2 -> And let me say something about the next year because that was your
original *question*.
3 -> *hhh I think Tony Benn would be personally extremely
foolish to sta:nd for the deputy leadership again?
*hhhh Because I think the moo:d of the Labour Party
Is not wanting to go for the: (.) bitter and sterile
Wrangles, *hhh but to unite (0.2) to fight the Tories ...
(continues)

Here, the politician answers the question (arrow 1), then establishes a different topical agenda (arrow 2), and finally talks to that agenda (arrow 3).

The following extract shows an example of an interviewee achieving an agenda shift covertly, in other words, without any explicit marking as in the previous dialogue (Greatbatch 1986:444):

Int: If there was a change brought in er – to change the law Mr Orme would the
Labour opposition vote against it?

SO: 1->*hhhh Well we would oppose it or an'

2-> I cannot see this government contemplating this at the moment, it's the sort of thing that perhaps er *hhh some Conservative members *hhh talk about in the corridor, = there's been a few letters in the Telegraph, *hhh but w- in the real world of politics er this would be: er very divisive indeed.

(Interview cut)

In this case, the interviewee, having answered the question (arrow 1), shifts away from the topical agenda established by that question (arrow 2), that is the issue of whether the Labour opposition would vote against a change in the referenced law. He then focuses on a different question, whether the government would contemplate implementing such a change. Greatbatch observes that the shift is not explicitly marked, but rather is done covertly, in other words, as a syntactic continuation of the sentence in which the answer is given.

AS3 Non-production of answers: Interviewees ignore the topical agenda established by the interviewer and proceed to direct their talk along an alternative track. It could be said that this procedure bears some similarity to type E1 (Ignores the question) of Bull and Mayer's (1993) typology (see Chapter 4, Section 4.3), where the politician makes no attempt to answer the question posed by the interviewer, and simply continues talking about a different issue. For example²²:

Q72 Mr Todd (Labour MP): Is that not perhaps an experience which tells us something about shared services across government as a whole? Getting a clearly defined scope that does not and yet has some value is a pretty repetitive challenge which one sees presented regularly in government. Is that not right?

Mr Smith (Chief Executive of OGC): If I could comment generally, I believe that looking at specific requirements, if we take the ICT requirement of government, I think what you need to do is to have a look at the outcomes you are trying to get rather than specify the product which you want, and, in my experience, that is a mistake which many organisations fall into. If you look at the structure, and one of the areas I spent a lot of time since I came trying to bring myself up to speed on is, indeed, the interaction between OGC and its category management teams, which includes ICT, and the CIO Council, i.e. the IT experts of government: because the important thing is that you actually have a strategy for where your technology is going, you have a forward funnel of visibility and you have a link with the supply industry. One of the things that I think I have learnt over the years in IT is that if you go out and look at buying, for example, laptops you will miss a trick. What you are actually looking to do is say: "We need a service, we need an outcome", and go to the supply industry and say, "Okay, come up with innovative solutions of how you will provide a solution to

²² Example taken from our corpus.

that outcome." That, I think, is something which has started within OGC and, in my view, that is the way forward.

In this case, Nigel Smith does not answer either of the two questions posed by Mark Todd, but instead makes general comments about a completely different issue.

AS4 Interviewees deny the relevance of a topical agenda established by the interviewer. This is achieved by indicating that an answer will not be forthcoming, introducing an alternative agenda, and then talking about it. This point seems comparable with type E4a of Bull and Mayer's (1993) typology (see Chapter 4, Section 4.2), where the politician or interviewee attacks the question, suggesting that it does not deal with the relevant issue. For example²³:

Q22 Peter Viggers (Conservative MP): The Transforming Government Procurement - First 100 Days document in January this year, I understand, refers to "new powers" to require departments to use your frameworks and collaborative deals. Are these legal powers and, if not, what is their status?

Mr Smith (Chief Executive of OGC): I could not really say whether they are legal powers, but certainly the powers relate to comply or explain principally in the area of collaborative procurement. Could I perhaps just say, though, that my approach is that powers are really not the issue. I believe what is the issue is getting a common grip of what needs to be done across government, and that will be through engaging the spending departments in getting those targets achieved.

In answer to Peter Viggers's question, Nigel Smith states that "... powers are not really the issue.", then goes on to give his opinion on an alternative topic.

To conclude this sub-section, it is worth mentioning that while agenda-shifting manoeuvres such as those described above allow politicians a certain amount of control in a broadcast interview, they are unlikely to pass unnoticed by interviewers. Greatbatch (1986) points out that interviewers are now prepared to sanction interviewees who depart from the topical line established by their questions. This aspect will not be examined in detail, as the main focus of this dissertation is not on how interviewers deal with the various strategies used by politicians to evade answering their questions, but rather on how such evasion is brought about. We shall now go on to examine another technique known as *reformulations*, which is also used by politicians in news interviews and press conferences.

²³ Example taken from our corpus.

3.1.3.3 Reformulations in news interviews

Clayman (1993) observes that a technique used by politicians in order to equivocate is to reformulate a question posed by the interviewer, thus creating a change of focus and evading the more challenging aspects of the original question. According to Clayman, reformulations have basically four features:

(a) They occur within a discrete unit of talk which is syntactically disjoined from the ensuing response. In this case, it is packaged within a separate sentence, although the reformulation could occupy a distinct clausal unit, as occurs in the following example (arrow 2)²⁴:

JRN: 1-> On that particular point, you have been briefed in some detail on the evidence in the Agnew problem. You are also a lawyer with some expertise. You could tell us -

RN: Some would question that.

JRN: whether there is any substance to Mr Agnew's charges that this is a frivolous investigation, that it is a frameup, and that it is in fact a smear.

RN: 2-> Mister Mollenhoff, when you say that I have been briefed on the charges,

3-> I should respond to that by saying that I have not heard the witnesses. I have only been briefed on what is believed the witnesses might testify to.

4-> As far as the charges are concerned, they are serious and not frivolous. ... (Clayman 1993:164)

(b) They refer to the preceding question or some aspect of it, and paraphrase or re-present what is said. As paraphrases, formulations recast (they do not have to be a word-for-word repetition) the whole or part of what the interviewer has said. A reformulation could also consist of a word, one part of a two-part question, or a statement introduced as preliminary background information by the interviewer.

In the example given in (a) above. Nixon first reformulates the preliminary item (arrow 2), and then proceeds with a response (arrow 3).

²⁴ In the transcripts provided by Clayman (1993), speakers are designated as follows: "JRN" for journalist-questioner, and first and last initials for public officials.

(c) They are asserted as prefaces to further talk. In this instance, Clayman observes, the reformulation does not contain an interrogative format, nor do the interviewees wait for confirmation from the interviewer.

Commenting on the example seen in (a) above, Clayman observes that the affirmative "... you say that ..." (arrow 2) is used instead of the interrogative form "Are you saying that ...?", and that the respondent does not wait for confirmation, but proceeds with further talk without hesitation (arrow 3).

(d) Subsequent talk initially builds on the reformulation rather than the original question. The ensuing talk responds to the reformulated version of the question rather than the original question. For example (Clayman 1993:162):

JRN: Senator Quayle (.) in recent years thuh Reagan administration has scaled back thee activities:

of thee Occupational Safety and Health.

Administration .hhh prompted in part by Vice.

President Bush's task force on regulatory relief. .hhhh Thee uh budget for thee agency has been cut by twenty percent, (0,2) and thuh number of inspections at manufacturing plants .hhh has been reduced by thirty three percent. .hhhh This's had a special effect in this area where many people work in thuh meat packing industry, .hh which (.) has a far: higher rate of serious injuries than almost any other injury, .hh a rate which appears to've been rising: although we're not really su:re .hh bec= some- some o`thuh lar:gest companies have allegedly been falsifying thuh reports. .hhhh

Would you: uh (0.5) acknowledge to thuh hundreds of injured and maimed people, (.) in Nebraska (.) Iowa: and elsewhere in thuh Midwest .hhh that in this case deregulation may have gone too far:, and thuh government should reassert itself in protecting workers rights

(0.8)

DQ: 1-> .hhh Thuh premise of your question John: .hh is that somehow this administration has been la::x .hh in enforcement . .h of thee OSHA regulations. .hh

2-> And I disagree with that. (0.3) And I'll tell ya why:. .hh If you wanna: Ask some business people. (1.2) that I talk to periodically (0.8) they complain:. (1.2) about th` tough enforcement (0.7) of this administration, .hhh and furthermore, (0.6) lemme tellya this for thuh record. (1.1) When we have foun:d violations in this administration. (1.0) there has not only been (0.5) tough enforcement. (1.2) but there have been: thuh most severe: penalties .hh thuh lar::gest penalties in thuh history. .hh (0.9) of thuh Department of

Labor (0.2) have been levied (0.2) when we- these evolutions have been found. ...

Clayman points out that, in this instance, when Quayle (initials DQ) responds “And I disagree with that”, the word “that” has as its referent the reformulated version of the question, rather than the original question. Moreover, in the example given in (a) above, Nixon rejects the presupposition that he was briefed on the evidence of the Agnew investigation, and avoids addressing the issue raised in the original question, which asked him to comment on the Agnew investigation. Clayman emphasizes, quite correctly, that these examples show that the interviewee’s response builds upon and is adapted to the reformulated version instead of the original question.

Why do politicians and other public officials indulge in reformulations instead of answering questions in a straightforward manner? Clayman (1993:165) suggests that: “... reformulations appear in environments where the relationship between what the question is seeking to obtain, and what the response actually provides is potentially problematic.” Two main objectives of question reformulations are: (a) to manage a response trajectory, and (b) to create a shift in the topical agenda. The former may occur when the question is particularly complex and the interviewee is not addressing the most recent issue under discussion. Sacks (1987) notes that this violates the contiguity principle. For this reason, Clayman observes, interviewees “... provide advance warning that something other than a standard response trajectory will be followed.” (1993:166).

In Section 3.1 of this chapter an attempt has been made to give a general outline of how and why politicians evade or try to evade giving direct answers to questions in political interviews. The main theme of political equivocation will be further discussed with a thorough examination of the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), in Chapter 4. In contrast to what occurs with regard to the equivocation typology proposed by Bull and Meyer, which deals principally with non-replies to interviewer’s questions, it is interesting to note that in both the agenda-shifting procedures by Greatbatch (1986) and the question reformulations by Clayman (1993), politicians may or may not provide an answer to the question posed. In the latter cases, although the political agent may give a satisfactory response, he or she does attempt to direct the interview towards his or her own interests.

In the following section, the concept of *face*, which is inextricably linked to questioning in political interviews, will be discussed.

3.2 The concept of face and face management.

3.2.1 Face: basic notions.

The concept of *face* was originally proposed by Goffman (1955, 1967) in an important essay on facework. This author defined face as "... the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact." (1967:5). Goffman specified three kinds of facework: an avoidance process (avoiding potentially face-threatening acts), a corrective process (performing a variety of redressive acts, and what he called making points (the aggressive use of facework). He argues that people, in addition to protecting their own face during social interaction, are also under an obligation to defend the face of others. Another point made by Goffman is that in many relationships people share a face. This means that in the presence of a third party, a face-threatening act on the part of one person could cause embarrassment to others.

Goffman's analysis (1955, 1967) was later developed by Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987), who proposed their *theory of politeness*. The latter emphasize that *face* is important in all cultures, and can be lost, maintained or enhanced. The three authors consider the preservation of face to be a primary condition for social interaction to take place. This is because, comment Brown and Levinson, "Some acts are intrinsically threatening to face and thus require 'softening' ..." (1978:24). These authors distinguish between what they term *positive face* and *negative face*, and give the following definitions of each:

negative face: the want of every competent adult member that his actions be unimpeded by others.

positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others. (1987:62).

The basic idea, therefore, is that all individuals possess a public self image, which they seek to safeguard, and good social relations require us to protect the self image of others. This can be said to be a minimum requirement for successful communication. However, communication quite often entails situations which create conflicts, referred to by Brown and Levinson (1987:65) as *face-threatening acts* (FTAs). They make a distinction between acts which threaten the addressee's negative and positive face, and also between those which offend both types of face of the speaker. Acts which threaten the addressee's negative face are those which impede the latter's freedom of action, and could include orders, requests, threats and criticism. On the other hand, acts which offend the hearer's positive face indicate that the speaker does not care about the addressee's feelings or wants. Examples of these are expressions of disapproval, criticism, and accusations. With regard to the speaker, FTAs which offend his or her negative face may include excuses and promises, while those which cause a

positive face threat are the ones which result in self-humiliation, such as apologies, confessions, or admissions of guilt. Brown and Levinson (1987) also propose a number of positive and negative politeness strategies for dealing with positive and negative face.

We shall not discuss positive and negative politeness strategies in detail, but instead, we will concentrate on certain FTAs which have particular relevance to discourse in political interviews. In the following sub-section, we will see how some of the FTAs examined by these authors are related to strategies used by political agents in news interviews.

3.2.2 Face in the political arena.

3.2.2.1 Face threat in news interviews.

Jucker emphasizes the fact that positive face is of vital importance for news interviews: "It is clear that what is primarily at issue in news interviews is the interviewee's positive face." (1986:71). He points out that the political or financial survival of interviewees depends on their positive face being sustained or enhanced during an interview. This is because, he argues, "Politicians depend on a majority of people in their own constituency appreciating their self-image as conveyed in an interview." (1986:71). On the other hand, Jucker suggests that the concept of negative face is of less importance because "The interviewee has undertaken to be publicly questioned on a certain topic, and therefore his/her negative face is for the time being to some extent put out of force." (1986:71). However, Bull and Fetzer seem to make a valid point when they state that: "But negative face is also important. ... politicians may suffer serious potential face damage through responses to questions which circumscribe future freedom of action." (2010:161). For example, in order to protect himself or herself against possible future face threat, a politician should refrain from making statements which could have negative consequences at a later point in time. Bull (1998) also criticizes Jucker's (1986) typology when he states that it is: "... specific to political interviews, but it focuses principally on the way in which politicians defend their own individual face without reference to the face of the political parties that they represent." Although the aspects of personal-political face and party face discussed by Bull et al. (1996) in the typology which they present overlap in some cases, it could be argued that their study is more complete. As we shall see in the following sub-section of this chapter, Bull et al. examine other aspects of face with regard to political parties, and also mention why politicians need to protect the face of what they term "significant others". Nevertheless, we do consider it pertinent to make a brief reference to Jucker's typology (1986), since, while Bull et al. focus mainly on how political agents defend face, Jucker gives us a basic outline of the type of face-threatening questions which politicians may be confronted with in political interviews.

Jucker (1986:77) gives a list of thirteen ways in which an interviewee's face could be threatened in a political interview:

Future act of BBB²⁵

- (1) commit yourself to do something

BBB's opinion

- (2) state your opinion
- (3) confirm your opinion (presupposing that it is demeaning)
- (4) accept discrepancy between your opinion and your actions
- (5) accept discrepancy between your opinion and reality

Past action associated with BBB

- (6) accept that the reason for doing the action is demeaning
- (7) state that the action is demeaning
- (8) confirm the action
- (9) take responsibility for the action (presupposing that you are responsible)
- (10) justify the action (presupposing that you are responsible)

Other's face

- (11) state that other's face is demeaning

BBB's face

- (12) accept that your own face is demeaning

We shall now proceed to examine some of the examples given by Jucker to support the points proposed in this typology, which we consider to constitute a serious face-threat to the interviewee.

With regard to (1), the interviewer expects the interviewee to commit himself or herself as to whether to do the act or not, as in the following example:

AAA Is it in your mind to invite Mr Tchernenko to come to Britain

BBB well no no don't jump too quickly one of the things if you're doing diplomacy is you must go stage by stage. Now Geoffrey Howe is going to to Moscow er to see Monsieur Gromyko in July.

If the interviewee commits herself, and then subsequently decides not to give the invitation, she could be reminded of her commitment at some point in the future, and would consequently suffer a serious loss of face.

In the group of "opinion", strategies (2) to (5), the interviewee's opinion is required. This constitutes an FTA because, as in (1), he or she is expected to commit

²⁵ The following initials are used by Jucker: AAA (interviewer), and BBB (politician or interviewee).

himself/herself. Strategies (4) and (5) present a much more serious face-threat because they suggest that there is a discrepancy between the interviewee's opinion and some action committed by him/her, and between his/her opinion and reality. For example:

AAA is there not a certain irony though in the fact that you'll be . talking with Mr Botha on the very day when the England rugby team {.8} erm will be playing in a test match in South Africa er: c contrary to the provisions of {3 syll} agreement and very much against the wishes of this Government

BBB I see no irony about it at all . er Mr Botha is over in Europe at that time and we take advantage of his being here to be able to talk to him

The interviewer suggests that there is a discrepancy between the Government's opinion, having expressed being opposed to maintaining sports contacts with South Africa, and its actions, in that the British Prime Minister will have talks with the Prime Minister of South Africa at the same time. Margaret Thatcher vehemently denies this discrepancy, because, if she agrees with the interviewer there would obviously be a significant loss of face for both her and the Government.

Strategies (6) to (11) of Jucker's typology relate to a past action or event for which the interviewee is seen as responsible. If the said action is deemed to have negative consequences, the interviewee would be considered to suffer a loss of face. In strategy (7), according to Jucker, the action is seen as demeaning, and the interviewee is required to confirm whether this is in fact the case. For example:

AAA Mr Heath made the very serious charge that the methods chosen to reduce inflation have been effective mainly by boosting unemployment

BBB well er that's that really is an oversimplification . if indeed you accept the fact and I'm sure Mr Heath would accept the fact . er that we were overmanned, in many of our industries (...)

If the interviewee were unable to deny the consequences of the action, in other words the "boosting of unemployment", the action would be seen to be demeaning, thus resulting in a considerable loss of face. Moreover, Jucker makes an important point when he observes that the use of the term "boost" makes the accusation stronger than if the interviewer had used the word "increase".

Jucker considers strategy (13), "State that your face is demeaning", to be the most direct threat to the interviewee's face. For example:

AAA Prime Minister you say th th that Britain is historically and by inclination pro American but do you accept that there is a majority of people in this country . which is opposed {1.2} to thi s thi deployment of cruise here deploy er: er: opposed to the purpose of trident

BBB {1.0} erm . I see a number o of polls but . I do not think . er when it comes to the majority of people . that the issues have ever been fully and properly explained before the thing is put in polls (...)

In this case, Margaret Thatcher is confronted with the view that the majority of people in Britain do not agree with her position on nuclear defense. The question is extremely face-threatening because it places the Prime Minister in an avoidance avoidance conflict. As Jucker points out, the polls referred to were widely publicized at the time of the interview, which meant that she could not deny what was common knowledge. However, agreeing with the interviewer's proposition would be disastrous, as it would result in a serious loss of face. After some hesitation, observes Jucker, the Prime Minister tries to save her face by suggesting that the basis of the information on which the polls were carried out may not have been altogether accurate.

These observations by Jucker (1986) give us an idea of the type of face-threatening questions which place political agents in situations of conflict. It is now pertinent to discuss the typology proposed by Bull et al. (1996), which explains why politicians are "three-faced".

3.2.2.2 Three aspects of political face. (Bull et al. 1996)

Before we examine the typology on aspects of political face presented by Bull et al. (1996), it would be helpful to mention how certain FTAs discussed by Brown and Levinson (1987:67-68) relate to the need for politicians to safeguard their own self-image, that of their political party, and that of other people or organizations who are important to the party's well-being. The following is a list of the relevant FTAs, all of which are adequately dealt with in Bull et al.'s typology (1996):

- (i) excuses (negative face).
- (ii) apologies (positive face).
- (iii) self-humiliation (positive face).
- (iv) self-contradicting (positive face).
- (v) confessions (positive face).
- (vi) admissions of guilt or responsibility (positive face).

We shall now proceed to summarize the coding system presented by Bull et al. (1996) for the three main components of face which they argue politicians should defend. These authors draw our attention to the following: the politician's own individual face, the face of the political party which they represent, and the face of significant others.

F1²⁶ *Personal-political face* (seven sub-categories)

²⁶ Each type and sub-type of political face mentioned is given a code number, in the same order in which they appear in the typology. (Bull et al. 1996).

- (a) Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about personal competence. A politician may threaten his or her face by excuses, apologies, admissions of guilt or responsibility. For example (Bull et al. 1996)²⁷:

Jeremy Paxman asks John Major: "... isn't all this emphasis on personality a cover for the fact that you haven't got a big idea?"

If John Major answered "yes" to this question, he would be admitting that he has no significant political ideas, and this would be a threat to his own personal competence.

- (b) Failing to present a positive image of self if offered the opportunity. If a politician fails to answer a question which gives him or her the opportunity to present a positive self image, it will reflect badly on him or her, and this can be seen to create a threat to face. For example:

David Frost asks Neil Kinnock: "... can you just give me some specific things these are still frames of how your life will be different after 12 months of Neil Kinnock in Number 10?"

If Neil Kinnock fails to answer this question, it will reflect badly on him, having been given the opportunity to say how things would be different if he became Prime Minister.

- (c) Losing credibility. If a politician makes a statement which is incredible, this will put his or her judgement in doubt, thus creating a threat to face. For example:

Jeremy Paxman asks John 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?'

If John Major answered "yes" to this question, it would ascribe properties to negative campaigning, and consequently raise doubts about his judgement and credibility.

- (d) Contradicting past statements, policies, etc. Politicians are expected to be consistent in their statements and policies. Any inconsistency on their part would constitute a face threat. For example:

David Frost to Neil Kinnock (after the latter has stated that he is not prepared to discuss specific details of the shadow budget): 'And you're not going to increase Corporation Tax?'

²⁷ The examples given are all provided by Bull et al. (1996) and consist of extracts from various political interviews.

If Kinnock answers “yes” or “no” to this question, he will be contradicting his previous statement.

- (e) Personal difficulties in the future. Politicians should avoid making statements which may have a negative effect in the future. For example:

Sir Robin Day asks Paddy Ashdown whether, if John Major lost the General Election: “... he should resign in those circumstances?”

If Paddy Ashdown answers “yes”, this could create difficulties in the future if he had to form a coalition with the Conservatives in the event of a hung Parliament.

- (f) Difficulty in producing/clarifying personal or party beliefs, statements, aims, principles, etc. A politician who fails to give an opinion on a particular issue loses face because this would indicate that he or she has no relevant opinion, or has not given adequate thought to the situation in question. For example:

David Dimbleby asks John Major: “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?”

If John Major does not give a reply to this question, it would indicate uncertainty or reluctance to state what he stands for.

- (g) Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about one’s own public persona. Politicians have a personal image which they need to support in public. For instance, John Major presents himself as softer and more caring than Margaret Thatcher, while Paddy Ashdown cultivates an image associated with forthrightness and integrity, as occupying the moral high ground in contrast to the other two major political parties. For example:

Jeremy Paxman asks Paddy Ashdown: “Are you embarrassed at all about the way in which this whole Liberal Democrat campaign has been hung on you?”

If Paddy Ashdown gives a negative reply to this question, it might imply that he encourages a cult of personality, which would be inconsistent with his self-presentation as a committed democrat, hence undermining his claim to occupy the moral high ground.

F2 Party face (five sub-categories)

- (a) Creating/confirming a negative statement/impression about the party or its policies, actions, statements, aims, principles, etc. (same category as F1a of personal-political face.)

If a politician confirms or creates a negative statement about his or her party through excuses, apologies or admissions of responsibility, he or she threatens the face of the party. For example,

Brian Walden says to John Major: “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 you must have hoped for haven’t you?”

If John Major answers “yes” to this question, he will be admitting the negative situation of the party, and the implication that the Conservatives will not win the election.

- (b) Failing to present a positive image of the party if offered the opportunity. (Same category as F1b of personal-political face.)

If a politician fails to answer a question which gives him or her the opportunity to present a positive image of the party, it will reflect badly on the party, and this can be seen to create a threat to face. For example:

David Frost asks Neil Kinnock: “... can you just give me some specific things these are still frames of how your life will be different after 12 months of Neil Kinnock in Number 10?”

If Neil Kinnock fails to answer this question, it will reflect badly on the Labour Party, as he has been given the opportunity to present a positive image of the party. (This example is a repetition of the one given in F1b, as it affects both the politician’s personal face and the face of the party.)

- (c) Future difficulties for the party. (Same category as F1e of personal-political face.)

Politicians should avoid making statements which could restrict the future freedom of action of his or her party. For example,

David Dimbleby asks John 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 to do some deal with somebody to keep yourself in office?”

If John Major confirms or denies this statement, he will be constraining the future freedom of action of the Conservative Party.

- (d) Contradictions between the party's policies, statements, actions, aims, principles, etc. any inconsistencies exposed in a party's policies, statements or actions can be seen to reflect badly on the party. For example:

Brian Walden asks John Major: "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?"

If John Major confirms this question, he will be contradicting existing Conservative Party policies.

- (e) Creating/confirming a negative assessment of the "state of the nation" (for the party in power only.) Making negative assessments may be seen to reflect badly on the party in power, and would thus constitute a threat to party face. For example,

David frost asks John Major: "... 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?"

If John Major admitted that the recession started in England, it could imply that this was the fault of the government, and it would reflect badly on his own party.

F3 Significant others (seven sub-types)

In addition to defending their personal face and their political party face, politicians need to defend the face of others. These include positively valued others, such as the electorate, colleagues and members of their own party. However, they would not want to support negatively valued others, such as political opponents.

- (a) Not supporting the electorate. Politicians need to be careful not to offend the electorate as a whole. For example:

David Frost asks Paddy Ashdown: "But before proportional representation becomes as it were final there would be a referendum?"

If Paddy Ashdown answered "no" to this question, it could mean that the Liberal Democrats were not prepared to give people any say in what changes would be made to the electoral system.

- (b) Not supporting a significant body of opinion in the electorate (where there is a division of opinion). If there is a significant division of opinion on major issues, a politician may risk offending some portions of the electorate. For example,

Brian Walden asks John Major: "Are you saying that when these people tell the poles 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?"

Should John Major answer "yes" to this question, he would be accusing the "caring voters" as willfully lying.

- (c) Not supporting a colleague. The term colleague is used to refer to members of the Government (for the party in power) or to members of the Shadow Cabinet/spokespeople for those who are not. For example:

Brian Walden in an interview with John Major says: "... 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 'n it?"

If John Major answered "yes" to this question, he would be threatening the face of his then colleague Norman Lamont.

- (d) Not supporting a sub-group of one's own party. Politicians need to be careful not to offend certain sub-groups in their party. For example:

David Dimbleby asks John Major: "But do you think the Conservative Party was wrong to have removed her (i.e. Margaret Thatcher)?"

If John Major answers "yes" to this question, he would offend the Conservatives who voted her out. However, if he answers "no", he also risks offending the Thatcher supporters within the party.

- (e) Not supporting other positively valued people or institutions. Politicians should be careful not to offend other people or institutions who are allies of their party, such as trade unions. For example:

Jeremy Paxman asks Neil Kinnock: "Would sympathy actions be legal or illegal?"

If Neil Kinnock says they would be illegal, he would be offending the trade unions, a valued institution in the Labor Party.

- (f) Not supporting a friendly country. Politicians will not want to offend a friendly country with which their own country has strong financial, commercial or military links. For example:

David Frost asks Neil Kinnock: "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 in Libya, would you be disposed to agree?"

If Neil Kinnock gives a negative answer to this question, he will not be supporting a friendly country, the USA.

- (g) Supporting a negatively valued other. A politician will have to avoid supporting the face of negatively valued others, which could include politicians of opposing parties, or representatives of countries or organizations with which their own country has poor relations. This can be done by withholding praise or by criticizing them. For example,

David Frost asks John Major: "... is there really a shift of opinion towards the Liberal Democrats or is it because they have run a better campaign than you have?"

If John Major confirms either of these two alternatives, he would be praising an opposing party.

With regard to this coding system, Bull et al. (1996) point out that these categories of face-threat may sometimes overlap. For instance, a question can threaten more than one sub-category of a particular type of face. A politician's reply to a question may create or confirm a negative statement both about the politician's personal competence and about the politician's persona. Moreover, it is possible for a question to simultaneously threaten a politician's personal-political face and that of his political party. Both points are demonstrated in the following example (Bull 2008:338-339), taken from a televised interview in the 2005 British general election between Tony Blair, the then prime minister, and the BBC interviewer Jeremy Paxman. Paxman asked Blair: "Do you accept any responsibility at all for the death of Dr. David Kelly?"²⁸ If Blair had replied "yes" to this question, it would have been face-damaging on two counts, because it would have reflected badly both on his own and his government's competence. Nevertheless, what is even more interesting, argues Bull (2008), is the fact that Paxman's question creates a typical communicative conflict. If Blair had answered "no" to the question, he would have appeared to be unsympathetic, thus

²⁸ "Dr David Kelly was a microbiologist and chief scientific officer for the Ministry of Defence. He apparently committed suicide after his identification 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 (the so-called dodgy dossier). Because it was the Ministry of Defence who identified Dr Kelly, the government was widely assumed to bear some responsibility for his death." (Bull 2008:338).

damaging his personal-political face. Furthermore, if he had equivocated, he would also have suffered a loss of face because he would be perceived as being evasive. Therefore, Paxman's question creates a communicative conflict as all three alternatives of reply are face-damaging. Blair finally opted for equivocation, which Bull (2008) suggests was the least face-threatening of the three possibilities.

While the typology provided by Bull et al. (1996) is adequate and creditable, there is another aspect which is worthy of attention. As we mentioned in sub-section 3.2.1, Goffman (1955, 1967) maintains that people, as well as satisfying the need to protect their own self-image, should also defend that of others. As far as the political context is concerned, Bull (2008) points out, quite correctly, that although politicians will logically defend the face of their political colleagues and allies, they would not wish to support that of their opponents. Nevertheless, what Bull has failed to emphasize, is that political speakers not only seek to preserve their own face and avoid supporting that of their opponents, but that they also use strategies to attack the face of the latter. Consequently, while enhancing their own self-image, they indulge in FTAs which damage that of rival politicians and parties. This can occur, not only in news interviews, but also in political debates. In this regard, we have found it necessary to take into account the following points. We have chosen what we consider to be the most relevant FTAs from the list given by Brown and Levinson (1987: 65-6):

1. suggestions and advice (negative face).
2. reminders (negative face).
3. expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule (positive face), complaints, reprimands, accusations and insults (positive face).
4. contradictions or disagreements (positive face).

AF1²⁹ Suggestions and advice

In this case, the politician indicates that his/her political adversary ought to do a certain act, for example³⁰:

ZAPATERO: ¿Cuál fue su actitud en el proceso del 11 de marzo, señor Rajoy? El día antes de las pasadas elecciones afirmó que tenía la convicción moral de que ETA era la autora del 11-M. Está aquí, lo saben todos los españoles que lo dijo. Más tarde llegó a defender con rotundidad que no tenía la más mínima duda de que tarde o temprano aparecerían las conexiones entre Al Qaeda y ETA. En el colmo de la sinrazón, en un momento dado pidió la paralización del procedimiento judicial. Yo tengo la convicción moral de que debería pedirle disculpas a los

²⁹ Each type of speech act mentioned is given a code number, in the same order in which they appear in Brown and Levinson's typology (1987:66).

³⁰ Example taken from the second political debate between José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero, a former President of Spain and the then leader of the Socialist Party (PSOE), and Mariano Rajoy, the then leader of the opposition and the Conservative Party (PP), which took place in 2008 before the General Election.

españoles, señor Rajoy. (What was your attitude regarding the trial related to the terrorist attack of March 11, Mr Rajoy? The day before the last elections you stated that you were morally convinced that ETA³¹ was responsible for 11M³². That is accounted for here. The whole of Spain knows that you said so. Later, you went on to say with absolute assurance that you had no doubt at all that sooner or later links between Al Qaeda³³ and ETA would come to light. What was totally outrageous was that at one point you asked for the trial to be stopped. I am morally convinced that you should apologise to the people of Spain, Mr Rajoy.)

RAJOY: Lo que hicimos nosotros en el 11-M fue detener a todos los autores. Y por eso se pudo celebrar el juicio en su día y por eso pudieron ser condenados. Si dependiéramos de ustedes, probablemente no se hubiera celebrado el juicio. Yo creo que quien debe pedir perdón a los españoles es usted por sus múltiples mentiras. (What we did with regard to 11M was arrest the people responsible. And that is why the trial was able to take place when it did, and that is why they could be convicted. If you had been involved, the trial probably would not have taken place. I think you are the one who should apologise to the people of Spain for your great number of lies.)

Zapatero asks Rajoy to explain his attitude with regard to the terrorist attacks in Madrid in 2004, and states that he should apologise to the people of Spain. Rajoy, in addition to justifying the action taken by his government, attacks Zapatero's negative face by suggesting that it is he who should apologise.

AF2 Reminders

The speaker indicates that the hearer should remember to do a certain act, for example³⁴:

ZAPATERO Hace unos días, un conjunto de personas: investigadores, rectores, gente de la cultura, nombres tan representativos como Miquel Barceló, como Serrat, como Sabina, expresaron su apoyo a mi candidatura. Y usted les llamó "untados". (A few days ago, a group of people consisting of researchers, university rectors, people from the world of culture, such distinguished names as Miquel Barceló and Sabina, gave support to my electoral campaign. And you said "they had been bribed".)

RAJOY: ¿Cómo? (What?)

ZAPATERO: Les llamó "untados" a las personas de la cultura, de la investigación que habían salido apoyando mi candidatura. Señor Rajoy, un país que desprecia a

³¹ Terrorist organization in Spain.

³² Terrorist attacks carried out in Madrid (11 March, 2004).

³³ Global militant Islamic organization.

³⁴ Example taken from the first political debate between Zapatero and Rajoy. (2008).

sus profesores, a sus creadores, es un país que vuelve la espalda al futuro. Y un político que incurre en ese desprecio a la gente de la cultura y de la investigación no merece presidir un país. (You said that the people from the world of culture and research were bribed, people who supported my electoral campaign. Mr Rajoy, a country which treats its teachers and people who create things with contempt is a country which turns its back on the future. And a politician who indulges in that kind of contempt towards people from the world of culture and research does not deserve to be the president of a country.)

RAJOY: Yo defendiendo a los creadores, he sido ministro de Cultura, y defendiendo a los artistas, pero yo a lo que no estoy dispuesto es a que me llamen, a diez millones de votantes del PP, para apoyarle a usted, "turba de imbéciles" o de estúpidos. Eso no se puede hacer. Yo lo que nunca haría sería agredir a las víctimas del terrorismo como lo ha hecho usted (...) Hay que tener un poco de tolerancia y un poco de respeto a las personas y hay muchas personas que votan al Partido Popular, porque quieren y porque les apetece. Y hay que tratarlos con tolerancia, como yo trato también a la gente. Ahora yo tengo que defender a la gente y usted debería haber defendido a aquellas personas que fueron insultadas en el acto de los artistas. (I stand up for people who create things, I have been the Minister of Culture, and I stand up for artists, but what I am not prepared to tolerate is allowing people to call me and ten million voters of the PP, "a bunch of idiots" or fools, in order to support you. And I would never abuse the victims of terrorist acts, as you have done. (...) You must be a little more tolerant towards people and show them a little more respect. There are a lot of people who vote for the PP because they want to and feel like doing so. And you must treat them in a tolerant manner, as I also treat people. Now I have to stand up for people, and you should have stood up for those people who were insulted in the ceremony for artists.)

In this example, Zapatero accuses Rajoy of treating a certain group of people with contempt. Rajoy, first of all, evades the issue by talking up his side, then counter-attacks by accusing Zapatero of abusing victims of terrorist acts, and finally threatens his negative face by reminding him of the necessity to be more tolerant towards people.

AF3 Expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule complaints, reprimands, accusations and insults. A politician indicates that he/she does not like or want one or more of his rivals wants, acts, personal characteristics, beliefs or values, for example³⁵:

RAJOY: Empezaremos por lo más que le interesa a la gente, que es el terrorismo. Cuando llegó usted al Gobierno, ETA estaba más débil que nunca, llevaba un año sin matar porque no podía, Batasuna estaba fuera de los ayuntamientos y del Parlamento. El terrorismo callejero seguía vigilado y lo más importante es que

³⁵ Example taken from the first political debate between Zapatero and Rajoy. (2008)

había un pacto entre PP y PSOE que quitaba a ETA toda esperanza de negociación. ¿Qué hizo usted? Negoció con ETA, rompió el pacto y les dio esperanza. (..) Le garantizo que yo nunca negociaré, como nadie lo hizo nunca en España, salvo usted, políticamente con una organización terrorista. (We shall begin with what people are most concerned about, terrorism. When you came into power, ETA was weaker than ever. They had not killed anyone for a year, because they were unable to, and Batasuna³⁶ were out of the local government and Parliament. Terrorism in the street was under control and, most importantly, an agreement was signed between the PP and the PSOE which left ETA with no hope of negotiation. What did you do? You had dealings with ETA, you broke off the agreement, and you gave them hope. (...) I give you my absolute assurance that I will never, just as no one except you has ever done in Spain, have political dealings with a terrorist organization.)

ZAPATERO: Cuando llegué al Gobierno veníamos de una legislatura en la que había habido 238 víctimas mortales a manos de terroristas, 46 a manos de ETA y 192 en el atentado del 11 de marzo a manos del terrorismo islamista. Mi primer deber moral como presidente del Gobierno era eliminar o reducir al máximo estas cifras de víctimas mortales de ETA. Cuando era líder de la oposición, firmé un pacto antiterrorista para dar mi apoyo pleno al Gobierno, sin condiciones. (...) Ustedes han sido el partido, en el Parlamento y en la calle, que no han hecho más que debilitar al Gobierno en la lucha contra el terrorismo. Son el único partido del mundo que se ha manifestado contra el Gobierno en la lucha contra el terrorismo. Y mintieron al final de su legislatura. ¿Cómo es posible que ETA estuviera acabada si ustedes le atribuyeron el atentado más grave de la historia de Europa, que fue el del 11-M de 2004? Usted mismo lo dijo, en la jornada de reflexión: "tengo la convicción moral de que era ETA". Ni estaba acabada, ni convicción, ni moral. (When I came into power, we had just come out of a term in office in which there had been 238 deaths at the hands of terrorists, 46 for which ETA were responsible, and 192 in the bomb attack of March 11 for which Islam terrorists were responsible. My first moral duty as President of the Government was to eliminate or reduce the number of deaths by ETA. When I was the leader of the opposition, I signed an anti-terrorist agreement in order to give my full, unconditional support to the Government. (...) You have been the party, both in Parliament and in the street, who have simply made the Government weaker in the battle against terrorism. And you lied at the end of your term in office. How could ETA be finished if you blamed them for 11M in 2004, the most serious terrorist attack in the history of Europe? You yourself said: "I am morally convinced that it was ETA." Neither were they finished, nor were you morally convinced.)

RAJOY: Hubo mucha gente que lo pensaba en aquel momento. Yo me enteré de este asunto porque oí al señor Ibarretxe, presidente del Gobierno vasco, en la

³⁶ A Basque political party, alleged political wing of ETA.

radio. (...) Pero yo creo que hay que hablar de lo que ha pasado ahora. Usted dice que no se le ha apoyado. Usted no apoyó a un Gobierno, usted apoyó la política antiterrorista de un Gobierno que había pactado con usted, que era una política eficaz y que además excluía las negociaciones. Si usted hubiera hecho lo mismo que yo, no sólo le hubiera apoyado, yo le hubiera aplaudido. ¿Cuándo había que apoyarle a usted? ¿A qué Zapatero hay que apoyar? ¿Al que dice hace tres años que el PCTV es legal o al que tres años después, ahora, porque hay elecciones y por oportunismo político quieren ilegalizar? (There were a lot of people who thought so at the time. I found out about this affair because I heard Mr Ibarretxe³⁷ speaking on the radio. (...) But I think we must talk about what is happening now. You say that you were not given support. You did not support a Government, you supported an anti-terrorist policy of a government which had signed an agreement with you. It was an effective policy and it also excluded any type of negotiation. If you had done the same as I had, I would not only have supported you, I would have praised you. When should we give you support? Which Zapatero should we support? The one who said three years ago that PCTV³⁸ is legal, or the one who, now, three years later wants to make them illegal, for his own political gain because elections are imminent?)

In these extracts the politicians express a great deal of disapproval or criticism of the other's actions, and voice a number of reprimands and accusations. First of all, Rajoy blames Zapatero for allowing ETA to recover a position of strength, then condemns him for having dealings with the terrorist group, which constitutes a serious face-threat. Zapatero evades the issue by talking up his side, stating that he gave his unconditional support to Rajoy's government. This is possibly an attempt to justify his alleged dealings with ETA, as it seems to suggest that by "unconditional support", Zapatero means that there should not be any restrictions imposed on the manner of dealing with terrorist matters. He then goes on to attack Rajoy's face by accusing him of lying with regard to the terrorist attack of March 11, 2004, for which the latter blamed ETA. Rajoy tries to protect his face by saying that that was the general opinion at the time. He, in turn, threatens Zapatero's face by launching a counter-attack, accusing him of being two-faced in his treatment of the PCTV (the political party with alleged terrorist links) for the purposes of political gain.

AF4 contradictions or disagreements. In this case, the politician indicates that his opponent is wrong or misguided or unreasonable about an issue. As in the previous point (AF3), this wrongness is also met with disapproval. For example³⁹:

RAJOY: ¿Cómo se explica usted que uno de los países de la Unión Europea con menor densidad de población, que es España, pues sea mucho más caro que Holanda, que tiene casi cinco veces más población por kilómetro cuadrado que España. ¿Cómo se lo explica? (How do you account for the fact that Spain, one of the countries with the lowest density of population in the European Union, is

³⁷ Leader of the PNV (Basque National Party).

³⁸ A Basque political party, allegedly related to ETA.

³⁹ Example taken from the first political debate between Zapatero and Rajoy. (2008)

more expensive than Holland whose population density per square kilometre is almost five times higher than that of Spain? How do you account for that?)

ZAPATERO: *Bien señor Rajoy, vamos a hablar de vivienda. Esta es la evolución del precio de la vivienda con el Gobierno del Partido Popular (muestra un gráfico), que llegó al máximo histórico, y la evolución con el PSOE, que ha ido decreciendo hasta situarse en una subida del 4,8 por ciento. ¿Sabe cuántas viviendas protegidas construían en el último año de su mandato?: 56.000. ¿Y sabe cuántas se inician ahora?: 100.000 viviendas protegidas para que las familias puedan acceder a ellas (...)* Pero para mí, la prioridad es la educación y la investigación, esa es la gran prioridad del futuro (...) ¿Sabe que hay 40.000 investigadores más en España que cuando ustedes gobernaban? (...) Por el contrario, usted en materia de investigación y educación, hace lo mismo que en materia de interior, en vez de reducir los delitos, que es lo que tenía que haber hecho, redujo el número de policías. En materia de investigación, en vez de aumentar el gasto y en educación aumentar las becas, lo que hizo fue reducir y congelar el gasto, las becas ... (Very well, Mr Rajoy, we will talk about housing. This is how the price of housing evolved (he shows a graph), reaching a historical high with the PP Government. And this is how it evolved with the PSOE Government, getting lower and lower until it reached an increase of 4.8%. Do you know how many council houses were built during your term in office? 56,000. And do you know how many are being started now? 100,000 council houses so that families can have access to them (...) But as far as I am concerned, the priorities are education and research, those are the great priorities of the future (...) Do you know that there are 40,000 more people doing research in Spain than when you were in power? (...) On the contrary, where education and research are concerned, you are doing the same as you did with internal affairs. Instead of reducing crime, which is what you should have done, you reduced the number of policemen. With regard to research, instead of increasing the amount of money spent and awarding more grants, what you did was lower and limit the number of grants given ...)

Zapatero evades answering Rajoy's question about population density in Holland and Spain (with regard to the cost of housing), and instead, tries to protect his face by talking up his own side, using the statistics of the building of council houses in order to do so. He then abruptly changes the subject under discussion, attacking Rajoy's personal face, and evidently that of the PP. It is important to realize, in this case, that Zapatero is not only criticizing Rajoy's choice of priorities, but also the way in which he tackled the issues of housing, internal affairs and education. He disagrees with the handling of these matters, suggesting that more council houses should have been provided, that there should have been more policing in the streets, and that more money should have been spent on education. This is basically what constitutes the attack on Rajoy's personal face and that of his political party.

In these exchanges we have seen a variety of examples of how politicians use strategies not only to defend their own face and that of their political parties, but also to attack that of their opponents. It is important to point out that these examples are taken from a political debate which took place just before the 2008 general elections in Spain, and this is basically the reason why both politicians frequently threatened

each other's face. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that evading questions or issues by attacking the face of rival political agents is a strategy which needs to be seriously taken into account.

In this chapter we have intended to give a brief outline of the various types of evasion in language, and also to show how the concept of face is linked to political equivocation. Politicians, in news interviews as well as political debates, are generally confronted with face-threatening questions, and this makes it necessary for them to use strategies to protect their own face and that of their political parties. This, as we have seen, is achieved by using different means of equivocation. In the following chapter, we will discuss, in some detail, types of questions posed in political interviews, and politicians' answers will be analysed. A thorough examination will also be made of the equivocation typology proposed by Bull and Mayer (1993).

CHAPTER 4: QUESTIONS, REPLIES AND NON-REPLIES. EQUIVOCATION TYPOLOGY (BULL AND MAYER 1993, AND BULL 2003).

PREVIEW

As Bull (1994:117) points out, “To study equivocation in political interviews, it is essential to have a clear set of guidelines for identifying questions, replies, and non-replies.” Although the main aim of this dissertation is not the analysis of equivocation in political interviews, but, as a matter of fact, the occurrence of it in debates on political issues, specifically in parliamentary committees, the same principles involved in identifying questions, replies and non-replies need to be taken into account. First, a typology will be devised to establish what constitutes a question, after which we shall explain the criteria used to determine what can be coded as a reply. This will be followed by an examination of Bull and Mayer’s typology (1993) on the various types of equivocation, which in turn will be applied to our corpus.

4.1 Questions, replies and non-replies

4.1.1 How to define a question

Although much has been written on the subject of defining exactly what constitutes a question, there exists a great variety of ideas in the respective studies. In this regard, we shall now proceed to examine the ideas of some authors on this subject, namely Bull (1994, 2003), Weber (1993), Jucker (1986), and Quirk et al. (1985). Bull (2003:102) indicates that:

Defining a question is by no means self-evident. If questions are defined simply according to syntax (i.e. questions are those utterances that take the interrogative form), then there is no problem. But if a question is defined functionally as a request for information, then it does not necessarily require interrogative syntax.

Weber (1993:4) seems to agree with Bull when he observes that:

The term question applies ambiguously to interactive function and morphosyntactic form. Commonly this term refers to some utterances which are doing questioning as well as those which exhibit grammatical forms, viz., interrogative forms.

From these points of view we are able to deduce that the term “question” not only refers to a sentence in the interrogative form, but could also include utterances with different varieties of syntax. An example of this is provided by Quirk et al. (1985:814), where they describe what is referred to as a *declarative question*. This is identical in form to a declarative statement, except for the final rising intonation, for example,

“You realize what the risks are?” or “They’ve spoken to the ambassador, of course?” Indeed, as Bull (2003:102) points out, although a declarative question may not be accompanied by rising intonation, it could still be considered a request to provide information.

We will now discuss various types of questions proposed by different authors. Quirk et al. (1985) identify, among others, four different question types:

- (1) Yes/no or polar questions.
- (2) Wh- questions.
- (3) Alternate or disjunctive questions.
- (4) Declarative questions.

Yes/no questions, also referred to by some authors as *polar* questions, are posed in the interrogative form, that is, with an auxiliary verb followed by a subject, then an infinitive or a present or past participle, for example “Have you got any money?” or “Did you see the Beefeaters?” or “Is your sister coming today?”. These questions generally require affirmation or negation. There are, however, other types of polar questions where it may not be sufficient to answer “yes” or “no”, or indeed where, depending on the illocutionary force of the question, no answer may be required at all. These and other aspects of polar questions will be examined in the following subsection.

Wh- questions, as their name suggests, are those which begin with an interrogative pronoun, such as “what”, “when”, “why”, “who” or “which”, as in “What are you doing?” or “Who’s that man over there?” Bull (2003) observes that Quirk et al., in the category of wh-questions, include “how”, which of course does not begin with “wh-“. If we take this into consideration, we should note that Bull makes a valid point when he suggests that, as the term “wh- question” is somewhat confusing, it may be preferable to refer to this type as *interrogative word question*. It should be noted that “whose” also needs to be added to the list of interrogative word questions.

Alternate or disjunctive questions expect as a reply one of two or more options presented in the question, for example “Would you like to watch television or go to the cinema?”

In contrast to these three question types which all contain interrogative syntax, the fourth category identified by Quirk et al. (1985), the *declarative question*, as has been mentioned before, has a different structure. Nevertheless, it is an utterance which requires some sort of reply. Another example of this type of question is “You see my point?”

In addition to the four categories of question types presented by Quirk et al. (1985), two more were identified, namely *indirect questions* (Bull 2003), and *moodless questions* (Jucker 1986). These categories, despite the fact that they lack interrogative syntax, can undoubtedly be classified as questions, or utterances which are requests for information. Bull defines *indirect questions* as those in which “... the force of the

question is expressed in a subordinate clause, ...”, and gives the following example, which is an extract from an interview between Sir Robin Day (BBC political broadcaster) and Margaret Thatcher (former Prime Minister of Great Britain)⁴⁰:

Day: What this er remarkable man with the tremendous brain Mr Powell says

Thatcher: mm

Day: in his last utterance he says it almost defies belief that grown men and women should seriously propose so crazy a scenario which he says is this Russia invades Germany or northern Norway perhaps the United States declines to commit suicide so he says Britain fires a nuclear salvo at Moscow and Leningrad and he asks the question how balmy do you have to be to believe that or believe that the Kremlin believes that.

Thatcher: Yes but you see so many of Enoch’s arguments stem from the starting place he chose and the starting place he chose isn’t the right one. (Bull 1994:121)

Bull goes on to explain that it could be assumed that Day uses the reported speech of Powell in order to pose a question to Thatcher. Moodless questions, identified by Jucker (1986), are questions which do not contain a finite verb. The following example appears in a study which he made on news interviews (Jucker 1986:141):

AAA⁴¹ But what about imports from the EEC into this country

BBB I think imports from within the EEC we can’t do all that much about and it’s the rules are very complicated and some people er try to get round those rules by various devices

AAA fiddles of various kinds

BBB I think that might be extending it a bit but that could well be said to be true.

The second question in this exchange “fiddles of various kinds” is given the term “moodless” because it not only lacks an interrogative form, but does not even contain a verb.

The addition of indirect questions (Bull 2003) and moodless questions (Jucker 1986) to the four categories identified by Quirk et al. (1985) gives us a total of six question types. However, for the purposes of our analysis, it has been found necessary to add a further two categories.

In the first instance, in both of the transcripts in our corpus, there are examples of yes/no questions where it would not be sufficient to simply answer “yes” or “no”. These will be given the term *implied interrogative word question*. Bull (2003:108) gives

⁴⁰ Interview from 1987 General Election.

⁴¹ The following initials are used by Jucker: AAA (interviewer), and BBB (politician or interviewee).

an example of this which is taken from an interview between David Dimbleby and Margaret Thatcher⁴²:

Dimbleby: Were you to be returned tomorrow and come back as Prime Minister is there anything you've learnt during this campaign any lessons you've learnt during this campaign that you would apply in a next period of Thatcher government?

Thatcher: Perhaps you've taught me one that it's not enough actually to do things which result in caring you also have to talk about it but we have done them and I have done them as you know personally although we don't talk about that either.

Bull comments that if Margaret Thatcher answered "no" to the question, she could be considered to have provided a satisfactory reply. However, had she answered "yes", she would be expected to explain *what* it is that she had learnt during the election campaign. Bull (2003:108) states, quite correctly, indicate that:

... the question has to be regarded both as a yes-no question, and as an interrogative word question; an affirmative response by the politician would only be categorized as a reply if the politician identified what it is that he or she has learnt during the campaign.

Moreover, he does comment on the term implied interrogative word question. However, it should be noted that, in spite of this, he does not classify it in a separate category. We are of the opinion, therefore, that this is a different type of question from the normal yes/no or polar question, and that it should be considered separately. Moreover, there are yes/no questions which are really requests for information, as in "Can you tell me the time?" If the hearer answers "yes" to this question, he or she can not be considered to have given a satisfactory answer unless the request is complied with.

In addition to the category implied interrogative word question to the list of question types, we have found it necessary to add another in order to deal with questions in the imperative form. In the following example taken from our corpus, John McFall⁴³, uses the imperative form to pose a question to Sir John Gieve⁴⁴:

Q5 Chairman: We want to get underneath the surface, Sir John, just the same as we are trying to do with departmental budgets. For example, we looked at the Home Office the other day in the Spending Review. So give us thorough answers, please.

⁴² Interview from 1987 General Election.

⁴³ Chairman of the Treasury Committee, Labour MP.

⁴⁴ Deputy Governor of the Bank of England for financial stability.

Although this question does not contain interrogative syntax, it is, nevertheless, a request for information.

We therefore have a grand total of eight question types, which can be summarized as follows:

(1) Questions in interrogative form:

- (i) Yes/no or polar questions.
- (ii) Wh- or interrogative word questions.
- (iii) Implied interrogative word questions (two sub-types):
 - (a) Yes/no questions requiring a further comment.
 - (b) Requests.
- (iv) Alternate or disjunctive questions.

(2) Questions with non-interrogative syntax:

- (v) Declarative questions.
- (vi) Indirect questions.
- (vii) Moodless questions.
- (viii) Imperative questions.

In the following sub-section, we will try to establish which utterances can be coded as replies. In order to achieve this, the type of question asked will logically be taken into account.

4.1.2 What constitutes a reply

Having defined the different question types, it would now be relevant to analyse what constitutes a reply. For this purpose, it should be noted that the relationship between questions and answers is of extreme importance for the analysis of political evasion, as Harris (1991:82) observes:

In order to tell whether a politician has in fact answered a question, it is essential to make a distinction between responses and answers. If we define a 'response' as whatever follows a question, it is clear that a large number of utterances may be acceptable as responses which do not necessarily count as answers.

Therefore, an "answer" or "reply" can only be considered as such if it is appropriate to the question posed. Three main categories will be dealt with: replies, non-replies, and what Bull (1994, 2003) refers to as intermediate replies.

As we stated in the previous sub-section, yes/no or polar questions require an answer of “yes” or “no”, and if this response is given, it may be considered an adequate reply to the question. However, Quirk et al. make a valid point when they suggest that affirmation and negation do not necessarily have to be expressed by the words “yes” and “no”, but could also be conveyed by expressions such as “certainly”, “of course”, “not at all”, or “never”. (1985:806). There are also other expressions which express affirmation, for example “I do” or “I suppose so”, or negation, as in “I don’t think so”. Moreover, a reply could be implied rather than explicitly stated, as in the following exchanges given by Yule (1996:43-44):

(1) Bert: Do you like ice cream?
Ernie: Is the Pope Catholic?

(2) Bert: Do vegetarians eat hamburgers?
Ernie: Do chickens have lips?

In the first example, Ernie responds to Bert’s question with another question, but obviously implies a “yes” answer, while in the second exchange, a definite “no” is implied.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to point out that responding with either “yes” or “no” does not always constitute a reply. Sometimes, as Bull (2003:107) observes, “yes” may be used to acknowledge a question rather than reply to it, and gives the following example from an interview between David Dimbleby and Neil Kinnock (former leader of the opposition and Labour MP in Great Britain)⁴⁵:

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 massive return of power I’ve never used such a phrase in my life.

Bull observes that by saying “yes” Neil Kinnock is not replying to the question, but simply acknowledging it, and in fact goes on to attack the question by claiming that he has been misquoted⁴⁶. Similarly, as Bull (2003:107) also indicates, answering “no” may precede an attack on a question, rather than convey a negative reply, as in the following extract from an interview between David Frost and Neil Kinnock⁴⁷:

⁴⁵ Interview from 1987 General Election.

⁴⁶ Attacks the question (misquotation), see type E4e of Bull and Mayer’s typology (1993) in section 4.2.

⁴⁷ Interview from 1987 General Election.

Frost: ... if the situation were to emerge where in fact there was no tactical voting and as a result of that Mrs T.⁴⁸ 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 ...

Bull argues, quite correctly, that by saying "no", Neil Kinnock does not give a reply, but indeed attacks the question, objecting to the use of the word "purity".

In addition, as we mentioned in the previous section, there are other types of question expressed in the yes/no format for which either "yes" or "no" would not be an adequate reply, namely the *implied interrogative word questions*. These, as we explained, involve two sub-categories: (a) questions requiring a further comment, and (b) requests. With regard to first type, Harris seems to agree with our observation, stating that, in the context of a political interview, politicians are expected to elaborate even when they are asked a question requiring a yes/no response. The following example is given (Harris 1991:82):

I. (Interviewer)⁴⁹: can we move on – Prime Minister – to the sort of criticisms that have been made of your style of leadership and – and government and um – uh – there have been many criticisms – one for example in *The Economist* – which is a paper which is favourable to the Government – which has described your style of leadership as being – uh petulantly authoritarian – which is characteristic of your your Government – now when you read criticism like that – do you recognize this as being a comment on the way you are running the country

Pol. (Politician) no

In this case, the politician should not only answer "no", but also provide some reasons to justify her disagreement with the opinion of *The Economist*.

The second sub-category of the *implied interrogative word question*, as we mentioned earlier in this section, is a yes/no type question involving a request. The hearer can only be deemed to have provided a satisfactory response if he or she complies with the request, as can be seen in the following example taken from our corpus:

Q20 Peter Viggers⁵⁰: The Office of Government Commerce has been described by a newspaper as a shadow of its former self. It had a very grand mission statement to improve efficiency across government and now it is a buying

⁴⁸ Reference made to Margaret Thatcher, former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

⁴⁹ Indications in brackets are mine.

⁵⁰ Conservative MP.

department. Can you summarise for us the key activities for which the OGC will now be responsible?

Mr Smith⁵¹: Yes. Really there are three major areas. The first is getting better value government procurement spend from third parties. That totals about £125-150 billion. Of that about £75 billion is on common goods and services and, obviously, one of the key roles of OGC is to drive the move towards collaboration in terms of procurement right across government, the second area is within the project space, making sure the right projects are there, they are delivered on time and to budget, and the third area is the better utilisation of the Government property estate.

In answer to the question posed by Peter Viggers, Nigel Smith, after saying “yes”, goes on to outline the information requested. This is considered to be a satisfactory reply.

Determining what constitutes a reply to a wh- or interrogative word question does not seem to be particularly complicated. Bull (2003:105) states that: “Interrogative word questions ask for a missing variable, and if the politician supplied that missing variable, he or she can be seen as having answered the question.” Quirk et al. (1985:817) identify seven types of wh-questions (what, when, why, who, how, where and which). Bull (2003:105) suggests that:

The criteria for defining what constitutes a reply to each of these six categories can be based on their customary dictionary definition. So, ‘what’ asks for a selection from an indefinite number of possibilities, or for the specification of amount, number or kind. ‘When’ asks at what time, on what occasion, in what case or circumstance. ‘Why’ asks on what grounds, for what reason or with what purpose. ‘Who’ asks what or which person(s). ‘How’ asks in what way or to what extent. ‘Which’ asks what one(s) of a stated or implied set of persons, things or alternatives.

He also comments on the question word, “where”, and its dictionary definition, “at or in what place, position or circumstances”. If, therefore, the hearer provides the information specified in the question, he or she can be said to have given a reply, but if he or she fails to give that information, the answer would not constitute a reply. The following extract, taken from our corpus, is an example of a non-reply:

Q23 Peter Viggers: The substance and function of these 12 existing frameworks and collaborative deals: what do they require of departments?

Mr Smith: I think the collaborative deals you are talking about were basically existing framework deals, and these were put out to the spending departments

⁵¹ Chief Executive of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

and said, "Okay, you have got your own deals. Have a look at these deals. These deals are going to provide you with better value for money.

In giving his response, Nigel Smith does not provide an answer to the question posed by Peter Viggers, as he fails to specify *what* is required of departments. Therefore, he cannot be considered to have given a reply.

Disjunctive questions offer the hearer a choice between two or more alternatives. If the hearer answers by choosing at least one of the alternatives, he or she can be considered to have given a satisfactory reply. However, Bull (2003:108) observes that: "... it is also possible to present an additional alternative, which might also be regarded as a reply", and he quotes the following example from an interview between David Frost and Paddy Ashdown (Liberal Democrat MP)⁵²:

Frost: ... can you get a feeling of whether as some of the people say Labour support is stronger and firmer than Tory support or do you think they're both actually if there is such a word wavery?

Ashdown: I think the mood of the country is one of gloom disappointment ...

Although Paddy Ashdown does not choose either of the alternatives offered by the interviewer, he does provide a reply to the question. On the other hand, if in making a response, the hearer does not choose between the alternatives presented by the speaker, nor proposes another alternative, he or she would be deemed not to have answered the question. This is illustrated in the following example which Bull (2003:108) quotes from an interview between Sir Robin Day and Margaret Thatcher⁵³:

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

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

We shall now try to determine what would constitute a reply with regard to questions which do not contain interrogative syntax, namely moodless, declarative and indirect questions, and questions in the imperative form. In a study on news interviews, Jucker (1986) maintains that in some cases it is difficult to determine on syntactic grounds whether a politician has given a direct answer to a question, and cites the following example (Jucker 1986:141):

AAA but what about imports from the EEC into this country

BBB I think imports from within the EEC we can't do all that much about and it's

⁵² Interview from 1992 General Election.

⁵³ Interview from 1987 General Election.

the rules are very complicated and some people er try to get round those rules by various devices

AAA fiddles of various kinds

BBB I think that might be extending it a bit but that could well be said to be true

Focusing on the first question posed by the interviewer, Jucker states that there does not seem to be any difficulty in determining that the interviewee has provided a straight and explicit answer. However, with regard to the second question, he argues that it is not possible to assess what constitutes a direct answer, since the question is moodless in form and has no unambiguous response set. Therefore, Jucker suggests, it is not clear what kind of answer the interviewer is trying to elicit. Harris (1991:79-80) seems to make a valid point when she suggests that:

... most moodless and declarative utterances which occupy a question slot in political interviews are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the interviewee, i.e. either “yes, that is the case” or “no, it isn’t” or some intermediate point on the scale of probability.

Thus, she states, it seems perfectly possible to treat most moodless and declarative questions as versions of yes/no questions. In the example given by Jucker above, the utterance “fiddles of various kinds” seeks agreement or disagreement on the part of the interviewee, and there seems to be every indication that the answer is “yes”. Moreover, with regard to declarative questions, it is worth mentioning that Quirk et al. (1985:814) do include them in the section on yes/no questions.

Imperative questions are very similar in nature to implied interrogative word questions category (b) requests, the only difference being that they are not in interrogative form. In the same way as with requests, the hearer can be considered to have given a reply only if he or she carries out the speech act indicated, as in the following example taken from our English corpus:

Q29 Chairman: Thank you. Before I go on to Kerry, each of you, what would you currently regard as the top three risks to financial stability? Hector, I will start with you.

Mr Sants: I think, on balance, given the fact that whilst the probability might be difficult to predict, the impact would clearly be high. I think that potential types of external events which would then drive through to financial stability (and I have obviously already touched on the ones that we particularly highlight in the FRO) would have to be, I think, at the top of the list currently. Having said that, as a small rider, as I also mentioned earlier, clearly it seems reasonable to forecast that financial market conditions will get more difficult just because of the length of time we have been in this relatively benign period, so that relative importance of market events, I think, will rise over the coming months.

Q30 Chairman: Give us, at the end, the top three. Just make it simple for us?

Mr Sants: The top three. If you take them at the very high level, number one is infrastructure disruption, I think number two is the possibility of correlation changes reverting back towards the norm that has not been properly anticipated by market participants, and in a way linked into that, so it is partially three, would be a widening out of credit spreads going back towards more norm, and that is also linked into the structural change in volatility. So, it is really market conditions going back to the norm.

The Chairman of the Treasury Committee⁵⁴ repeats, in Q30, the question asked in Q29, although the former is posed in the imperative form. The Chairman needs to repeat the question because Hector Sants's⁵⁵ first answer is long-winded and unclear. The latter is then asked in Q30 to state simply what the top three risks to financial stability are. Sants, at the second attempt, complies with the request, as he gives three reasons. This, therefore, constitutes a reply. Had he, however, failed to provide the three reasons, or mentioned only one or two, he could not be considered to have given a satisfactory answer to the question asked.

We will now discuss a different type of response, given the term *intermediate replies* (Bull 1994, 2003).

4.1.3. Intermediate replies

While attempting to analyse different question types with regard to the kind of reply expected in each of these, it is also important to examine a very special category referred to by Bull as *intermediate replies* (1994, 2003). Bull argues that this type of answer cannot be regarded either as a reply or a non-reply, and identifies three types of intermediate response. Firstly, a reply may be implied in the politician's response, without being explicitly stated. Then, a politician may give an answer to only a part of the question. Moreover, a response to a question may be interrupted by the interviewer, in which case it would be impossible to say whether or not a reply would have been given. In each of these cases, it can be stated that the politician has not given a full reply to the question, but he or she cannot be said to have given no reply at all. Harris (1991:84) seems to agree with Bull to some extent when she refers to one type of what she terms 'indirect answers'. The following is an example given:

I. (interviewer)⁵⁶: I've been told that religion is very important to you – is this a factor in your immense public courage

Pol. (politician): I think there are times when it would be difficult to carry on unless one had faith – um – and I have and I am very grateful I was brought up

⁵⁴ Rt Hon John Mc Fall, Labour MP.

⁵⁵ Managing Director, Wholesale, Financial Services Authority.

⁵⁶ Indications in brackets are mine.

that way and that I think enables you to see what matters from what doesn't – because in the last resort you either have the choice to act with courage or without it – and I think the fact that you have faith enables you to have that much more courage in the face of any situation

In this case, a direct “yes” is not given as an answer, but the politician’s views do seem to be clear.

Bull (1994, 2003) identifies three major types of intermediate response:

- (1) Answer by implication.
- (2) Incomplete reply:
 - (a) partial replies.
 - (b) half answers.
 - (c) fractional replies.
- (3) Interrupted reply.

In the first type, the answer by implication, the hearer may make his or her views clear without actually stating them, as in the above example given by Harris (1991). Bull (2003:110) also quotes a reply made by Margaret Thatcher when asked by Sir Robin Day if the Labour Party won the 1987 General Election and decommissioned Polaris whether she thinks it would be the duty of the Chiefs of Staff to resign:

I know what I would do I just could not be responsible for the men under me under those circumstances it wouldn't be fair to put them in the a field if other people had nuclear weapons ... but they are free to make their decision that's a fundamental part of the way of life in which I believe.

In this answer, it would seem that Margaret Thatcher makes her views quite clear although she does not actually state that she thought that it would be the duty of the Chiefs of Staff to resign.

The second type, the incomplete reply, is divided into three subcategories. In (a) the partial reply, the hearer replies to part of a single-barrelled question, that is, one question asked about a single aspect or subject. Bull (2003:111) cites the following example from an interview between David Dibleby and Neil Kinnock (Labour MP)⁵⁷:

Dibleby: 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.

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

⁵⁷ Interview from 1987 General Election.

Dimbleby points out that Kinnock's response is incomplete because he only mentions one kind of tax.

Bull (2003:110) describes (b) the half answer as only answering one of two questions posed in a double-barrelled question (when two questions are being asked). He provides the following extract from an interview between David Frost and Margaret Thatcher⁵⁸:

Frost: But do you regret the leaking of that letter? Was that a black mark against the government?

Thatcher: Well I indeed I indeed I indeed said that I regretted the the leaking of that letter I said so at the time.

Bull considers this a half answer because Thatcher only replied to the first question.

A fractional reply (c), according to Bull (2003:110-111) occurs when a politician answers only part of a multi-barrelled question (when three or more answers are required), as in the following example taken from an interview between Sir Robin Day and Paddy Ashdown (Liberal Democrat MP)⁵⁹:

Day: Many people reading that may say to themselves how so what on earth is the relevance of PR to better schools curbing inflation unemployment homelessness or any of our other problems?

Ashdown: Let me take that urm absolutely urm 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 ...

Bull points out that this is a fractional reply because Ashdown, in answer to the multi-barrelled question, focuses on education but makes no comment on inflation, unemployment or homelessness.

In the third major type of intermediate response, the interrupted reply, Bull (2003:111) states that, due to an interruption by the interviewer, it is not possible to determine whether the politician would have given a reply to the question or not. He cites the following example from an interview between Sir Robin Day and Neil Kinnock (former Leader of the Opposition and Labour MP in Great Britain)⁶⁰:

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 er was our potential

⁵⁸ Interview from 1987 General Election.

⁵⁹ Interview from 1992 General Election.

⁶⁰ Interview from 1992 General Election.

enemy and had 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.

Kinnock did not have the opportunity to answer the question posed by Day because he was interrupted by the interviewer.

There is little doubt that both Harris (1991) and Bull (1994, 2003) have made very important observations regarding indirect answers and intermediate responses respectively. However, in order to carry out the analysis of our corpus, where we need to determine whether equivocation occurs in replies to questions posed, a few points need to be taken into consideration.

With regard to the answer by implication, if it can be deduced from the implications of the hearer's answer that his or her views are clear, it will be considered that a satisfactory reply has been given. In the interrupted reply, as it is not possible to discern whether the hearer would have replied to the question or not, it will be deemed that equivocation does not occur in this instance. However, regarding the incomplete replies, where the hearer answers only a part of the question posed, or does not give a satisfactory reply to *all* of the questions asked, it is evident that this constitutes equivocation, and Bull (2003:120-121) does, in fact, include them in his equivocation typology, which will now be examined in the following section.

4.2. EQUIVOCATION TYPOLOGY (BULL AND MAYER 1993; BULL 2003)

It is important to note that the first typology of equivocation written by Bull and Mayer was published in 1993, and that this was updated by Bull in 2003. In the first essay, the authors identified eleven main types of equivocation indulged in by politicians in political interviews, in addition to nineteen sub-types. This number was increased in the second publication where twelve main types of equivocation were proposed, along with twenty-three sub-types. Given that at least some of the additions made in the 2003 edition are relevant to our study, our references will be made to the later edition, although the vast majority of them do coincide with those of the earlier publication.

Although many of the types and sub-types of political equivocation identified by Bull and Mayer (1993) occur frequently in our corpus, for the purposes of our analysis it has been found necessary to include a further type of equivocation, namely *Modifies the question* (E13)⁶¹, and a sub-type in the category *Declines to answer* (E6), which will be given the term *Hot potato* (E6f). Explanations and examples of these will be given below. This therefore gives us a grand total of thirteen main types and twenty-four sub-types of equivocation.

We shall now summarise the equivocation typology presented by Bull (2003:114-121), and explain the additions which we have included.

E1 Ignores the question

The politician makes no attempt to answer the question or even acknowledge that a question has been asked, for example (Bull 2003: 114):

Thatcher: ... that is the only power you have the power from the ballot box at every election you submit yourself to the judgement of your people on your stewardism

Frost⁶²: But that back on January 27th though why did you say that?

Thatcher: and then don't forget I also have another submission to make to the judgement of my party and that is every single year I'm the first leader to whom that's happened ...

Margaret Thatcher ignored the question and simply continued talking.

E2 Acknowledges the question without answering it

The politician acknowledges that a question has been asked but fails to give an answer, for example (Bull 2003: 115):

⁶¹ Each type and sub-type of equivocation mentioned is given a code number, in the same order in which they appear in the typology (Bull and Mayer 1993 and Bull 2003). Our own additions, E6f and E13, have been similarly coded and included in the relevant sections.

⁶² David Frost. British television interviewer.

Thatcher: ... they will also get housing benefit which meets their rent they will also get rate rebate and also may I point out that when ever we come to ...

Dimbleby, J⁶³.: (interrupts) Would you accept they live in poverty Prime Minister?

Thatcher: please there's just one other thing when we get bad weather the Labour Party only gave 90 million pounds a year on heating allowances with us it's up over 400 million ...

By saying 'please there's just one other thing' Margaret Thatcher acknowledged that the interviewer had asked a question, but simply continued answering the previous question.

E3 Questions the question (two sub-types)

- (a) Request for clarification. The politician asks for further information on the question, for example (Bull 2003: 115):

Dimbleby, J.: ... and I should be glad if you would ask Mrs Thatcher what advice she can give me in order to spend the extra 15p she awarded me in the budget to my best advantage what is your advice to her?

Thatcher: The 15p awarded in the budget?

Dimbleby, J: I thi I think she was probably referring to the April uprating in practice which in fact gives her I think 11p a day

- (b) Reflects the question back to the interviewer, for example (Bull 2003: 115):

Day⁶⁴: If you have an overall majority Mr Kinnock say with about 350 MPs what proportion of those would be on the hard left?

Kinnock: Well you tell me

E4 Attacks the question (eight sub-types)

The politician attacks or criticizes the question.

- (a) The question fails to tackle the important issue, for example (Bull 2003: 115-116):

Day: But do you accept that Western freedom the freedom of Western Europe is ultimately assured by the nuclear weapons behind NATO?

Kinnock: I think the fact that nuclear weapons exist and they're a fact of life and that there are two superpowers each co counterpoised against each other is the predominant issue

⁶³ Jonathan Dimbleby. British political commentator.

⁶⁴ Sir Robin Day. British political broadcaster and commentator.

(b) The question is hypothetical or speculative, for example (Bull 2003: 116):

Frost: But given that scenario there I mean could labour cope if if that came true could you cope or would you be shot out of the water in in a guff of wind?

Kinnock⁶⁵: It's the stuff of which novels are made I don't think it could be or should be regarded as a serious proposition ...

(c) The question is based on a false premise, for example (Bull 2003: 116):

Day: ... and he asks the question how balmy do you have to be to believe that or believe that the Kremlin believes that?

Thatcher: Yes but you see so many of Enoch's arguments stem from the starting place he chose and the starting place isn't the right one this has always been one of Enoch's problems ...

(d) The question is factually inaccurate, for example (Bull 2003: 116):

Dimbleby, J.: In the present circumstances do you think that those 2 million or so pensioners who rely on the basic state pension have enough to live a decent life?

Thatcher: But they don't have to rely on the basic state pension

(e) The question includes a misquotation, for example (Bull 2003: 116):

Dimbleby, D⁶⁶.: What about your attitude to the trade unions you've said you're going to give a massive return of power to trade unions if Labour come 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 massive return of power I've never used such a phrase in my life

(f) The question includes a quotation taken out of context, for example (Bull 2003: 115):

Dimbleby, J.: What do you make of this statement if I can quote it to you irrespective of whether or not we win the election there's a major struggle coming about the kind of Labour Party we want to see

Kinnock: I've read the piece and you've got it out of context

(g) The question is objectionable, for example (Bull 2003: 117):

⁶⁵ Lord Neil Kinnock. Former Leader of the Labour Party and Leader of the Opposition in the UK.

⁶⁶ David Dimbleby. British television presenter and political commentator.

Dimbleby, J.: The one you didn't mention were books and magazines does that mean they're the ones that might be ...

Thatcher: No you're going to try you're going yes and that's exactly a typical question

(h) The question is based on a false alternative, for example (Bull 2003: 117):

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

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

Day: Supposing it was?

Thatcher: I think you have possibly posed a false alternative.

E5 Attacks the interviewer

The politician criticizes the interviewer as distinct from attacking the question, for example (Bull 2003: 117):

Thatcher: Look if anyone tried to put Value Added Tax on children's clothes and shoes they would never never never get it through the House er

Dimbleby, J.: So that's out?

Thatcher: ... now I'm not going any further than that Mr Dimbleby for a very good reason yes people like you will try to go on and on and the moment we say one thing you'll find another and then another

E6 Declines to answer (five sub-types)

(a) Refusal on grounds of inability, for example (Bull 2003: 117):

Day: If you're reelected for another four or five years will inflation be brought down to zero?

Thatcher: It will be our aim to bring down inflation further we shall run our financial policies in that way I wish I could promise it would be brought down to zero I can't

(b) Unwillingness to answer, for example (Bull 2003: 117):

Day: The hypothesis I was discussing wouldn't you regard that as a defeat?

Thatcher: I am not going to prophesy what will happen

(c) I can't speak for someone else, for example (Bull 2003: 118):

Day: If Labour wins Prime Minister and decommissions Polaris immediately as Mr Kinnock has announced his intention of doing what do you think is the duty of the Chiefs of Staff to resign if they disagree with that order or to obey the orders of the democratically elected Queen's first minister?

Thatcher: The Chiefs of Staff have to make up their own mind each person is responsible for what he decides it'll be for the Chiefs of Staff to decide ...

- (d) Deferred answer. It is not possible to answer for the time being, for example (Bull 2003: 118):

Walden⁶⁷: ... is that what you're telling me?

Major⁶⁸: Brian I'm telling you to wait for the consultation document which will be published very shortly

Walden: Will I will I then see that you have changed your mind or see that you haven't?

Major: Wait for the consultation document Brian and then you can make up your own mind

- (e) Pleads ignorance, for example (Bull 2003: 118):

Walden: Let me put it to you Mr Major that at least one other candidate I say at least because I don't want to bring Mr Hurd into this at the moment but at least one other candidate in this election Mr Helestine would not accept that view would he?

Major: Well I don't know whether Michael would accept that view at all on Thursday and I'm not going to be tempted along this route

It is worthy of mention here that there would seem to exist two other categories of equivocation, instead of the one indicated by Bull. These are given in brackets:

Major: Well I don't know whether Michael would accept that view at all on Thursday (*I can't speak for someone else*) and I'm not going to be tempted along this route (*unwillingness to answer*).

- (f) Hot potato. The responsibility for answering the question is transferred to someone else⁶⁹. In the following example, taken from our corpus, Philip Dunne⁷⁰, poses a question to Nigel Smith⁷¹, who does not answer but transfers the responsibility to Alison Littlely⁷²:

⁶⁷ Ben Walden. British political commentator.

⁶⁸ John Major. British Conservative Party politician and former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom.

⁶⁹ This sub-type has been identified by me in the analysis of the British Parliamentary sessions of our corpus and introduced in this section of Bull's typology.

⁷⁰ Conservative MP.

Q32 Mr Dunne: Because the Public Accounts Committee report into OGC buying.solutions was quite critical about the effectiveness of the whole framework regime, there are a plethora of framework agreements. Most of the procurement seems to have been directed through a smaller number of them and there are allegations from competitors that these are being used to featherbed OGC in terms of the revenue raising from the commissions achieved compared with achieving best value for the taxpayer. How would you respond to those allegations?

Mr Smith: I would like Alison to respond.

Although this example has been identified as a type of equivocation, we think it necessary to make the following observation. When Nigel Smith answers “I would like Alison to respond”, there is also some doubt as to whether he is actually unable to answer, or is deliberately equivocating. This would depend on whether it is within Smith’s responsibility to provide the information required, and it could be argued that, as Chief Executive of OGC, he should be able to answer any question in this regard. Nevertheless, in order to determine whether equivocation occurs in these cases or not, each example will be examined carefully in the analysis of the corpus.

E7 Makes political point (eight sub-types)

- (a) External attack – attacks opposition or other rival groups, for example (Bull 2003: 118):

Dimbleby, D.: ... are you saying that a third of the people are supporting a party that is revolutionary and quite different and militant and unacceptable in the way the Labour Party used to be that they’ve all been conned?

Thatcher: They have done everything possible to hide their militants and to hide their real plans during this election

- (b) Presents policy, for example (Bull 2003: 119):

Day: That is why I’m asking you what you would do

Kinnock: ... it is a government a Labour government that is committed to combating inflation to fighting poverty ...

- (c) Justifies policy, for example (Bull 2003: 119):

Dimbleby, J.: Well what sense of negotiations is that then?

Kinnock: ... Cruise weapons have never enjoyed the majority support of the British people they don’t enhance our security they’re weapons of first use

⁷¹ Chief Executive of the Office of Government Commerce (OGC).

⁷² Head of OGC buying.solutions.

(d) Gives reassurance, for example (Bull 2003: 119):

Day: ... don't you think some of them are worried about some of the people on the hard left wing of the Labour Party who advocate things that disgust many ordinary people?

Kinnock: ... I think the British people have come to know me well enough to know that there is nobody on what you describe as the hard left or any of those elements that may or may not be in or around the Labour Party that exercises any influence

(e) Appeals to nationalism, for example (Bull 2003: 119):

Dimbleby, J.: Wouldn't it lead to they should have the right to do so as well?

Thatcher: No, I'm not talking about the logic I'm talking about Britain's history I'm talking about the fact that Britain hung on when the rest of Europe surrendered I'm talking about the fact that Britain was right in the beginning of the atomic weapon

(f) Offers political analysis, for example (Bull 2003: 119):

Dimbleby, J.: ... wages are running at seven per cent at the moment do you regard that as too high from the point of wages?

Kinnock: ... where does inflation come from most of our inflation is imported in er inflation it comes from movements in commodity and import prices and the effects of our currency

(g) Self-justification, for example (Bull 2003: 119-120):

Day: Does it surprise you or upset you when you see yourself or hear yourself described as a hard woman uncaring and out of touch with the feelings of ordinary folk?

Thatcher: ... I certainly hope they would not level it at me personally because as you know both Dennis and I spend a great deal of time working for our own favourite causes my my own the National Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Children

(h) Talks up one's side, for example (Bull 2003: 120):

Dimbleby, D.: Do you think it does you political damage do you think that's why the Tories are not making the advances that you must have hoped when you came into office eight years ago they would be making?

Thatcher: No but I think we have actually transformed Britain

E8 Gives incomplete reply (five sub-types)

- (a) Starts to answer but doesn't finish (self-interrupts), for example (Bull 2003: 120):

Frost: But why not then because of your principles?

Thatcher: Because the health service is run look Mr Frost you use the private health service as well you exercise your freedom of choice ...

- (b) Negative answer. The politician states what will not happen instead of what will happen, for example (Bull 2003: 120):

Day: Would you have no incomes policy?

Kinnock: ... what I'm setting aside is the idea either the the guiding lights of Selwyn Lloyd or the legislated incomes policies of Mr Jenkins and Mr Wilson in the sixties or the incomes policies of fixed norms or Ted Heath's counter-inflation incomes policy those whilst having possibly an initial impact never managed to last and all they did was store up difficulties for the future much better to follow through ...

Day: (interrupts) That is why I'm asking what you would do

- (c) Partial reply. The politician only answers part of a single-barrelled question, for example⁷³:

Q2 Chairman: We have got double vision for each institution, but if one person from your institution can answer the questions, that will comply with our target of finishing by half past eleven at the latest. The Memorandum of Understanding has recently changed. What were the main changes and why were they brought about?

Mr Cunliffe: It was changed, I think, to bring it more up-to-date with the operating experience of the years since 1997 and the changing circumstances. For example, one of the main changes is that it now has quite a developed section on business continuity operational risk and how the Standing Committee addresses that, because that work very much developed after September 11. It also has some clearer statements, I think, of Bank and FSA responsibilities.

Mr Cunliffe starts by giving an answer to the second part of the question. However, in answer to "What were the main changes", he only mentions one, and the presence of a scalar implicature in his reply "one of the main changes ..." implies that there were others.

⁷³ Example taken from our corpus.

(d) Half answer. The politician answers one half of a double-barrelled question, for example⁷⁴:

Q23 Mr Gauke: Can I ask each of the organisations what resources are devoted to financial stability, looking at numbers of staff, expenditure, et cetera?

Sir John Gieve: Directly we have a division under Nigel of about 100 people working on financial stability issues. That includes a team of, I think, around 10 who work on financial crisis management. As to business continuity work, we have a single team covering the external responsibilities and our own preparations internally within the Bank, and there are about 15 people in that.

In this case, Sir John Gieve only mentions staff numbers, but makes no reference to expenditure.

(e) Fractional reply. The politician answers only part of a multi-barrelled question, for example⁷⁵:

Q67 Mr Todd: Can you give us a little bit of background as to, firstly, how far it went before it was dropped, the costs involved and what were the obstacles that caused it to be?

Ms Littley: I have not got the details in terms of the costs involved, but I can give you details as to why it was dropped. Following the NAO report, one of the things that we undertook to do was to review all current and up and coming frameworks and one of the things that we also had to be cognisant of was how easy it was going to be for people to use frameworks, which was one of the things that also came out of the NAO report. In looking at it as part of that review, it was felt that the spectrum of things within that framework, i.e. from buying a piece of equipment to something that was an all singing and all dancing service, was too wide and the amount of procurement capability that some organisations would need would be too difficult for them to find and therefore it was dropped.

The subject under discussion in this exchange is a project devised to do a deal, which was abandoned. Alison Littley is asked to give three answers to this multi-barrelled question. She begins by pleading ignorance regarding the costs involved, then gives a satisfactory answer as to why the project was dropped. However, no mention is made as to how far it went before it was dropped. She therefore does not give a full answer to the question, and thus, indulges in equivocation.

As we mentioned in the previous section, Bull (2003:120-121) argues correctly that, as the last three types of response mentioned provide only a part of the

⁷⁴ Example taken from our corpus.

⁷⁵ Example taken from our corpus.

information requested, they are considered forms of equivocation, and are therefore included in this typology.

E9 Repeats answer to the previous question, for example (Bull 2003: 121):

Kinnock: What I've said is that the US President whoever the US President was would only take a decision to commence or to respond to nuclear war according to United States priorities

Dimbleby, J.: Well supposing he decided to respond what would you do then?

Kinnock: ... even our strongest allies the United States of America would only take a decision to use their nuclear weapons either for themselves or on behalf of others according to their own priorities

E10 States or implies that the question has already been answered, for example (Bull 2003: 121):

Kinnock: ... as far as secondary picketing is concerned er in pursuit er of a trade dispute in connection with that trade dispute the same kind of right that workers enjoyed for seventy years in this country is a right that should be enjoyed in order to be able to do that and the reason why it was awarded ...

Dimbleby, J.: (interrupts) That means you do not approve of secondary picketing being restored or not?

Kinnock: to well I think I made that pretty clear

E11 Apologises, for example (Bull 2003: 121):

Dimbleby, D.: ... isn't one of the difficulties for the Tories that your way of governing and talking about the government gets up the noses of a lot of voters?

Thatcher: Well I'm sorry if it does it's not intended to I'm very sorry if it does

In this case, it is arguable that Thatcher does give a reply to the question. In the example given, David Dimbleby describes a difficulty for the Tory government, for which Margaret Thatcher apologizes. It would seem that, in expressing her apology, she is agreeing with Dimbleby. If we assume that to apologize is, in a way, to admit culpability, (one is unlikely to apologize if one feels that no offense has been committed), then we may say with some degree of certainty that Thatcher is answering "yes" to the interviewer's question.

E12 Literalism

The literal aspect of a question which was not intended to be taken literally is answered, for example (Bull 2003: 121):

Lawley: So you are suggesting in fact that rooming houses in Brixton and Downing Street are not so far apart at all?

Major: Well they're about four miles as the crow flies

E13 *Modifies the question*⁷⁶

The politician or the hearer rephrases the question before giving an answer, thus not replying to the question posed. In the following example, taken from our corpus, Peter Viggers⁷⁷ asks Sir John Gieve⁷⁸ to define financial stability⁷⁹:

Peter Viggers: Can I ask the lead witness from each of your groups, how would you define, in simple terms, financial stability? What are you seeking with financial stability?

(...)

Sir John Gieve: I think it is easier to define financial instability actually; and the instability that we are concerned about is a loss of functionality in the financial system which would damage the wider economy because it no longer functioned to bring savings and investment into balance or to transmit money effectively round the system.

Sir John Gieve modifies the question, and goes on to define financial *instability*.

Another very good example of the equivocation strategy *Modifies the question* can be found in an interview from the program Prime Minister's Question Time, which occurred shortly before Tony Blair's retirement (April, 2007)⁸⁰:

Mr. Cameron: The interesting thing is that the Prime Minister will not endorse the Chancellor. We know why we do not want the Chancellor—he has complicated the tax system and virtually bankrupted the pensions system, he is impossible to work with and he never says sorry. That is why we don't want the Chancellor—What does he think is wrong with him? (The Chancellor then of course was Gordon Brown)

The Prime Minister: [Tony Blair] Let me tell the right hon. Gentleman what is right with the Chancellor. The right hon. gentleman has some experience of the economy, has he not? He had something to do with the British economy once, hasn't he? Back in 1992, did he not? He was the special adviser to the Chancellor of the time—we remember Black Wednesday. The Chancellor has delivered the strongest economic growth that this

⁷⁶ This type has been added to Bull's typology as examples can be found in the corpus.

⁷⁷ Conservative MP.

⁷⁸ Deputy Governor of the Bank of England.

⁷⁹ Example taken from our English corpus.

⁸⁰ Example provided to me personally by Dr Peter Bull.

country has ever seen, interest rates half what they were under the previous Conservative Government, the highest employment, the lowest unemployment for years and rising living standards. What's he delivered for the British economy? A bit part on Black Wednesday.

With regard to this equivocation typology, another important point made by Bull (2003:121) is that: "... it is important to realise that one response to a question can be coded in terms of several categories.", and he gives the following example, which is an extract from an interview where Jonathan Dimbleby asks Margaret Thatcher a question about pensioners. The equivocation categories are given in brackets:

Dimbleby, J.: Would you accept they live in poverty Prime Minister?

Thatcher: Please there's just one other thing (*acknowledges the question without answering it*) when we get bad weather the Labour Party only gave 90 million pounds a year on heating allowances (*makes political point – external attack*) with us it's up over 400 million and that too is important because under a Conservative government we've had strong growth and a strong economy without that we'd not be able to do them (*makes political point – talking up one's own side*) of course one would always like to do more but fortunately now most people are retiring with two pensions the basic and an occupational pension a large number have savings 71 per cent of pensioners who retire have savings a half of them have their own homes and of course more and more will have shares (*makes political point – offers political analysis*).

A similar example taken from our English corpus also gives support to Bull's observation:

Q49 John Thurso⁸¹: Mr Smith, when you were responding to the Chairman in his questions you said that one of your key objectives was more for less, I think it was. How can you ensure, in doing that, that the quality of service to tax payers is maintained?

Mr Smith: Actually what I said was more value for less (*Attacks the question – question includes a misquotation*), and I think that is the key. I think people's understanding of procurement is that it is buying: it is buying commodities and there is a standard commodity. It is not. Procurement covers a range of goods and services (*Attacks the question – question is based on a false premise*). If I can give you one example from my own experience: my daughter this year went off and worked in the care industry looking after people in their homes, people that had various physical disabilities, people that were old, people that

⁸¹ Liberal Democrats MP.

could not do things (*Makes political point – self-justification*). She worked in the care industry and the quality of service of the people she worked for was appalling (*Makes political point – external attack*). That is not value. Lowest cost is not value. It is about what service comes from that value and also right across the lifecycle. If you are talking about a car, it is not about the purchase price of a car (*Makes political point – offers political analysis*).

From the points made and the examples given in his typology, Bull (2003) adequately demonstrates how politicians quite often equivocate by using various methods of talking around questions or beating about the bush in order to avoid giving a clear response. Our own additions and the examples taken from our corpus also serve to further reinforce this point. Although the main aim of this dissertation is not to make a criticism of Bull's work, it is, nevertheless, pertinent to make a few comments on the typology presented. It is arguable that deliberate equivocation does not necessarily occur in some of the aforementioned types and sub-types. However, it is important to point out that the following arguments are not due to inaccuracies in Bull's theory, but could be the result of the difference between the nature of our corpus, which deals with question and answer sessions in debates in parliamentary committees, and that of political interviews.

First of all, with regard to sub-type E3a (questions the question by requesting clarification), it could be argued that when a politician asks for clarification of a question, it is not always obvious that he or she is deliberately equivocating. In the example given by Bull above, it would seem that Margaret Thatcher is avoiding the question by repeating the interviewer's words 'the 15p awarded in the budget?' If, as it is implied, she did award the extra 15p, then she knew what the question entailed, and there was therefore no need to ask for clarification. However, in the following example taken from our corpus, it is very probable that the witness does not make a genuine attempt to equivocate:

Q58 John Thurso: Last year, when discussing outsourcing, I asked Mr Barratt about the possibility of outsourcing the finance functions, but he responded that one of the key rules of outsourcing is that you do not outsource a mess, you get your own house in order and then you outsource it. Has the finance function now improved to the point that it is not a mess and it could be considered for outsourcing?

Mr Smith: Within OGC?

Q59 John Thurso: Within government generally.

Mr Smith: I am afraid I could notice⁸² really comment.

⁸² Typographical error in original.

Q60 John Thurso: Or within OGC?

Mr Smith: I can comment on what I found in OGC when I came in, and that is I think there were adequate financial controls. I think information systems within OGC need some improvement in terms of the finance area but they are adequate. As far as the service which we are getting from the Treasury, again, that seems adequate, although I would wish to see a very explicit service agreement where the customer, which is myself as OGC, and the supplier, which is the Treasury, have a series of matrix to monitor performance.

Nigel Smith⁸³ asks for clarification on John Thurso's⁸⁴ first question (Q58), which the latter provides. Although the witness is unable to answer, he does reply to Q60, thus indicating his intention to give a reply to at least one of the questions asked. It is therefore possible to assume that the clarification asked for in Q58 may not be a genuine attempt to equivocate.

Secondly, with regard to the sub-type E6a (declines to answer on grounds of inability), in the example given by Bull, Margaret Thatcher seems to answer the question posed by the interviewer, or at least may be implying a negative answer by saying "... I wish I could promise it would be brought down to zero, but I can't". Moreover, with regard to this sub-type and also others such as E6c (I can't speak for someone else) and E6e (pleads ignorance), the hearer may not be deliberately equivocating, but may be genuinely unable to answer the question. The following examples from our English corpus help to illustrate this point:

Example 1 (E6a)

Q66 Mr Todd: The project that was devised to bring together a framework IT deal, Integrated Solutions, has been dropped, I believe?

Mr Smith: I am afraid I cannot comment. I have no information, I should say.

Ms Littley: That is right; it has.

In this extract, Nigel Smith is unable to answer the question posed by Mark Todd⁸⁵. The question is then answered by another witness, Alison Littley. This could give rise to the argument that Smith is unable to provide the information required because it is the responsibility of someone else to do so.

Example 2 (E6c)

⁸³ Chief Executive of OGC.

⁸⁴ Liberal Democrats MP.

⁸⁵ Labour MP.

Q4 Chairman: The OGC has been without a permanent chief executive for nine months. Why did they take so long to find you?

Mr Smith: You would have to ask the people that recruited me; I am sorry.

Nigel Smith indicates quite correctly that he is unable to answer because it is really a question for the OGC. It can be argued with a fair degree of certainty that deliberate equivocation does not occur in this case.

Example 3 (E6e)

The following extract, taken from our English corpus, also gives an example of the hearer being unable to answer the question, pleading ignorance:

Q67 Mr Todd: Can you give us a little bit of background as to, firstly, how far it went before it was dropped, the costs involved and what were the obstacles that caused it to be?

Ms Littley: I have not got the details in terms of the costs involved, but I can give you details as to why it was dropped. Following the NAO report, one of the things that we undertook to do was to review all current and up and coming frameworks and one of the things that we also had to be cognisant of was how easy it was going to be for people to use frameworks, which was one of the things that also came out of the NAO report. In looking at it as part of that review, it was felt that the spectrum of things within that framework, i.e. from buying a piece of equipment to something that was an all singing and all dancing service, was too wide and the amount of procurement capability that some organisations would need would be too difficult for them to find and therefore it was dropped.

Alison Littley answers only one of aspects presented in the multi-barrelled question, and, as has been said before, indulges in equivocation. No attempt has been made to answer the first part of the question "... how far it went before it was dropped ...". However, as the reply she gives to the third part, "... what were the obstacles involved ...", is a coherent one, it could be assumed that her inability to answer the second part of the question stems from ignorance rather than a deliberate attempt to equivocate. There are a number of examples of this kind in our corpus where there does exist some doubt as to whether there is genuine equivocation on the part of the speaker. These will be examined in detail in our analysis of the corpus in Chapter 6.

To conclude this chapter, certain points should be taken into account. While Bull's typology on equivocation is thorough and, for the most part, accurate, it is also necessary to mention that, as Bavelas et al. (1990) point out, interviewers in political interviews do have a tendency to present politicians with awkward or unanswerable questions. This could give support to our view that intentional equivocation does not

necessarily occur in all the cases examined. Moreover, although Bull's typology demonstrates that politicians quite often deliberately equivocate during interviews in order to avoid what Bavelas et al. (1990) term avoidance-avoidance conflicts, the typology needs to be applied with care to the analysis of our corpora. This is because our corpora do not consist of political interviews, but rather debates on political issues.

The following chapter will give a description of how the British and Spanish Parliaments operate.

CHAPTER 5: TWO PARLIAMENTS IN CONTRAST

5.1 How parliament works: The House of Commons and *El Congreso de los Diputados*⁸⁶.

In the UK, parliament business is carried out in two Houses, the House of Commons and the House of Lords. In Spain, parliament also takes place in two Houses, *El Congreso de los Diputados* and *El Senado*. Both parliaments are responsible for examining the work of their respective governments, and for the approval of laws. The work of both parliaments is shared among various committees.

In the British Parliament, a Departmental Select Committee is a cross-party group of MPs responsible for the scrutiny of the work of each government department. Similarly, in the Spanish Parliament, a Comisión Permanente Legislativa is also a cross-party group of MPs appointed by the various parliamentary groups, and is created at the beginning of a term of office after a general election. The committees in both the British and the Spanish Parliaments are subject to the general rules governing committees established by their respective governments.

In the UK, all Departmental Select Committees consist of a main committee and a sub-committee, each of which have a Chairman, although the membership of the main committee and the sub-committee is the same. Sub-committees are normally used to deal with one aspect of the committee's remit, and their reports have to be considered and approved by the parent committee. The Chairmen of the main committee and the sub-committee are chosen from among the committee members at the committee's first meeting. The *Comisiones Permanentes Legislativas* in the Spanish Parliament elect from among their members a Bureau, which consists of a Chairperson, two Vice-Chairs, and two Secretaries. This election is carried out in accordance with the provisions governing the election of the Bureau of Congress. Committees in the Spanish Parliament do not have an established sub-committee as such, but this may be created, when necessary, to deal with a particular matter. In the House of Commons, Select Committees also have a Bureau or staff consisting of between three and six members, who are selected from the permanent and politically neutral staff of the House. This team is led by the Clerk of the Committee, and normally has a second clerk, a committee (subject) specialist, a committee assistant and a secretary. In addition, British committees employ specialist advisers, who may be academics or people with specialized knowledge in a particular area, to assist with technical matters concerning a particular enquiry. For similar purposes, Spanish committees may request, through the Speaker of Congress, the presence of authorities and civil servants who are legally qualified in the matters to be debated, and/or persons in possession of the relevant knowledge, to report to and advise the committee.

⁸⁶ The information given in this chapter is true for the year 2007, when the parliamentary sessions analysed in our corpus took place.

In the British Parliament, the Chairman has no special powers, but has a casting vote if there is a tie in any vote within the committee. In the Spanish Parliament, the role of the Chairperson is to summon and preside all of the sessions in his committee, maintain order in the sessions, and together with the other members of the Bureau, give orders regarding the work to be carried out in the committee. In contrast to the House of Commons, the Chairperson of a committee in *El Congreso de los Diputados* does have a casting vote, as do the other members of the committee, whether or not there is a tie in any vote within the committee.

According to the general rules for committees established by the Spanish Constitution, committees usually consist of members appointed by parliamentary groups, the number of which would be determined by the Bureau of Congress, after consultation with the Board of Spokesmen, and would depend on the number of each group in the House. Nominations for membership of Departmental Select Committees in the British Parliament are proposed by the Committee of Selection. The full membership of a committee is chosen after a general election, and membership continues until the next election unless a member is replaced. The replacement of a member can only be carried out with the approval of the House, and normally only occurs when the status of a member changes, for instance, if the said member becomes a minister. In *El Congreso de los Diputados*, committee members are chosen by Parliamentary Groups, and may be replaced with another member or other members of the same political party. Replacement must be notified in writing to the Speaker of Congress. However, if the substitution is only for a specific matter, debate, or meeting, notice may also be given verbally. In the House of Commons, membership of Departmental Committees is confined, in practice, to back-bench Members of Parliament (MPs). Ministers, opposition front-bench spokesmen, and party whips do not normally serve on these committees. In Spain, members of the government may attend and speak at committee meetings, but may only vote at meetings of committees of which they are members. In contrast to the Spanish Parliament, as has been mentioned in paragraph four, the chairman of a committee in the British Parliament only votes when there is a tie in any vote in the committee. However, it is possible for members of parliament to serve on more than one committee in Britain.

In the British Parliament, committees determine their own subjects of enquiry, although, in the same way as in the Spanish Parliament, such subjects must come within an individual committee's terms of reference. They gather written and oral evidence, and sometimes information from visits in the United Kingdom or overseas. These committees are established by the House of Commons, and are therefore expected to report to the House on the outcome of their enquiries. In the Spanish Parliament, committees have to deal with bills or business entrusted to them in accordance with each committee's remit, by the Bureau of Congress. These may include legislative functions, involving matters to be debated and the approval of decisions made, political guideline functions, with debate about and approval of non-

legislative motions, and control functions, with requests for reports from members of the government, authorities, and civil servants. In the various committees, smaller or reporting committees are formed, which consist of a representative from each parliamentary group, and they hold meetings in private and prepare reports which have to be presented to the main committee.

As has been mentioned, Departmental Select Committees choose their own subjects of enquiry. Some inquiries may consist of a single day's oral evidence which the committee may publish without making a report, while others may last for several months giving rise to a report to the House. This would depend on the subject, external deadlines, and the amount of oral evidence the committee decides to take. When a subject of inquiry is chosen, the committee normally issues a press notice outlining the main themes of inquiry, and inviting interested parties to submit written evidence. The written evidence is then received and analysed, after which the committee invites a limited range of individuals or representatives of organisations to give oral evidence, in order to supplement what has been said in their written evidence. In the Spanish Parliament, committees are summoned by the Chairman, on his own initiative and with the consent of the Speaker of Congress, or at the request of two Parliamentary Groups, or one-fifth of the members of the committee. The Speaker of Congress may summon and chair any committee meeting, but is only entitled to vote at the meetings of committees of which he or she is a member. The Bureau and Spokesmen of a committee normally hold meetings in private prior to the committee's session. Standing Legislative Committees usually coincide with ministerial departments, and they collaborate in the making of laws. As has been mentioned in paragraph six, in these committees, reporting committees are formed in the various committees, and they prepare a report on the debate and approval of amendments. A final decision is made which, on occasion, as in the case of organic laws, has to be proposed at a plenary sitting of the House. However, when a committee has full legislative authority, proposals are referred directly to the Senate, in order to be negotiated. In contrast to the British Parliamentary System, Spanish committees do not deal with written and oral evidence presented by members of the public.

In the United Kingdom, committees usually meet once or twice a week when Parliament is sitting. Most of the evidence sessions are held in public, and transcripts are published on the committee's website soon after the session. Committees also have the power to order witnesses to attend a session, but these formal powers are rarely used. In Spain, committees do not have a fixed period for organising sessions, and, unlike British committees, the general public is not allowed to attend. However, access is permitted to journalists, and sessions may be recorded and broadcast. The appearance of people is voluntary, and it is the committees who request the presence of individuals or organisations, as opposed to what happens in the British parliament. Committees in the House of Commons also have the power to share evidence with other committees, and to meet jointly to take evidence and deliberate. Similarly, in El

Congreso de los Diputados, the Bureau of Congress may, on its own initiative or at the request of any committee, agree to allow other committees to report previously on a matter which is the remit of one particular committee.

In the British Parliament, when a committee has completed taking oral and written evidence, a draft report is prepared for the Chairman by the committee staff. This is then discussed in detail by the members of the committee, a process which sometimes continues over several meetings. Once the final report is agreed on, it is usually published within a week, and is made available to the public on the committee's website. In the Spanish Parliament, a report is prepared, based on the text of the proposal, the information provided by the reporting committee, and the amendments, if any, which have been approved by vote. The report is then finalised by the committee members and the clerks of the committee, who provide the Bureau and the sub-committee with the necessary technical and legal advice. This report is published within a few days, and is also available to the public on the committee's website. Spanish committees normally have a maximum period of two months to deal with a particular matter. This is different from British committees, where there is no time limit imposed for dealing with such matters.

British government departments are expected to reply to a committee report within sixty days. The reply normally takes the form of either a memorandum to the committee, which is published by the committee as a special report, or a White Paper published by the government. After a report and a government response are published, the committee has the option of recommending it for debate. In Spain, the government is not expected to reply to reports published by committees. It normally expresses its criteria with regard to a private member's bill before it is debated in the committee, and this occurs once the proposal has been examined and finalised, and before the matter in question has been debated at the plenary sitting.

As has been mentioned in paragraph six, in the House of Commons Departmental Select Committees choose their own subjects of enquiry, during which written evidence is requested from interested parties. After this, committees may also identify witnesses from whom they may wish to take oral evidence. Any persons or organisations who are interested in submitting written evidence are required to present a covering letter and a memorandum. The covering letter should contain their name and contact details, a request to give oral evidence (where applicable), and if they so desire, a request for the information to remain confidential. The memorandum should include a summary of the main points to be made, a brief introduction to the submitter, any factual information the submitter has to offer which may be useful to the committee, and any recommendations for action to be taken by the government. Care should be taken not to comment on matters currently before a court of law, or matters in respect of which court proceedings are imminent. Written evidence will become public either when the committee publishes it, or at such a time as oral evidence is given to a committee, whichever takes place first. This is made available in

a report and on the internet. In Spain, as has been mentioned in paragraph eight, it is the committee which requires the presence of people or organisations at its sessions, not the opposite, as in the British Parliament. Spanish committees may request, through the Speaker: (i) any information and documentation which they may require from the government and administrative bodies; (ii) the attendance of members of the government to report on matters relating to their respective departments; (iii) the presence of authorities and civil servants with expertise in the matters to be debated, to report to the committee; (iv) or the presence of persons knowledgeable in the subject matter for the purposes of reporting to and advising the committee.

In the House of Commons, with regard to giving oral evidence, committee staff will contact the persons or organisations involved to inform of any administrative arrangements. The committee staff will be able to provide the participants with an informal briefing, highlighting potential lines of questioning. The committee staff will also need to know the name and job title of the witnesses. If there is the possibility that matters which may arise during oral evidence are currently before a court of law, or court proceedings are imminent, the committee staff should be contacted.

On the day of the hearing, witnesses are advised to attend sessions prior to their own, in order to be able to comment on any evidence which may be relevant. The hearing is in the form of a question and answer session, in which the committee poses questions to the witnesses. Giving oral evidence in Parliament is generally a public process. However, witnesses who have particular reasons for wanting to give their evidence in private should inform the clerk of the committee. A witness may appeal to the Committee Chairman if he or she considers a particular question to be unfair, or that he or she may not be the appropriate person to answer it, or may need time to consider the answer or seek advice. Nevertheless, if the committee collectively considers that the question is proper, the witness must attempt to give an answer. A witness who is not in possession of the necessary information to answer a question may, however, offer to provide the committee with this information at a later date. In the Spanish Parliament, as has been mentioned in paragraph seven, there is no procedure for the hearing of oral evidence by the public. Nevertheless, in Spain there does exist a question and answer session, where politicians pose questions to the relevant parties. As will be seen in the analysis of the sessions of the committees, in Britain a question is answered immediately after it has been asked, while in Spain, a politician may ask several questions together, after which the participant will attempt to give the answers.

After the hearing of evidence has taken place, if witnesses have agreed to provide the committee with any further information, they should send it to the committee staff as soon as possible. This information is ordinarily treated as written evidence, and is published together with the other written evidence received by the committee. A transcript of what was said in the oral evidence is available a few days after the hearing. This uncorrected transcript is published on the committee's website,

and sent to witnesses. Witnesses are then asked to correct the transcript and identify any supplementary information requested by the members of the committee. In El Congreso de los Diputados, at the end of a committee session, a report is prepared in which a record is made of all the evidence given, and it is published on the committee's website. As opposed to the procedure in the British Parliament, the persons who have given evidence are not normally required to send any information to the committee after the hearing. In the House of Commons, a committee will ordinarily conclude its inquiry by agreeing on a report to be sent to the House. Likewise, in El Congreso de los Diputados, an inquiry concludes when a final report is approved by the committee, in the case of a legislative matter. In the case of a control function, the inquiry concludes at the end of the session in which evidence is given.

5.2 The Treasury Committee and *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*

The Treasury Committee is composed of fourteen members, eight of whom are Labour Members, four are Conservative Members, and the other two Members are from the Liberal Democrats Party. This is standard procedure in Departmental Select Committees, which consist of between eleven and fourteen members, of whom the majority belong to the governing party, while the others are selected from opposition parties. *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* has 38 members, as do all the other committees in the Spanish Parliament.

As determined by the House of Commons, the role of the Treasury Committee is to examine the expenditure, administration and policy of Her Majesty (HM) Treasury, HM Revenue and Customs, and associated public bodies. Its remit therefore also covers the Bank of England, the Financial Services Authority, and financial and economic subjects generally. Similarly, *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* negotiates all bills relating to economic business, except matters regarding the establishment of the State Budget, which are the responsibility of the Budget Committee.

In the following chapter, we shall conduct an analysis of parliamentary debates which took place in the committees mentioned above.

CHAPTER 6: ANALISIS OF CORPUS

6.1 Analysis of the transcripts of parliamentary sessions in The Treasury Committee of The House of Commons.

6.1.1 Table Eng1: financial stability.

The following table, Eng1, deals with the first debate of the English Parliament to be analysed, and shows the results of the analysis of the oral evidence given before the Treasury Committee of the House of Commons. This session, which took place on Thursday 1 February 2007, deals with financial stability in the United Kingdom. The following members of the Treasury Committee attended the session: Rt Hon John McFall, in the Chair (Chairman of the Treasury Committee, Labour MP), Mr David Gauke (Conservative MP), Ms Kerry McCarthy (Labour MP), Mr Andrew Love (Labour MP), and Mr Peter Viggers (Conservative MP). Oral evidence was given by the following witnesses: Sir John Gieve, Deputy Governor for Financial Stability, Bank of England, Mr Nigel Jenkinson, Executive Director for Financial Stability, Bank of England, Mr Jon Cunliffe, Managing Director, International Finance, HM Treasury, Mr Clive Maxwell, Director, Financial Services, HM Treasury, Mr Hector Sants, Managing Director, Wholesale Business Unit and Institutional Markets, Financial Services Authority, and Mr David Strachan, Leader, Financial Stability Sector Team and Director, Major Retail Groups Division, Financial Services Authority.

URNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENT S
Turn 1	Implied interrogative word: request ⁸⁷	No		Introduction: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 2a	Interrogative word	Yes	E8c	
Turn 2b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 3	Interrogative word	Yes	E4c	
Turn 4	Implied interrogative	Yes	E4c	

⁸⁷ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. As a request is implied, the witness can only be considered to have given a satisfactory answer if he or she complies with the request (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

	word: requires comment ⁸⁸			
Turn 5	Imperative	No		
Turn 6	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7a(i) ⁸⁹	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7a(ii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7a(iii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7b(i) ⁹⁰	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7b(ii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 7b(iii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 8a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 8b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 9a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T9b: not counted in the total number of questions.

⁸⁸ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. In order to be considered to have given a satisfactory answer, the witness would be expected to give a further comment (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

⁸⁹ Question posed to three people.

⁹⁰ Question posed to three people.

Turn 9b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 10	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 11	Declarative	No		
Turn 12	Declarative	Yes	E6f	
Turn 13	Declarative	Yes	E4c	
Turn 14a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to T14b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 14b(i) ⁹¹	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 14b(ii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E13	
Turn 14b(iii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E13	
Turn 15a(i) ⁹²	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E6f	
Turn 15a(ii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 15a(iii)	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E1	
Turn 15b(i) ⁹³	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6f	
Turn 15b(ii)	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 15b(iii)	Interrogative Word	Yes	E1	

⁹¹ Question posed to three people.

⁹² Question posed to three people.

⁹³ Question posed to three people.

Turn 16(i)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 16(ii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 16(iii)	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 17	Moodless	No		
Turn 18	Moodless	No		
Turn 19a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Question is made more specific in T19b, T19c, and T19d: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 19b(i) ⁹⁴	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 19b(ii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 19c(i) ⁹⁵	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 19c(ii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 19d(i) ⁹⁶	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		

⁹⁴ Question posed to two people.

⁹⁵ Question posed to two people.

⁹⁶ Question posed to two people.

Turn 19d(ii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 20	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 21(i) ⁹⁷	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 21(ii)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 21(iii)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 22a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 22b	Interrogative word	No		Repetition of question T22a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 23(i) ⁹⁸	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E8e	
Turn 23(ii)	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E8e	
Turn 23(iii)	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E8e	
Turn 24a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 24b	Interrogative word	No		

⁹⁷ Question posed to three people.

⁹⁸ Question posed to three people.

Turn 25a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 25b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 26	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 27a	Polar	No		Introductory question to T27b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 27b	Interrogative word	Yes	E7c	
Turn 27c	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 28a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 28b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 29	Interrogative word	Yes	E10	
Turn 30	Imperative	No		
Turn 31	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Witness asks for repetition: no genuine attempt to equivocate.
Turn 32	Interrogative word	No		Question T31 repeated: not counted in the total number of

				questions.
Turn 33	Declarative	No		
Turn 34	Moodless	No		
Turn 35	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 36	Moodless	No		
Turn 37	Declarative	Yes	E4e	
Turn 38	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 39	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E10	
Turn 40	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 41	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 42	Moodless	No		
Turn 43	Declarative	No		
Turn 44	Declarative	No		
Turn 45	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 46	Declarative	No		
Turn 47	Declarative	No		
Turn 48	Declarative	No		
Turn 49	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 50	Declarative	No		

Turn 51	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 52	Moodless	No		
Turn 53	Moodless	No		
Turn 54	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6f	
Turn 55	Declarative	Yes	E7c	
Turn 56	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 57a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T57b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 57b	Declarative	No		
Turn 58	Declarative	No		
Turn 59	Declarative	Yes	E4d	
Turn 60	Moodless	No		
Turn 61	Disjunctive	No		
Turn 62	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 63a(i) ⁹⁹	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 63a(ii)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 63b(i) ¹⁰⁰	Interrogative word	No		

⁹⁹ Question posed to two people.

¹⁰⁰ Question posed to two people.

Turn 63b(ii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 64	Declarative	Yes	E13	
Turn 65	Declarative	No		
Turn 66	Declarative	Yes	E13	
Turn 67a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T67b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 67b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E7d	Potentially face-threatening question.
Turn 67c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6e	
Turn 68	Declarative	Yes	E8c	
Turn 69	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 70	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 71a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T71b: not counted in the total number of questions.

Turn 71b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 71c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 72a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T72b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 72b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 73a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 73b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 74	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 75a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T75b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 75b(i) ¹⁰¹	Indirect	No		
Turn 75b(ii)	Indirect	Yes	E1	

¹⁰¹ Question posed to three people.

Turn 75b(iii)	Indirect	Yes	E1	
Turn 75c(i) ¹⁰²	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 75c(ii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 75c(iii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 76	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 77	Interrogative word	Yes	E13	
Turn 78a	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 78b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 78c	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 79a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introductory question to T79b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 79b(i) ¹⁰³	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E10	
Turn 79b(ii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	

¹⁰² Question posed to three people.

¹⁰³ Question posed to three people.

Turn 79b(iii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 79c(i) ¹⁰⁴	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 79c(ii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 79c(iii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 79d(i) ¹⁰⁵	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 79d(ii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 79d(iii)	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 80	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 81	Declarative	No		
Turn 82	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 83	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 84a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		

¹⁰⁴ Question posed to three people.

¹⁰⁵ Question posed to three people.

Turn 84b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 85a	Interrogative word	No		Introduction to T85c: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 85b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 85c	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 86	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 87	Declarative	No		
Turn 88	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 89	Declarative	No		
Turn 90	Implied interrogative word: request			
Turn 91	No question			Chairman thanks witnesses: not counted in the total number of questions.

The Treasury Committee held this debate on financial stability, in which 91 question turns were used by the five MPs who attended: Mr John Mc Fall, the Chairman (Labour, 47), Ms Kerry McCarthy (Labour, 13), Mr Peter Viggers (Conservative, 10), Mr David Gauke (Conservative, 10) and Mr Andrew Love (Labour,

10). The exact number of questions posed was arrived at by using the following criteria. Question turns T8, T9, T14, T15, T22, T24, T28, T57, T63, T72 and T73 all consist of two separate questions, and are given the term *double-barrelled questions* by Bull (2003:110). Similarly, although they are semantically linked by the conjunction “and”, turns T2, T7, T25 and T84 also contain two questions. Question turns T27, T67, T71, T75, T78 and T85, on the other hand, all involve three questions, while T19 and T79 consist of four questions each. If we follow these criteria, we would arrive at a total number of 124 questions. However, we also need to take into account certain factors relating to other questions posed in this parliamentary session. In a number of cases, the interviewer specifically requests more than one witness to answer a particular question. Therefore, in order to obtain a more accurate indication of the equivocation involved in answers, we have found it necessary to add extra questions in these question turns. As a result of this, in turn T19, questions T19b, T19c and T19d each contain an extra question for the second witness. This also occurs in turn T63, where a second witness is asked to answer questions T63a and T63b. Moreover, in turns T7, T14, T15, T16, T21, T23, T75 and T79, as many as three witnesses are required to give answers. Therefore, as can be observed in Table Eng 1, two extra questions have been added to T7a, T7b, T14b, T15a, T15b, T16, T21, T23, T75b, T75c, T79b, T79c, and T79d. This would mean adding a further 31 questions, which would give us a total of 155. Nevertheless, before we can calculate the percentages of equivocation in the answers provided by the interviewees, it will also be necessary, for various reasons, to deduct a number of questions from the total. The witnesses present identify themselves in answer to question T1, which will not be counted in the final number of questions, as equivocation strategies are unlikely to be employed in this case. The same could be said of T91, where the Chairman thanks the witnesses before closing the session. Moreover, T9a is really an introduction to T9b, and both will therefore be counted as one question. The same could be said of questions T14a and T14b, T27a and T27b, T57a and T57b, T67a and T67b, T71a and T71b, T72a and T72b, T75a and T75b, T79a and T79b, and T85a and T85c. All of these pairs will also be counted as one question each. In addition, question T32 is a repetition of T31, where there is no deliberate attempt to equivocate, as the witness did not hear or understand the original question. These two will also constitute a single question. Moreover, T22b is repetition of T22a. These two will also be counted as one question. In addition, T19a is made more specific in the questions that follow, (T19b, T19c and T19d), and will also be omitted from the final tally. After these 20 questions are deducted, we arrive at a final total of 140 questions.

As can be seen from Table Eng1 above, of the 140 questions posed in this parliamentary debate, 43 of these were deemed not to have received satisfactory replies (30.7% of the total), while an adequate reply was given to 86 questions (69.3%)¹⁰⁶. In order to determine which questions receive a satisfactory reply, we have

¹⁰⁶ See graph nº1.

applied the theory discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, and also section 4.1.3, which deals with what Bull terms immediate replies (1994, 2003). Moreover, the type of equivocation observed in unsatisfactory answers will be determined by the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in chapter 4, section 2.

As we mentioned in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, question types are important in determining whether equivocation occurs in a reply. In this regard, seven of the eight question types identified in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1 were found in this debate on financial stability. As can be seen from Table Eng1, the number of questions for each type, with their respective percentages of the total number of questions posed in brackets, is the following:

- implied interrogative word questions, 59 (42.1%);
- interrogative word questions, 45 (32.1%);
- declarative questions, 22 (15.7%);
- moodless questions 8 (5.7%);
- indirect questions, 3 (2.1%);
- imperative questions, 2 (1.4%);
- disjunctive questions, 1 (0.7%)¹⁰⁷.

We will now provide a list of the equivocation strategies used in this parliamentary session, after which, statistics of the frequency of the use of each type will be given. An analysis will then be made of at least one example of each type of equivocation observed in the interviewees' answers. This will be followed by a discussion where we will try to determine why a particular strategy was used by the witnesses to avoid answering a question. Finally, the percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each of the different question types will be discussed, and we will also try to establish the reasons why certain question categories were employed by the interviewers.

In this parliamentary debate of the Treasury Committee, seven types of equivocation have been observed. These include:

- E1 (*Ignores the question*)¹⁰⁸.
- E4 (*Attacks the question*, three sub-types): E4c (the question is based on a false premise), E4d (the question is factually inaccurate), and E4e (the question includes a misquotation).

¹⁰⁷ See graph n°2.

¹⁰⁸ The code numbers used to identify each type and sub-type of equivocation are the same as those which appear in the equivocation typology in Chapter 4, Section 2.

- E6 (*Declines to answer*, two sub-types): E6e (pleads ignorance) and E6f (hot potato: the responsibility for answering the question is transferred to someone else).
- E7 (*Makes political point*, three sub-types): E7c (justifies policy), E7d (gives reassurance) and E7f (offers political analysis).
- E8 (*Gives incomplete reply*, two sub-types): E8c (partial answer), and E8e (fractional reply).
- E10 (*States or implies that the question has already been answered*).
- E13 (*Modifies the question*).

The frequency with which each type occurs in the answers to questions, with their respective percentages of the total number of questions involving equivocation given in brackets, is the following:

- E1: 17 questions (39.5%);
- E4: 5 questions (11.6%);
- E6: 5 questions (11.6%);
- E8: 5 questions (11.6%);
- E13: 5 questions (11.6%).
- E7: 3 questions (7.0%);
- E10: 3 questions (7.0%)¹⁰⁹.

Examples of the equivocation strategies identified in the witnesses' answers will now be analysed. In this regard, the following circumstance should be taken into account. In some questions, more than one strategy of equivocation has been observed in the answers given. This occurs in questions T29, T37 and T67b. In these cases, we shall take into account the one which we think has the greatest influence on the interviewee's answer, and this will be the type recorded in Table Eng1.

In question turn T2, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee, John McFall, poses two questions regarding changes in the Memorandum of Understanding, to the witnesses present: “[Turn 2a] What were the main changes [Turn 2b] and why were they brought about?” These are both *interrogative word questions*, which require the interviewee to supply a missing variable (Bull 2003:105). Jon Cunliffe, the Managing Director for international finance at the Treasury, starts by giving a suitable reply to the second question, T2b: “It was changed, I think, to bring it more up-to-date with the operating experience of the years since 1997 and the changing circumstances.” However, in answering the first question, he equivocates because he provides a partial answer:

¹⁰⁹ See graph n°3.

... one of the main changes is that it now has quite a developed section on business continuity operational risk and how the Standing Committee addresses that, because that work very much developed after September 11. It also has some clearer statements, I think, of Bank and FSA¹¹⁰ responsibilities.

In a partial reply, the politician (in this case, the witness) replies to only part of a *single-barrelled question*, that is, a question about one aspect (Bull 2003). Cunliffe only mentions *one* of the main changes to the MoU, without any reference to others. As a matter of fact, his use of the *scalar implicature* "... one of the main changes is that ..." implies that there were indeed other changes. This type of equivocation is classified by Bull under the category of *intermediate replies* (2003:110), and is given the code number E8c in the typology.

In question T3, John McFall expresses the opinion that the Bank's role is downgraded, and asks Sir John Gieve, the Deputy Governor of the Bank, why this has happened. The latter attacks the question, suggesting that it is based on a false premise (equivocation strategy E4c): "I do not think the role has been downgraded ...". In T4, the Chairman asks another question with regard to the MoU mentioned above: "Are you saying that there was less rigorous thought going into that, Sir John?" This is an *implied interrogative word question*, which, although it contains a polar structure, requires the person answering to make some sort of additional comment. In addition to answering "yes" or "no" to the question, he would be expected to explain *why* this was the case. The Chairman also goes on to accuse Sir John of giving a flippant answer: "I want Sir John to answer that because it is a bit of a flippant answer." However, the latter is again evasive and uses the same strategy as in the answer to question T3 (E4c): "I was not trying to be flippant. I was trying to make a point." With this reply, Sir John attacks the last comment made by the Chairman in order to change the focus of attention, and thus delay giving a reply to question T4. After this, John McFall insists that Sir John answers the question: "So give us thorough answers, please." This question, T5, is in the *imperative* form, and requires the person answering to provide a missing variable in the same way as in an *interrogative word question*. In answer to this, Sir John finally provides a satisfactory reply, where he explains what the MoU is about:

Sir John Gieve: I am sorry, I was not intending to be flippant. Both the original statement and this revised memorandum were agreed before I got to the Bank, but the whole point of this memorandum is that the stability of the financial system is, in fact, a joint function, if you like, of the three parties to the memorandum—that is what it is about—so I think it was rather odd to say in the

¹¹⁰ Financial Services Authority. A quasi-judicial body responsible for the regulation of the financial services industry in the United Kingdom between 2001 and 2013. (Wikipedia).

first one, and I think it is an improvement to say in the second one, that the Bank contributes to the financial stability but it is not solely responsible for it.

By apologising first, and then trying to explain certain facts related to the MoU, it seems that Sir John does make a serious attempt to provide a reply to the questions posed.

With regard to giving the benefit of the doubt to the hearer in the case of whether a reply can be deemed satisfactory or not, it would now be pertinent to make a comment on the answer to question T8b. The Chairman of the Treasury Committee poses the following question to Hector Sants, the Managing Director of the Wholesale Business Unit and International Markets of the FSA: “Was your influence over the past few years significant in ensuring the change in wording the Memorandum of Understanding?” Hector Sants makes the following remarks:

In terms of the MoU from the FSA's point of view, I think we do feel, both through the MoU and, in a way, echoing some of the earlier comments, more importantly, through regular interaction with the Bank and the Treasury - particularly through the tests, though, critically, we do all understand better what our relevant roles are and, particularly at the operational level, how it would all fit together in the event of a crisis - that testing it all works is actually the real way to get into the guts of whether it is functioning properly rather than the particulars of the memorandum; and the fact that we have done tests in the last year or two which previously had not been done, I think, is critical to us feeling that it works better.

The question posed by the Chairman is of the *implied interrogative* type, which, as we mentioned earlier, requires the person answering, in addition to replying with the words “yes” or “no”, to provide an additional comment. In this case, if the witness answered “yes”, he would be expected to explain *in what way* his influence was significant to the changes in the MoU. Sants does not actually use the word “yes” in his reply, but seems to make his views clear.

This is followed by further exchanges between the MPs and the witnesses about the MoU, and in question T12, Peter Viggers, the Conservative MP, gives his own account of the situation. He then asks the witness for agreement: “That is what happened, surely, Sir John?” This is a *declarative question*, which does not contain interrogative syntax, but is, nevertheless, a request for information. Two sub-types of the equivocation strategy type E6 (*Declines to answer*) can be found in the answer given by the witness. First of all, Sir John Gieve states that he is unable to answer (E6a): “I was not around negotiating the first one.” He then transfers the responsibility for

answering the question to another witness (E6f): “Jon was, so he can tell us.”¹¹¹ In answer to another *declarative question*, T13, “That has got to be true”, the second witness, also equivocates because he attacks the question, saying that it is based on a false premise (equivocation sub-strategy E4c): “I have to say, it is not a version of events I recognise at all.” He then goes on to give his own account of what actually occurred.

Another type of equivocation used by the witnesses in this debate, precisely our own addition to the typology proposed by Bull and Meyer (1993) and Bull (2003), strategy E13 (*Modifies the question*), occurs in the answer given to the questions in turn T14. Peter Viggers asks the lead witness from each group to define financial stability, T14a, a question which he extends in T14b: “What are you seeking with financial stability?” The first witness to answer is Jon Cunliffe, who gives a clear and coherent reply: “I think you are seeking to ensure that the financial system can operate, can play the role that it needs to play in the economy as a whole.” However, the next witness, Sir John Gieve, equivocates because he modifies the question, and goes on to define financial *instability*:

Sir John Gieve: I think it is easier to define financial instability actually; and the instability that we are concerned about is a loss of functionality in the financial system which would damage the wider economy because it no longer functioned to bring savings and investment into balance or to transmit money effectively round the system.

In this case, the witness avoids giving a direct reply to the question posed, in order to give voice to his ideas on a completely different issue. A similar tactic is adopted by the third witness, Hector Sants, who makes the most of the opportunity provided by Sir John, and is also able to give his views on financial instability:

Mr Sants: I have not got a lot to add to that last comment other than maybe just to elaborate that probably the two main transmission mechanisms for the financial market place impacting on the real economy would probably come either through operational infrastructure disruption or through market movements and subsequently, therefore, financial instability. That is the mechanism by which the financial market place would transmit a shock into the real economy which would then create financial instability.

In this way, Sants also indulges in the use of the equivocation strategy E13.

Still on the subject of financial stability, which is the main theme under discussion in this debate, Peter Viggers poses two more questions to the three main witnesses in question turn T15. The first, T15a, is an *implied interrogative word question* which

¹¹¹ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T12. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E6f, since the responsibility for answering the question was passed on to a second witness, who makes an attempt to give a reply in T13.

involves a request. The witness can only be considered to have given a reply if he or she complies with the request¹¹²: “Can I ask each of the three of you, please, to characterise the current environment for financial stability?” The second question which the MP asks the witness, T15b, is a straightforward *interrogative word question*: “What are the principal risks at the moment?” In reply, Jon Cunliffe declines to answer, transferring the responsibility to the other witnesses (equivocation strategy E6f): “It might be best for the FSA and the Bank of England to start with that, because the FSA has recently done an analysis and the Bank has published its Financial Stability Review.” Although Hector Sants gives an adequate reply to both questions, there is no reply from Sir John Gieve on behalf of the Bank of England, who does not even acknowledge that the questions have been asked. The latter has, therefore, incurred in the use of the equivocation strategy E1 (*Ignores the question*).

The E1 type of equivocation is also present in some of the answers given in question turn T19. In this case, four separate questions are asked by Peter Viggers. These questions are addressed to two people. As the first question, T19a, is really an introduction to those that follow, we shall concentrate on the replies to questions T19b, T19c and T19d:

[Turn 19b] How do you share information? **[Turn 19c]** Do you have staff exchanges from time to time? **[Turn 19d]** Do you have a happy working relationship at all levels?

Although questions T19c and T19d consist of a polar structure, they are really *implied interrogative word questions* which require a further comment. In other words, if the answer to question 19c were “yes”, the witnesses would be expected to state the frequency with which the staff exchanges occurred. Similarly, if the witnesses also replied “yes” to question 19d, they would need to give reasons as to *why* the working relationship was happy. The first witness to answer, Hector Sants, gives adequate replies to the three questions. However, the second witness, Sir John Gieve, only gives a reply to question 19c:

Obviously at a senior level, Hector or David attend our Financial Stability Board, I am a member of the FSA Board, Callum McCarthy is a member of the Bank's Court, so there is interaction at every level.

Sir John makes no attempt to answer questions 19b and 19d, or even acknowledge that they have been asked, and again indulges in equivocation type E1.

In question turn T23, there is an example of an *intermediate reply*. David Gauke, another Conservative MP, asks the three witnesses the following question:

¹¹² See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.3.

Can I ask each of the organisations what resources are devoted to financial stability, looking at numbers of staff, expenditure, et cetera?

This is what Bull terms a *multi-barrelled question*, one which deals with three or more aspects (2003:110-111). The answers given show that all three witnesses equivocate, because they only mention one of the matters in question:

Sir John Gieve: Directly we have a division under Nigel of about 100 people working on financial stability issues. That includes a team of, I think, around 10 who work on financial crisis management. As to business continuity work, we have a single team covering the external responsibilities and our own preparations internally within the Bank, and there are about 15 people in that.

Mr Cunliffe: We have 75 people in the Treasury who work on the financial sector generally. We do not pull out financial stability issues specifically in each area. A lot of the different teams have financial stability responsibilities. Then we have six or seven people who have specific responsibilities for financial stability and operational stability and supporting the Tripartite Committee.

Mr Sants: The direct co-ordinating team, which is David's team, has some 15 or so people in it, but, of course, in our case, the type of issues that we are addressing, the ones I have just set out, are also part of our day-to-day activity. So, in that sense, you could say that effectively all our staff engaging with the larger institutions who are central to the financial system are party to this overall initiative.

In these replies, Sir John Gieve, Jon Cunliffe and Hector Sants, only mention staff numbers, without discussing any other aspect. This type of *intermediate reply* is classified in the equivocation typology as a fractional answer (strategy E8c). It is important to note that, in this case, the three witnesses equivocate in the same manner. This probably occurs because they are unwilling to reveal secrets of their respective organisations.

A different type of equivocation strategy is used in question turn T27, namely E7 (*Makes political point*). David Gauke poses two *interrogative word questions* to Sir John Gieve:

Sir John, ... **[Turn 27b]** To what extent in your role as a member of the MPC do you bring a financial stability angle to the discussions and **[Turn 27c]** how important is that to the discussions of the MPC?¹¹³

In his reply, Sir John simply justifies the policy of the Central Bank (equivocation type E7c), and then goes on to discuss different issues:

¹¹³ Monetary Policy Committee. A committee of the Bank of England which decides the official interest rate in the United Kingdom.

Sir John Gieve: The financial system is a key part of the transmission mechanism for monetary policy, and that is one reason why the Central Bank cannot step away from a concern for financial instability. The two go together. But the sort of issues that I am talking about in the Standing Committee are essentially about systemic risk and the risk of instability incidents and crises. We tend to be talking about, if you like, the tail end of the distribution, the improbable events; whereas naturally in the MPC in normal times we are talking about the balance of risk but we are broadly focusing on what is most likely to happen.

He states that his knowledge and work play a part in the MPC, but fails to emphasize to *what extent* they actually do, which is required by the question:

What I would say on the MPC is that, of course, I bring my knowledge and the work we have done on the financial sector to the table ...

He does, nevertheless, give a satisfactory reply to question T27c: "... but I do not see that as in normal times determining how I vote because it is a different question that I am addressing."

One of the more unusual types of equivocation, of which there are few examples in our analysis of the British Parliamentary sessions, can be seen in the response to question T29. John McFall, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee, asks the witnesses a question regarding risks to financial stability: "... each of you, what would you currently regard as the top three risks to financial stability?" Hector Sants, states in his reply that the answer to the question was already given before (equivocation strategy E10):

... I think that potential types of external events which would then drive through to financial stability (and I have obviously already touched on the ones that we particularly highlight in the FRO) would have to be, I think, at the top of the list currently.

It is also arguable that, in his answer, he also incurs in equivocation, since he goes on to vaguely mention a possible risk to financial stability. However, in this case, he equivocates because he only mentions *one* instead of *three*:

Having said that, as a small rider, as I also mentioned earlier, clearly it seems reasonable to forecast that financial market conditions will get more difficult just because of the length of time we have been in this relatively benign period, so that relative importance of market events, I think, will rise over the coming months.

Sants, in this case, only gives a fractional reply to the question (equivocation type E8c)¹¹⁴.

Equivocation also occurs in the reply to question T37. The Chairman asks Sir John Gieve a question relating to hedge funds: “So hedge funds, credit derivatives, is not in the top 12 of sources of financial vulnerability.” This is a *declarative question*, which, as Harris suggests (1991), is a type of question put forward for agreement or disagreement on the part of the interviewee. Sir John Gieve begins his reply by saying: “Yes, ...”. It is not clear whether, by saying “yes”, he is agreeing with the Chairman. Moreover, he goes on to equivocate in two different ways. Firstly, he attacks the question by hinting that he was wrongly quoted (equivocation strategy E4e), or, at least, not quoted to the full extent:

... what I went on to say was that, nonetheless, hedge funds come in 40 times or more in the FSR, so they are a new factor in the financial markets.

He then makes a political point, offering his own political analysis about hedge funds risks (sub-type E7f)¹¹⁵:

... The point I was trying to make was that the spreading of risk, of which the growth of hedge funds has been one part, is in itself a positive in many ways in terms of financial stability because it allows the key players at the centre of the financial system, whose failure would have very widespread consequences for the economy, to off load some of their risk. But as I have just said, the fact that the derivatives markets—and, again, this is not just the hedge funds, it is just as much the investment banks—have grown and developed very rapidly in clement times and the fact that those have not been tested in a genuine downturn and a point of turn of the credit cycle means that we face some risks, because none of the players know quite how they will behave. The risk that they will behave differently is what Hector has talked about.

He does not, however, give a clear reply to question T37, as to whether hedge funds are in the top twelve list of financial vulnerability.

In T54, Kerry McCarthy, a Labour MP, asks Jon Cunliffe the following question about hedge fund markets: “Is it not more of a trend now in the hedge fund markets that because they are using similar financial models that herd mentality is growing?” Cunliffe starts to answer and equivocates because he suggests that another witness

¹¹⁴ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T29. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E10, since, by that the question was answered earlier, the witness is able to change its focus and give a different answer.

¹¹⁵ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T37. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E4e, since, by suggesting that he has been misquoted, the witness is able to change the focus of the question and give a different answer.

should answer the question (equivocation strategy E6f): “I do not think so. Hector will have more information about how the models work, but I think—”. Before he is allowed to finish, he is interrupted by the MP who poses another question (T55): “I think there was an IMF warning issued.” Suggesting that the witness equivocates in his answer to T54 would seem to be a contradiction of a point made in chapter 4, section 4.1.3, where we stated that an interrupted answer would not be classified as equivocation, since it is not possible to ascertain whether or not the interviewee will answer the question. Nevertheless, it is arguable that McCarthy interrupts Cunliffe’s answer because he realizes that he is going to continue to equivocate. Cunliffe again equivocates in his answer to question T55 because he does not agree or disagree with the MP, but rather, justifies the policy (equivocation type E7c):

Mr Cunliffe: There is another set of players in the market who often take contrary positions, and some of the techniques they use—. I will go back to this point. It is difficult to define what is a hedge fund; and just about everything we talk about is done by the proprietary trading desks of big banks throughout the world, so this is not exclusive to hedge funds. For example, the use of derivatives, which John mentioned, which cause concerns about understanding the instruments, value in the instruments, but of course one of things that credit derives do is they take risk and they cut it up and they parcel it out to people who are best able to bear it, and there is an argument that one of the reasons why the financial sector has been able to weather some pretty big shocks is that it has actually been able to spread risk or diversify it more efficiently through these instruments. The point I was simply making is that there is an up side and a down side here; it is quite a complex picture.

As the discussion on hedge funds continues, the witness again equivocates in his answer to question T59: “So you can set up that sort of business by the back door.” In this case, Cunliffe attacks the question, claiming that it is factually inaccurate (equivocation type E4d), and thus avoids answering the question posed: “It is not by the back door.” It is evident that the witness has no intention of getting involved in the discussion about hedge funds, possibly because of his ignorance of the matter.

In turn T63, Kerry McCarthy, asks two questions, and suggests that possibly all three witnesses could answer¹¹⁶:

[Turn 63a] What did you learn from the failure of Amaranth?¹¹⁷ **[Turn 63b]** What assessment did you make at the time whether it would pose a financial stability threat?

¹¹⁶ Since the MP uses the word “possibly” in the question, it is not obligatory that all three witnesses should answer, and therefore we will not consider the third witness to have incurred in equivocation for not having provided a reply.

Hector Sants, the first witness to speak, gives suitable replies to both questions. The second witness, Sir John Gieve, also replies to the first question, drawing conclusions arrived at from the Amaranth case:

The question is what comfort do we draw from that. I think you can draw a bit of comfort in that they were able to liquidate their positions smoothly within working markets, that the leverage turned out to be not as great as it was in LTCM¹¹⁸, and so on. Does that mean all is well and we do not need to worry about big price changes, in this case in the gas futures market or other markets? There were a few special features of the Amaranth case which meant that it had a few things going for it which might not always be true, one of which was it was in a special market, and the other of which was the change that hit it was a positive change for the world economy, namely a reduction in prices. If you go back to 1998, you had some big negative shocks to the world economy, the default of Russia and so, which were associated with LTCM. I thought it was very interesting.

However, he makes no comment as to whether it would constitute a threat to financial stability, and therefore makes no attempt to answer the second question (T63b), or even acknowledge that the question has been asked. In this way, he incurs in equivocation (strategy E1).

In the exchanges which follow, Kerry Mc Carthy and Sir John Gieve continue to discuss the Amaranth case. Kerry McCarthy asks Sir John Gieve the following question (T64):

If Amaranth had happened in the economic circumstance of 1998, potentially the fall-out would have been much greater and vice versa?

This question, which is *declarative* in structure, plays the role of an *implied interrogative word question*, since the witness, in addition to answering “yes” or “no”, will be expected to give reasons for his opinion. The latter equivocates because he gives his own opinion of the situation, but does not give a straight answer to the question:

My conclusion is that it is positive because a lot of things worked well which allowed this big loss to be swallowed by the market. I do not think it should lead us relax our guard completely.

¹¹⁷ A defunct hedge fund firm.

¹¹⁸ Long-term Capital Management. A hedge fund management firm based in Greenwich, Connecticut from 1994 to 1998.

In this case he could be said to modify the question (equivocation strategy E13), or at least to reformulate it (Clayman 1993)¹¹⁹, thus answering a different question in order to avoid giving a reply. McCarthy then tries to obtain more information by asking question T65: “It was a particular combination of factors.” Sir John agrees with the MP, answering: “Yes, there were some special factors.” By answering “Yes ...”, Sir John converts question T65, which has a *declarative* structure, into an *implied interrogative question*. In this case he would be expected to identify *what* the special factors were, which he fails to do, and therefore incurs in equivocation strategy E8c (partial reply). However, another witness, Jon Cunliffe, is able to provide a more complete answer, which we will consider to be an acceptable reply to the question:

On why was it different to LTCM, John is right that 1998 was a particularly stressed time in the world economy because of the Asian crisis and the Russian default, et cetera. The other point I make is its leverage was less. One of the things that is different now in relation to hedge funds and the way they are regulated, because they are regulated, is that a lot of the prudential regulators focus on this question of where leverage is coming from in the financial system. Of course LTCM was very highly leveraged.

In this case, it can be seen that Cunliffe defends his colleague by saying that he has made a valid point, but gives a number of other reasons about the issue. This latter circumstance enhances even further Sir John’s inability or unwillingness to give a full answer.

In turn T67, specifically question T67b, a witness is confronted by what we could term a potentially face-threatening question, posed by the Chairman of the Treasury Committee:

Q67 Chairman: [Turn 67a] Could I just finish this? Sir Andrew Large, your predecessor, made a speech in Hong Kong a number of years ago, "Where is the Risk?" I was not able to get it before I came here. I tried the Bank of England website but failed this morning in that. On this issue of hedge funds, he gave the impression that we do not know where the risk is. You have discussed how hedge funds and complex derivatives parcel out risk and this can lessen the concentration of risk. I accept the liquidity brings the markets and the positive aspects but **[Turn 67b]** does it not also mean that you cannot see where the risks currently lie **[Turn 67c]** and, along with complex financial instruments, this opaqueness poses a risk in itself?

As we have mentioned, the important question here is T67b: “... does it not also mean that you cannot see where the risks currently lie ...?” This question is considered to be

¹¹⁹ See chapter 3, section 3.1.3.3.

potentially face-threatening because, if Hector Sants agrees with the Chairman, he would be seen to be incompetent. On the other hand, if he disagreed, he would be contradicting his predecessor, Sir Andrew Large. Sants avoids either agreeing or disagreeing with the Chairman's question, by making clever use of different equivocation strategies in order to escape from the communicative conflict. First of all, he makes a political point by trying to give reassurance (equivocation strategy E7d):

I would agree with you that one of the challenges, or arguably the biggest challenge, we face from the financial stability perspective is the fact that it is almost axiomatic that markets are getting ever more complex.

He then implies that the Chairman understands the situation of risk by suggesting that the latter made an earlier comment which is relevant to the question (type E10):

As you yourself have said, recent historical experience suggests that one of the positives of the increased complexity of markets has been increased risk dispersion.

He then goes on to give his own political analysis (strategy E7f):

... It is really important to recognise the hedge funds have been a primary agent in that increased risk dispersion. Our point about the benefits hedge funds bring to the system is to indicate, on historical records to date, that ability to disperse risk has been a very major benefit to the market-place. I do not want, in any way, to underestimate the point you are making, which is as markets get more complex the available transparency to the regulatory community overseeing those market places is diminished.

He ends up by pleading ignorance (equivocation type E6e), suggesting that the situation regarding the risks in hedge funds is unclear¹²⁰:

Whilst it is reasonable to say that visibility of risk is on a declining trend due to complexity, it is not totally clear that increased visibility of risk would necessarily help regulate.

By using different types of strategies, Sants avoids giving a straightforward reply to the questions posed by the Chairman, and thus avoids a potential loss of face.

¹²⁰ As many as four equivocation strategies have been used by the witness in answering T67b. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E7d, because we are of the opinion that giving his own political analysis is the strategy which is most likely to prevent face loss, at least to a certain extent.

Turn T75 consists of three questions, which are addressed to three people, one from each group. As can be seen in Table Eng1, T75a is an introductory question to T75b, and will not be taken into account. In T75b and T75c, Andrew Love, the Labour MP, makes use of *indirect questions* to ask the witnesses about a term used in the discussion:

[Turn 75b] I want to ask each of you what you mean or understand by the term "search for yield" **[Turn 75c]** and what your concerns are arising from it.

Although the MP specifies that he would like one person from each group to answer the questions, only the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England provides a reply. The other two witnesses equivocate by ignoring both questions (strategy E1), quite probably in order to conceal their ignorance of the concept. The fact that the representatives of the Treasury and the FSA are unable to answer either of the questions posed further serves to reinforce this point.

An attempt will now be made to establish why interviewees preferred a particular equivocation strategy to another, to avoid answering questions posed in this parliamentary session. As can be observed from the statistics given above, type E1 (Ignores the question), was by far the most used. This strategy was employed 17 times by the witnesses, which represents 39.5% of the total number of non-replies. An important reason for this seems to be the fact that when a question is completely ignored, the MPs have not always insisted on receiving an answer, when they pose the following question. This is in contrast to what usually occurs when other equivocation strategies are used. For example, in question turn T19 (quoted earlier), which contains questions specifically posed to two people, the first person provides replies to all of questions. On the other hand, although he answers question T19c, the second witness ignores questions T19b and T19d. However, the Chairman does not insist upon obtaining a reply in question turn T20, but instead asks about a different matter:

Q20 Chairman: We did visit the Bank's Court, and at a later date we will have them in, but do the Court get information on your deliberations in the Tripartite Committee?

The same occurs in turn T75 (quoted earlier), where questions T75b and T75c are addressed to three witnesses. Only the first group representative replies to the questions, while the other two people ignore them. In the same way as in T20, the interviewer simply asks a different question in T76:

Q76 Mr Love: There were a lot of people going around saying it is the benign macroeconomic environment created by central banks, the low interest environment you talked about. Do you accept some responsibility for this narrowing of risk?

However, in the following example, where a different equivocation strategy (E4c) is used in answer to question T3, the MP places pressure on the witness to give a reply in the questions that follow, T4 and T5:

Q4 Chairman: An awful lot of thought should have gone into the Memorandum of Understanding in 1997. Are you saying that there was less rigorous thought going into that, Sir John? I want Sir John to answer that because it is a bit of a flippant answer.

Sir John Gieve: I was not intending to be flippant. I was trying to make a point.

Q5 Chairman: We want to get underneath the surface, Sir John, just the same as we are trying to do with departmental budgets. For example, we looked at the Home Office the other day in the Spending Review. So give us thorough answers, please.

This situation can also be observed in question T14b (quoted earlier), which is also addressed to three people, and where the first witness answers the question, but the other two equivocate by modifying the question (type E13). It can be also be argued that these examples show that, when two or three interviewees are required to answer a question, E1 is the preferred equivocation strategy, since, by not saying anything at all, it is easier to “hide” behind the people who do answer the question.

To conclude this sub-section, we will now examine statistics regarding question types. We will also try to determine why a particular type of question was preferred by the interviewers. As we were able to observe from the statistics given earlier, the MPs asked a total of 140 questions in this meeting, and the number of non-replies amounted to 43, or 30.7% of the total. Seven of the eight question types examined in chapter 4 of this dissertation have been identified in the debate on financial stability. The following is a breakdown of the question types used with the respective percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each category. The total number of questions of each type posed is given in brackets:

- indirect (3): equivocation in 2 questions, or 66.7%;
- declarative (22): equivocation in 8 questions, or 36.4%;
- interrogative word (45): equivocation in 16 questions, or 35.6%;
- implied interrogative word (59): equivocation in 17 questions, or 28.8% of the total;
- moodless (8): no equivocation, or 0%;
- imperative (2): no equivocation, or 0%;
- disjunctive (1): no equivocation, or 0%¹²¹.

¹²¹ See graph n°4.

From these statistics, it can be seen that the indirect question was the type which received the highest percentage of equivocation in answers (66.7%), and the moodless, imperative and disjunctive categories had the lowest, with no equivocation at all in the answers to any of the three.

It is important to bear in mind that in this parliamentary session there were only three questions of the indirect type, or, as a matter of fact, the same question posed to three different people (question T75b quoted earlier in this section). In this case, the purpose of the indirect form is to focus the witnesses' attention on a term which was frequently used in the discussion, the "search for yield". Nevertheless, this question type plays the role of an interrogative word question, since Andrew Love, the Labour MP, wishes to know *what* the three witnesses understand by the concept. While one interviewee, Sir John Gieve, the Deputy Governor of the Bank of England, gave an answer to the question, there was no reply from either the representatives of HM Treasury, or those of the FSA. As we mentioned earlier, the two witnesses who equivocate by ignoring the question (strategy E1), refrain from doing so in order to conceal their ignorance of the term indicated in the indirect question. However, in spite of the above statistics, it would probably be an exaggeration to highlight this type as the one with the greatest percentage of non-replies, since there was, in theory, only one such question in the whole debate.

From the figures given, it can also be observed that the declarative question contained the second highest percentage of no-replies in this parliamentary session (36.4%). Harris states that declarative utterances are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the interviewee (1991). Bearing this argument in mind, they could be said to require replies which are similar to those of interrogative word questions in which specific answers are required, or indeed, questions of the implied interrogative word type, where the interviewee is expected to give reasons to justify his answer. Nevertheless, with regard to the latter two types, an important difference should be taken into account. Interrogative word questions or those of the implied interrogative word category allow the hearer to give his or her own ideas, if the answer is known. However, the fact that the declarative question is really a single statement put forward for agreement or disagreement. In this case, if the interviewee is unable to agree with the idea proposed, he or she is forced to equivocate, as occurs in questions T12 and T13, discussed below. This is, arguably, the main reason for its fairly high percentage of non-replies.

The declarative question was the third most employed by interviewers in this parliamentary session with 22 questions (15.1% of the total number of questions posed). This type was sometimes used by an MP when he is almost certain that the answer to the question will be "yes". The following dialogue, where the MPs and the witnesses discuss the frequency with which the Tripartite Standing Committee holds meetings, is an example of this:

Q11 Chairman: So it has met once since 1997?

Mr Cunliffe: It has met once formally at principal level to test the crisis, yes.

Q12 Peter Viggers: What really happened, surely, is that the Labour Government came in with a landslide majority in 1997 and in came a great clunking fist with one big idea and, as a result of that, making the Bank of England independent, we had this Memorandum of Understanding in 1997. Paragraph two: "The Bank's responsibilities. The Bank will be responsible for the overall stability of the financial system as a whole." The Treasury then fought back, "My God, what have we done?", and in 2006 you have a totally different idea. "The Bank's responsibilities", under the revised Memorandum of Understanding: "The Bank contributes to the maintenance of the stability of the financial system as a whole", one of its two core purposes. That is what happened, surely, Sir John?

Sir John Gieve: I was not around negotiating the first one. Jon was, so he can tell us.

Q13 Peter Viggers: That has got to be true?

Mr Cunliffe: I have to say, it is not a version of events I recognise at all. I think the In the following chapter, we will analyse the second transcript of the English Parliament, which consists of a debate on inflation by the Treasury Committee.

The first question asked by the Chairman, T11, seems to imply that he is surprised that the Tripartite Standing Committee has only met once since 1997. After Cunliffe replies, Peter Viggers, the Conservative MP, gives his analysis of the situation, and then poses another declarative question to Sir John Gieve, T12, who equivocates by transferring the responsibility of answering the question to Jon Cunliffe. Viggers then confronts Cunliffe with yet another declarative question. There is little doubt that, in these cases, the MPs use the declarative question instead of the polar type, not only because they think that the answer to the questions will be "yes", but also because the former place rather more pressure on the interviewees to give an answer. This pressure is further increased by the use of the adjective "surely" in question T12, and the verb "has got" in T13, which adds extra emphasis to the declarative questions, and which would not have been possible if the polar structure had been used.

With regard to equivocation strategies used in this parliamentary session, the interrogative word question has a fractionally lower percentage than the declarative category, with 16 non-replies in 45 questions (35.6%). The interrogative word question was the second most used by the interviewers with 45 questions, or 32.1% of the total. Possible the interesting point to note about equivocation strategies in this case is that, when two or three questions of this type are asked together, there is occasionally a tendency for the interviewee to answer one of them, and either equivocate in his answer to the others, or even completely ignore them. We have found two such examples in this parliamentary session. The first one can be observed in question turn

T2, where the Chairman of the Treasury Committee, while discussing changes to the Memorandum of Understanding, asks two interrogative word questions:

[Turn 2a] What were the main changes **[Turn 2b]** and why were they brought about?

Jon Cunliffe, the witness, begins his reply by answering question T2b:

Mr Cunliffe: It was changed, I think, to bring it more up-to-date with the operating experience of the years since 1997 and the changing circumstances.

However, as we discussed earlier in this section, he equivocates in his reply to question T2a because he only gives a partial answer:

For example, one of the main changes is that it now has quite a developed section on business continuity operational risk and how the Standing Committee addresses that, because that work very much developed after September 11. It also has some clearer statements, I think, of Bank and FSA responsibilities.

The other example occurs in the interviewee's reply to the questions posed in turn T78. Andrew Love, the Labour MP, asks the following three interrogative word questions:

Q78 Mr Love: [Turn 78a] What about carry trades? **[Turn 78b]** What about some of these riskier investments that everybody accepts in principle are risky but do not seem to be priced in that way by the market at the present time? **[Turn 78c]** What is the FSA doing to alert those involved in this activity to do better?

As we can see from his answer, Hector Sants, the witness, first of all, gives a reply to question T78c, where he discusses the role of the FSA in this matter. He then goes on to give his opinion about what can be done regarding other types of risk. However, no mention is made of the "carry trades" asked about in question T78a:

Mr Sants: You rightly identify it is not our role to directly manage individual firm's trading strategies. What is critical, and clearly the focus of our attentions as a regulator, is to seek to ensure they have proper systems and controls and proper risk management systems. There are two key components I would like to re-emphasise which have both been mentioned before, and one is a comment which we made in the FRO today. One of the features of the shorthand term "search for yield" is also people looking to utilise a greater variety of trading instruments than they did before and that does push them into illiquid and, in many cases, OTC markets. One particular risk we do want people to be focused on is the valuation point and the importance of having good valuation systems which seek to, as best they can, make sure that these portfolios of illiquids are

properly valued. Secondly, and most critically—and I know you have heard this a lot already today but it is an absolutely essential mitigant for firms to be focused on here—is the ability to scenario test stress tests. It is tied back to our capital regime but it is critical that people stress test effectively. We do believe stress testing in the industry is much improved. We believe the introduction of the CRD regime is further increasing the focus in that area. Having said that, as we said before, and we have had some special papers on this topic, we think there is still more work to be done. It is drawing the extension between stress testing, to give you a layman's feel, maybe looking back at historical events and saying "If that happened, what would happen to our set of positions at the current time", but also overlaying that type of analysis with the more extreme question, which we think senior management should be properly focused on, which is under what conceivable circumstances would this financial institution get itself into difficulty. That type of stress testing is a somewhat different one to running historical scenarios. We do think more work can be done in this area so we recognise progress.

In these examples, the witnesses, very cleverly, begin choosing the question which they prefer to answer, and, by doing this, are able to divert attention from the other matters mentioned.

Another reason why the interrogative word question gives rise to a fairly high percentage of no-replies are ignorance on the part of the interviewee, for example, in the conversation on the concept of "search for yield" in question T75c, analysed earlier in this sub-section.

As we discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, the purpose of this question type is simply to solicit information of a particular nature. The fact that there were so many questions of this category is due to the fact that different kinds of information were required. The interrogative pronouns "why", "what", and "how", are each used to introduce a number of questions. Moreover, it would also be particularly interesting to examine questions T25a and T25b, which begin with the words "To what extent ...". In each case, the interviewer expects a specific reply to be provided. For example, in question T3, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee suggests that the Bank's role has been downgraded, and asks the following interrogative word question: "Why has this happened?" In this case, the person answering is simply required to state for what reason or reasons. In T22a, David Gauke, while discussing arrangements made to prevent financial stability crises, poses a question introduced by the pronoun "what":

What would you say if someone said, frankly, the tripartite arrangements have not made any difference to that, it is more a matter of luck, that you can each do your separate work in your own silos and, as long as you do that all right and the world economy is ticking along all right, really it has not made any difference?

The MP asks this question, which is made more complex because of the conditional structure, with the aim of obtaining the witness's opinion on a specific matter.

As we mentioned, questions T25a and T25b deserve special attention. Gauke, who continues the discussion on financial stability crises, asks the FSA representative:

[Turn 25a] To what extent is prudential regulation about stopping financial stability crises **[Turn 25b]** and to what extent do you feel that you have got control over prudential regulation, (because obviously a lot of that is determined at a European level) to address any concerns that you might have?

It is especially important to note that both of these interrogative word questions contain presuppositions. In T25a, the question presupposes that prudential regulation is about stopping financial stability crises. Therefore, if the witness gives a reply to the question (which is indeed the case), he would be agreeing with the MP. With regard to T25b, the question presupposes that the FSA have control over prudential regulation. It could be argued, in this case, that Gauke uses the interrogative word question to compliment the witness on his company's work, in addition to obtaining the information required by the question.

The implied interrogative word question contained a slightly lower percentage of equivocation in answers than the aforementioned question types with 17 non-replies in a total of 59 questions asked (28.8%). It is, nevertheless, significant enough to merit our attention. This question type entails a similar difficulty to that of the interrogative word question, since the interviewee is required to provide replies to specific questions, but also to give extra information where necessary. The main reasons why witnesses choose to equivocate in answer to implied interrogative word questions in this parliamentary session are the same as those given above with regard to the interrogative word category. However, it is interesting to note that, in question T23 (discussed earlier), another circumstance which gives rise to equivocation on the part of the witnesses seems their possible reluctance to reveal company secrets. This seems to be the case because the three interviewees all equivocated in exactly the same manner, by using strategy E8c.

From the above figures it can also be observed that the implied interrogative word question type was one most used by the interviewers, with 42.1% of the total number of questions posed. The reason for this is that this question category was employed for a variety of purposes. First of all, question T7a, a question of this type is used by the Chairman of the Treasury Committee to make a polite request, before moving on to the interrogative word question in T7b:

Q7 Chairman: [Turn 7a] Can I ask one person from each institution how, in your opinion, has the Tripartite Standing Committee functioned and **[Turn 7b]** what is undertaken to try and monitor the effectiveness of the Tripartite Committee?

The use of the modal expression “Can I ask ...?” constitutes a negative politeness strategy which is used to alleviate the threat to the addressees’ face caused by the request (Brown and Levinson 1987:131).

In turn T19 the implied interrogative word question type is used for different reasons, as can be seen in the following example:

Q19 Peter Viggers: [Turn 19a] Would the Bank and the FSA say a word about the practical manner in which you co-operate? **[Turn 19b]** How do you share information? **[Turn 19c]** Do you have staff exchanges from time to time? **[Turn 19d]** Do you have a happy working relationship at all levels?

Peter Viggers, the Conservative MP, starts with an introductory question addressed to two people, T19a, and then poses an interrogative word question in T19b. However, in both T19c and T19d, he switches to a different category, the implied interrogative word type. It would seem that the reasons for this are two-fold. First of all, it is very probable that Viggers’s intention is to help the witnesses to reply by offering suggestions with regard to how they share information. Moreover, it could be argued that the choice of the implied interrogative word question type could be described as a kind of politeness strategy used by the MP. Questions T19c and T19d are considerably less imposing than, for instance, interrogative word questions such as “How often do you have staff exchanges?” or “What is your working relationship like?” The reason for this is that, in the first case, the interrogative word question “How often ...?” could presuppose that it is compulsory for the two organizations to have regular staff exchanges. Secondly, the use of the adverb “happy” also makes question T19d less imposing.

There would seem to be an ironic tone attached to the implied interrogative word question posed by David Gauke, the Conservative MP, in question turn T28:

Q28 Mr Gauke: [Turn 28a] Does it work vice versa? **[Turn 28b]** Is your knowledge of the monetary position and the thinking of the MPC helpful in understanding financial stability risks at all?

In a discussion about the monetary policy, Gauke seems to be unconvinced with regard to Sir John Gieve’s answer to question T27b (quoted earlier), where the latter states that his knowledge and work play a part in the MPC, but does not reveal to what extent they do, which is what the question requires (also quoted earlier). The MP uses the implied interrogative word question in T28 with two objectives in mind. In addition to expecting a reply from the Deputy Governor of the Bank of “yes” or “no”, and the reasons for his choice, it appears that he is implying that Sir John Gieve’s knowledge is *not* helpful in understanding financial stability risks. Moreover, the use of the adverbial phrase “at all” seems to emphasize this point.

The other question types used by the interviewers in this debate, the moodless, the imperative and the disjunctive did not cause any equivocation strategies to be used in the replies given. Since there were only two imperative questions, and one of the disjunctive type, we shall concentrate on the moodless category, of which eight questions were found. The fact that there existed no non-replies at all in this case is undoubtedly due to the nature of the questions, which will now be discussed

As we have mentioned, the moodless question was sparingly used in this debate, with only eight questions of this type posed by the MPs (5.7% of the total). One of the uses of this category in this session was to summon a different speaker to answer a question. We can see how this is done in the following extract:

Q51 Chairman: Is there anything that keeps you up at night and makes you rush for the Rennies?

Mr Sants: I think we should always be focused on issues, but, as I have said, I do not think there is one thing that is particularly keeping me up at night at the moment in the context of this discussion.

Q52 Chairman: What about you Jon?

Mr Cunliffe: Nothing.

Q53 Chairman: What about you, Sir John?

First of all, the Chairman poses a question in T51, which is answered by Hector Sants, After this, with the help of moodless questions in T52 and T53, the former requests Jon Cunliffe and Sir John Gieve to give their ideas. In this case, it is evident that the moodless question “What about you ...?” is more practical than, for example, an interrogative word question such as “What do you think about ...?” The reason for this is that the shorter form of question helps to keep the conversation moving on quickly.

Another use of the moodless question can be seen in question T60, where Kerry McCarthy, a Labour MP, and Hector Sants are discussing how a hedge fund could be set up:

Q59 Kerry McCarthy: So you can set up that sort of business by the back door.

Mr Sants: It is not by the back door.

Q60 Kerry McCarthy: But in a less regulated way.

Mr Sants: They are presented in the market place in the same way as hedge funds are, and they can introduce variants around that whereby they can look at the components of the investment strategy and, as appropriate, introduce it into

their other funds. The restrictions, just to remind you (and so we do not get confused), are on the marketing of products to UK consumers. There is no restriction on a company setting up a hedge fund utilising the various legal structures which hedge funds themselves utilise and, indeed, vice versa, a hedge fund could set up a conventional asset manager, indeed, some have done.

The Labour MP poses a declarative question in T59, to which Sants equivocates in his answer, by implying that the question is based on a false premise (strategy E4d). McCarthy then rephrases the question in T60, changing to a moodless structure, and this time the Managing Director of the FSA does provide a reply. This example also gives support to the view put forward by Harris (1991) that¹²²:

... most moodless and declarative utterances which occupy a question slot in political interviews are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the interviewee, i.e. either “yes, that is the case” or “no, it isn’t” or some intermediate point on the scale of probability.

Although Sants does not give a direct answer of “yes” or “no”, his explanations seem to indicate that he agrees with McCarthy’s observation in T60.

In the following sub-section, we will analyse the transcript of the second debate of the British Parliament, which deals with inflation.

¹²² See chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.2.

6.1.2 Table Eng2: Inflation

The second transcript of the British Parliament consists of a debate held by the Treasury Committee in the House of Commons on 27 March 2007. Table Eng2 gives the analysis of the questions asked by the MPs, and the oral evidence given by the witnesses present in this session, which deals with inflation. The members of the Treasury Committee who attended the session were: Rt Hon John McFall, in the Chair (Chairman of the Treasury Committee, Labour MP), Mr Colin Breed (Liberal Democrats MP), Mr Andrew Love (Labour MP), Mr Michael Fallon (Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee, Conservative MP), Mr Brooks Newmark (Conservative MP), Mr David Gauke (Conservative MP), and Mr John Thurso (Liberal Democrats MP). The following witnesses gave oral evidence: Mr Mervyn King, Governor of the Bank of England, Ms Rachael Lomax, Deputy Governor responsible for monetary policy, Sir John Gieve, Deputy Governor responsible for financial stability, Ms Kate Barker, External member of the Monetary Policy Committee, and Dr Andrew Sentance, External member of the Monetary Policy Committee.

TURNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENTS
Turn 1	No question	No		Chairman welcomes witnesses: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 2	Polar	No		Introduction: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 3	Indirect	No		
Turn 4	Implied interrogative word: requires comment ¹²³	No		
Turn 5a	Interrogative word	No		

¹²³ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. In order to be considered to have given a satisfactory answer, the witness would be expected to give a further comment (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

Turn 5b	Implied interrogative word: request ¹²⁴	No		Question repeated in T6, T7 and T8: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 6	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 7	Moodless	No		
Turn 8	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 9a	Interrogative word	Yes	E4c	
Turn 9b	Interrogative word	Yes	E10	
Turn 10	Indirect	No		
Turn 11	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 12	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E4c	
Turn 13	Declarative	No		
Turn 14	Declarative	Yes	E4a	
Turn 15a	Indirect	Yes	E6b	
Turn 15b	Indirect	No		
Turn 16	Declarative	No		
Turn 17a	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 17b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 18	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 19	Indirect	No		

¹²⁴ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. As a request is implied, the witness can only be considered to have given a satisfactory answer if he or she complies with the request (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

Turn 20a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Introduction to question T20c: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 20b	Polar	No		Introduction to question T20c: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 20c	Interrogative word	Yes	E3b	
Turn 21a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E4c	
Turn 21b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6d	
Turn 22	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 23a	Interrogative word	No		Introduction to question T23b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 23b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 24a	Indirect	No		
Turn 24b	Polar	No		Repetition of T24a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 25a	Interrogative word	No		

Turn 25b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 26	Disjunctive	Yes	E4a	Question causes communicative conflict.
Turn 27a	Interrogative word	No		Introduction to questions T27b and T27d. Not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 27b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 27c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Extension of question T27b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 27d	Declarative	Yes	E1	
Turn 28	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 29	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 30	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6e	
Turn 31	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 32	Declarative	No		
Turn 33	Disjunctive	Yes	E6e	
Turn 34	Implied interrogative word: requires	No		

	comment			
Turn 35	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 36a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6c	
Turn 36b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Extension of question T36a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 37a	Polar	No		Introduction to question T37b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 37b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 37c	Polar	No		
Turn 38a(i) ¹²⁵	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 38a(ii)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 38b(i)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 38b(ii) ¹²⁶	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 38c	Interrogative word	No		Extension of T38a and T38b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 39(i) ¹²⁷	Declarative	No		

¹²⁵ Question posed to two people.

¹²⁶ Question posed to two people.

¹²⁷ Question posed to two people.

Turn 39(ii)	Declarative	No		
Turn 40a	Polar	No		
Turn 40b	Polar	No		
Turn 41	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 42	Declarative	Yes	E3a	
Turn 43a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T43b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 43b	Interrogative word	Yes	E13	
Turn 44	Indirect	No		
Turn 45a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T45b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 45b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E4a	
Turn 46	Declarative	No		
Turn 47	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 48	Declarative	No		
Turn 49	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E5	
Turn 50	Indirect	No		
Turn 51	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		

Turn 52a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T52b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 52b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6c	
Turn 53	Declarative	No		
Turn 54a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T54b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 54b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 54c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Repetition of question T54b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 54d	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 55	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 56	Interrogative word	Yes	E7f	
Turn 57	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		

Turn 58a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 58b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 59	Imperative	No		
Turn 60	Disjunctive	No		
Turn 61a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 61b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 62	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 63a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 63b	Disjunctive	No		
Turn 64	Polar	No		
Turn 65a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 65b	Declarative	No		
Turn 66a	Polar	No		
Turn 66b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 67	Interrogative word	No		

Turn 68a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 68b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 69	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6c	
Turn 70a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Introduction to question T70b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 70b(i) ¹²⁸	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 70b(ii)	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 70c(i) ¹²⁹	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 70c(ii)	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 71	Declarative	Yes	E3a	
Turn 72(i) ¹³⁰	Moodless	No		
Turn 72(ii)	Moodless	No		
Turn 73a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6d	
Turn 73b	Interrogative word	No		Extension of question T73a: not counted in the total number of questions.

¹²⁸ Question posed to two people.

¹²⁹ Question posed to two people.

¹³⁰ Question posed to two people.

Turn 74	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 75	Declarative	No		
Turn 76	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 77a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 77b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 78	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 79	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Chairman thanks witnesses: not counted in the total number of questions.

In the debate of the Treasury Sub-committee on inflation, there were 79 question turns used by the seven MPs present: Mr John Mc Fall, the Chairman (Labour, 28), Mr Brooks Newmark (Conservative, 16), Mr Michael Fallon (Chairman of the Treasury Sub-committee, Conservative, 9), Mr Andrew Love (Labour, 8), Mr Colin Breed (Liberal Democrats, 7), Mr John Thurso (Liberal Democrats, 7), and Mr David Gauke (Conservative, 10). The following criteria were used to calculate the exact number of questions posed. There are two separate questions in each of question turns T5, T15, T17, T23, T24, T36, T40, T43, T45, T52, T58, T66, T68 and T73. These are given the term *double-barrelled questions* by Bull (2003:110). Similarly, although they are semantically linked by a conjunction, question turns T9, T21, T25, T61, T63, T65 and T77 also consist of two questions. Moreover, turns T20, T37, T38 and T70 contain three questions, and T27 and T54 each consist of four questions. If we take all of the questions in each of the question turns into account, we would arrive at a total of 114 questions. However, certain factors need to be taken into account with regard to a number of other questions. In turns T38, T38, T39, T70, T70 and T72, two witnesses attempt to give replies, and in these cases extra questions are added in these question turns. Therefore, as can be seen in Table Eng2, T38a, T38b, T39, T70b, T70c and T72

each contain an extra question for the second witness. This means we need to add six questions to the total, which would amount to 120. On the other hand, a number of questions need to be deducted from the total before we can arrive at the final tally. In question turn T1, the Chairman does not ask a question, but instead, welcomes the witnesses. Moreover, in answer to T2, the main witness introduces his colleagues, after being requested to do so by the Chairman. Both questions will be deducted from the total since there is unlikely to be any kind of equivocation involved. The same could be said of T79, where the Chairman thanks the witnesses before closing the session. This question will also not be counted in the final tally. Furthermore, questions T20a and T20b introduce T20c, and these three will therefore be counted as one question. The same could be said of questions T23a, T27a, T37a, T43a, T45a, T52a, T54a, and T70a, which all introduce the questions that follow. These will all be deducted from the total number of questions. In addition, T27c, T36b, T38c and T73b are really extensions of the preceding questions, and will therefore not be counted in the final score. Also, question T5b is repeated in questions T6, T7 and T8, where it is posed separately to three witnesses. This question will also be deducted from the final tally. Finally, questions T24b and T54c are also repetitions of T24a and T54b respectively. These pairs will therefore be counted as one question each. After all the necessary deductions have been made, we arrive at a final total of 100 questions.

In Table Eng2 above, it can be observed that, of the 100 questions posed in this parliamentary debate, equivocation occurred in the answers to 25 questions (25.0% of the total), while an adequate reply was given to 75 questions (75.0%)¹³¹. In order to determine which questions receive a satisfactory reply, we have applied the theory discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, and also section 4.1.3, which deals with what Bull terms immediate replies (1994, 2003). With regard to the type of equivocation observed in each case, we have, in the same way as we did with the first transcript, based our analysis of this parliamentary debate on the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2.

In Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, we mentioned that, the type of question asked will be taken into account in order to establish which utterances can be coded as replies. With regard to the questions posed in this parliamentary debate, all eight question types identified in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1 were found. The following is a list of the question types, with their respective percentages of the total number of questions posed given in brackets:

- *implied interrogative word questions*, 38 (38.0%);
- *interrogative word questions*, 27 (27.0%);
- *declarative questions*, 14 (14.0%);
- *indirect questions*, 8 (8.0%);
- *polar questions* 5 (5.0%);

¹³¹ See graph n°5.

- *disjunctive questions*, 4 (4.0%);
- *moodless questions* 3 (3.0%);
- *imperative questions*, 1 (1.0%)¹³².

First of all, we will list the different types of equivocation which occur in the answers to the questions posed in this parliamentary debate, after which, we will be able to consult statistics showing how often each strategy was employed. We will then make an analysis of at least one example of each type of equivocation used. A discussion will follow where we will attempt to establish why certain strategies were preferred by the interviewees. Finally, we will discuss the percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each of the different question types, and reasons will be given as to why we think that the MPs used a particular question category.

Eight types of equivocation strategies were used In this parliamentary session of the Treasury Committee. These include:

- E1¹³³ (*Ignores the question*).
- E3 (*Questions the question*, two sub-types): E3a (request for clarification), and E3b (reflects the question back to the interviewer).
- E4 (*Attacks the question*, two sub-types): E4a (the question fails to tackle the important issue), and E4c (the question is based on a false premise).
- E5 (*Attacks the interviewer*).
- E6 (*Declines to answer*, four sub-types): E6b (unwillingness to answer), E6c (I can't speak for someone else), E6d (it is not possible to answer for the time being), and E6e (pleads ignorance).
- E7 (*Makes political point*, four sub-types): E7a (external attack – attacks other groups), E7c (justifies policy), E7f (offers political analysis), and E7g (self-justification).
- E10 (*States or implies that the question has already been answered*).
- E13 (*Modifies the question*).

The following statistics show the frequency with which each type of equivocation occurs in the answers given by the witnesses. Their respective percentages of the total number of non-replies are given in brackets:

- E6: 8 questions (32.0%);
- E4: 6 questions (24.0%);
- E1: 4 questions (16.0%);
- E3: 3 questions (12.0%);

¹³² See graph n°6.

¹³³ The code numbers used to identify each type and sub-type of equivocation are the same as those which appear in the equivocation typology in Chapter 4, Section 2.

- E5: 1 question (4.0%);
- E7: 1 question (4.0%);
- E10: 1 question (4.0%);
- E13: 1 question (4.0%)¹³⁴.

We will now proceed to discuss the occurrence of equivocation in the answers given by the witnesses. With regard to this, it should be observed that more than one type of equivocation can be found in the answers provided by the witnesses. The questions where this occurs are: T36a, T42, T43b, T49, T52b and T73a. In these cases, we shall take into account the one which we think has the greatest influence on the interviewee's answer, and this will be the type recorded in Table Eng2.

In question turn T9, John McFall, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee, comments that long term interest rates appear to be on the rise, and asks Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, two questions in this regard:

[Turn 9a] To what do you attribute that rise, **[Turn 9b]** and what are the consequences for UK monetary policy?

These questions are both of the *interrogative word* type, and the interviewee is expected to supply a missing variable (Bull 2003:105). King equivocates when giving an answer to both questions. In the first case, he attacks the question, stating that it is based on a false premise (equivocation strategy E4c): "I am not sure things really are on the rise." He then implies that the second question has been answered elsewhere (type E10): "We had a chart in our Inflation Report which plotted long-term interest rates, chart 1.2." Although King gives acceptable replies to questions T10 and T11, he incurs in equivocation in answering question T12. Brooks Newmark, a Conservative MP, while talking about cash flow, poses the following question: "There is a sense that I pick up from the City that people think that equity prices are overvalued. I am just curious: do you believe that or not?" This is an *implied interrogative question*, where the interviewee, in addition to answering "yes" or "no", would be expected to justify his reply. If his answer were "yes", he would be expected to explain *why* he thought this was the case. On the other hand, had he replied "no", he would also be required to give reasons for his opinion. However, King again avoids giving an answer, implying that the question is based on a false premise (E4c):

If enough people thought that equity prices were overvalued you would think that they would be selling them and they would not be overvalued any more.

The discussion continues, and King again equivocates in his answer to T14, where he interrupts the MP in order to reformulate the question to suit his own purposes

¹³⁴ See graph n°7.

(Clayman 1993)¹³⁵, and in this way, evades the matter in question. He suggests that the question fails to tackle the important issue (equivocation strategy E4a): "I think the key thing to stress here is the significance of the world capital market; it is not a series of unconnected, national capital markets." In question turn T15, Newmark accuses King of not answering his previous question, by using the indirect form:

Q15 Mr Newmark: [Turn 15a] You are not making a judgment on whether prices are overvalued; **[Turn 15b]** you are simply saying the market is what the market is.

It could be argued that Newmark's use of reported speech to form an *indirect question* is more forceful, because it is used to imply that the Governor of the Bank of England is not providing the judgement asked for in question T12 (whether he thinks that equity prices are overvalued). In his answer, King equivocates once more, showing his unwillingness to answer (equivocation type E6b):

It is, and I think very few people in the past who have been willing to say, "I know that prices are over or undervalued" have consistently been able to demonstrate that they were right. I am not going to go down that road.

It would seem that the Governor of the Bank of England uses equivocation strategies in his answers to questions T14 and T15a in order to avoid giving an opinion on prices, since, as he himself admits, he could be proved wrong. This would undoubtedly constitute a loss of face for him personally. Since King refuses to give a reply, Newmark changes the subject, and decides to discuss volatility.

In question turn T20, the same two protagonists are involved, and Newmark asks King a question about housing (T20c): "How would you currently describe the housing market?" The latter avoids giving an answer by reflecting the question back to the interviewer (equivocation strategy E3b): "Give me a range of adjectives you think might be appropriate here, and I can tell you!" The MP, however, takes this answer literally, and in turn T21, complies with the witness's request by posing two further questions:

[Turn 21a] Do you agree with the IMF's¹³⁶ assessment, for example, that house prices are overvalued **[Turn 21b]** and that there is a risk "of an abrupt downward adjustment"?

¹³⁵ See Chapter 3, Section 3.1.3.3.

¹³⁶ International Monetary Fund. An international organization which tries to Foster global monetary cooperation, secure financial stability, facilitate international trade, promote high employment and sustain economic growth, and reduce poverty around the world. (Wikipedia).

The Governor of the Bank of England again avoids giving a reply, by attacking question T21a, suggesting that it is based on a false premise (type E4c):

It is clear that if you were to look at the housing market in terms of prices relative to a multiple of earnings then house prices look much higher than they were some years ago, but I am not sure if that is the right criterion.

It could also be argued that he goes on to make a political point by giving his own analysis of the housing market (equivocation type E7f)¹³⁷:

In the end, I suspect that to understand the housing market two very simple words help: supply and demand. On the demand side we have seen, as with other asset markets, very low, long-term real interest rates set in the world capital market. That, you would expect, would lead to a rise in the prices of all assets; there is no reason why housing should be an exception to that. Secondly, we are seeing, on the demand side, significant migration that is also bound to increase the demand for housing. We have the country's expert on my right-hand side—who has pointed to some of the shortcomings on the supply side of the UK housing market. If you put those two things together then, perhaps, it is not very surprising that house prices have been high.

In answer to question T21b, he again equivocates by declining to answer, stating that he does not know what will happen in the future (strategy E6d): “Where they will go in the future I do not pretend to know.” In this case, King chooses to equivocate in order to protect his personal face, since as Bull et al. suggest, politicians (or in this case the witness) should avoid making statements which could create difficulties in the future (1996). If the Governor made a future prediction, and was later proved to be wrong, he would suffer a certain amount of face damage.

In question turn T25, Brooks Newmark and Mervyn King turn to borrowing. Question T26 is deserves special consideration because it could be classified as what Bavelas et al. term an *avoidance-avoidance conflict* (1988), referred to as a *communicative conflict* by Bull (1994). The Conservative MP poses the following question to the Governor of the Bank of England:

The fact that there is something like £1.3 trillion of loans out there, does that give you some cause for concern, or do you simply say: "Actually, it doesn't bother me; what I really focus on is the default rates, and as long as people can afford it they can keep borrowing and borrowing"?

¹³⁷ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T21a. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E4c, since, by suggesting that the question is based on a false premise, the witness is able to change the focus and give a different answer.

This is a *disjunctive question*, which forces King to decide between two alternatives. If he agrees with the first alternative, he could be accused of having a bad policy. On the other hand, if he chooses the second alternative, he could be considered to be insensitive to the borrower's needs. King does not choose either alternative, but changes the focus of the question by suggesting that it does not tackle the important issue (equivocation type E4a), and then goes on to give his own political analysis (strategy E7f)¹³⁸:

In terms of housing debt what matters, really, is the relationship of the debt to the house value, allowing a pretty wide margin for fluctuations in house prices as well as their ability to service the mortgage. What we have seen is that with much lower interest rates in recent years it has been easier to service mortgage debt, and that has made it possible for people to borrow more in order to purchase houses of a higher price, but we have not seen an adverse experience in terms of repayment or arrears. That is a decision best left to those households themselves. It is on the unsecured side that we have seen a number of problems of household debt and difficulties that many households have got themselves into. So, both the borrowers and the lenders have been adjusting to that."

At a later stage in the debate, it is the turn of Colin Breed, the Liberal Democrats MP, who asks Mervyn King a question about fraud (T30):

As you mention trade and fraud, do you believe that the current Government's measures it has introduced fairly recently are having any significant effect on MTIC fraud¹³⁹.

This is another example of an *implied interrogative word question* which, although it contains the structure of a *polar question*, requires the listener to add extra information. In this case, if King answered "yes" to the question, he would be expected to explain *what* the "significant effect" is. However, he declines to answer, pleading ignorance (equivocation strategy E6e):

Fraud? We cannot judge, but the numbers we have been given do show a substantial fall in fraud towards the end of last year, but I do not think we are the experts on fraud.

¹³⁸ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T26. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E4a, since, by suggesting that the question does not tackle the important issue, the witness is able to change the focus of the question and give a different answer.

¹³⁹ Missing trader fraud. The abuse of VAT rules on cross-border transactions within the EU. (Out-law.com)

An important point to note here is that, although King states that “... the numbers we have been given do show a substantial fall in fraud towards the end of last year ...”, he does not answer the MP’s question as to whether he believes that this is due to the “... current Government’s measures it has introduced fairly recently ...”

The same protagonists go on to discuss volatility, and Breed poses the following *disjunctive question* (T33), where the interviewee is again required to choose between two alternatives: “Do you expect it to continue or do you expect that to be a blip?” In his answer, King again equivocates, pleading ignorance once more (E6e):

Either because it is measurement error or because of difficulties of the seasonal adjustment, without being able to predict the weather or what the factors are that are leading to the seasonal pattern, I think it is impossible to know.

King’s inability or refusal to answer questions T30 and T33, appears to be due to ignorance on his part, and reveals his incompetence in these matters. His decision to equivocate in this case does not help to protect his own personal image or that of the organization which he presides.

In question T36a, David Gauke, another Conservative MP, becomes involved in the discussion, and asks the Governor of the Bank of England a question with regard to predictions about inflation:

Is there an assumption from the Treasury, in their projections, that there will be a rise in interest rates before falling back?

King declines to answer the question, stating that he is unable to speak for someone else (strategy E6c): “That is a question you must ask them, and no doubt they will come to you and you can ask them what assumption they are making.” He then tries to answer the question, but he again equivocates because he ends up giving his own political analysis (equivocation type E7f)¹⁴⁰:

For our own judgment, I think—and we saw this very clearly in the February Report—there is a good deal of uncertainty about the short-run path of inflation. I think it is fair to say that around 2% is the broad judgment that most forecasters have come to as to where inflation will be by the time we get to the end of this calendar year, but it does depend on the pace and extent of cuts in retail gas and electricity prices. The cuts that have been announced since we published our February Inflation Report are consistent with the judgment we made in the report. Our judgment was that over the next six months there would be the sort

¹⁴⁰ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T36a. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E6c, since the witness’s suggestion that he can not speak for someone else makes the remainder of his answer considerably less important.

of cuts that have been announced. We also assumed there would be further cuts to come, and we will see whether that happens or not. The difficult judgment facing the Committee, and the important one, is to look through this short-term volatility of gas and electricity prices and try to judge where inflation is likely to settle once we have seen our way through this. It is quite tricky. In the last year we saw inflation pick up, in part, because of higher energy prices. This year, if those energy prices had stayed where they were, inflation would have come back again because there would not have been the base effect. But because they are now falling inflation will come down faster than we had previously thought. Equally, however, once you get into 2008, unless gas and electricity prices continue to fall, there will be a bounce back up again in inflation. So we have got to see through the increase last year, the sharp falls this year, the bounce-back in 2008 and try and see where all this leads to. That is not easy, and that is why it is perfectly easy to understand why there are differences of judgment on the Committee.

The discussion on inflation continues, with the focus on monetary aggregates. After different opinions are given, John McFall, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee and a Labour MP, poses the following question to Mervyn King (T42): “No chance of a revivalist meeting here, is there?” In answer to this *declarative question*, which simply requires a straightforward answer of “yes” or “no”, King questions the question by asking for clarification (equivocation strategy E3a): “I am not sure what you mean by ‘a revivalist meeting’.” It could be argued that he deliberately pretends to misunderstand the Chairman, as he changes the focus of the question by equivocating in other ways. First of all, he makes a political point by means of self-justification (type E7g): “I am more concerned about the monetary aggregates than some of my colleagues.” After this, he goes on to give his own political analysis (equivocation strategy E7f)¹⁴¹:

I think there are two main reasons for that. One is the extent of the growth of broad money. It goes back to some of the things I discussed at the beginning with Mr Newmark, about the growth of liquidity and asset prices. Although, as Andrew Sentance said, you have to look very carefully at the data, and it is fair to say that some of the increase in broad money is reflecting what probably ought not to be recorded as an increase in money because it is essentially an inter-bank transaction, not a transaction between the banking sector and the rest of the economy (which is the purpose of these aggregates to measure). Nevertheless, even if you were to do that you would still end up with pretty rapid growth of broad money.

¹⁴¹ Three equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T42. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E3a, since, by stating that he does not understand the question, the remainder of the witness’s answer lacks credibility.

In question turn T43, Michael Fallon, the Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee and a Conservative MP, comments on output measures shown in a chart in the Inflation Report, and poses the following question (T43b): “What is the outlook for these measures?” This is an *interrogative word question*, and requires a specific answer on the part of the hearer. However, King does not provide a reply, but instead equivocates in various ways. First he modifies the question (equivocation strategy E13), then makes a political point by attacking or criticizing the work of another institution (type E7a). After this, he attacks the question, stating that a different matter is the important issue (strategy E4a). He finally makes another political point by justifying the policy of his organization (equivocation type E7c). It would be helpful to quote King’s speech in order to identify the equivocation strategies used¹⁴²:

What we are concerned with, and what this box is all about, is trying to say: how can we measure the impact of the public sector and public spending plans on the resources available for the private sector? (*Modifies the question*) Because the ONS¹⁴³ have changed the conventions which they use to measure public sector output, we have not found that their estimates of that are terribly helpful to us. They are making their own adjustments to the level of output and productivity in the public sector, (*Makes political point – criticizes another group*) but what matters, in terms of the resources available in the economy and the pressure of demand overall on the supply capacity of the economy, is the extent to which the public sector is subtracting from the resources available to the private sector, either in terms of direct employment, because those people if they are working for the public sector cannot work for the private sector, or because the public sector is buying goods and services which are not available then for the private sector. (*Attacks the question – the question fails to tackle the important issue*). What we are trying to calculate in our measures here, is to try and get round the problem that none of us really know what the true output or productivity in the public sector is; they have perfectly understandable reasons (this is the Atkinson programme of work) for trying to work out the value of output in the education and health sector, but whatever judgment you make about that is not really relevant to the question of what are the resources available in the private sector and what is a pressure of demand on capacity. So we are trying to abstract from the important but quite separate question of what is the value of the public sector output to look at a measure of resources available for the private sector

¹⁴² Four equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T43b. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E13, since, by modifying the question, the witness is able to change the focus of the question and give a different answer.

¹⁴³ Office of National Statistics. The executive office of the UK Statistics Authority, charged with the collection and publication of statistics related to the economy, population and society of England and Wales at national, regional and local levels. (Wikipedia).

which private sector demand can then use. (*Makes political point – justifies policy*).

Question T49 provides us with an example of an unusual equivocation strategy (it is the only instance of this category in the British Parliamentary sessions). This is type E5, where the interviewee attacks the interviewer, or criticizes him or her, or the manner in which the question is asked. This equivocation strategy is placed in a separate category by Bull, which he considers different from attacking the question (2003). Michael Fallon poses the following question to Mervyn King: “Does anybody here think the economy is not at trend or very close to it?” King begins his answer by saying: “You are putting very precise words into our mouths and asking us to dissent from it. ...” In this case, King criticizes or attacks Fallon after the question has been made. He then declines to answer, pleading ignorance (equivocation strategy E6e):

... I do not think anyone can really know, and I must say that I myself have doubts as to whether in a situation where it is possible to acquire labour from abroad when demand for labour expands here, the output gap is as precise and useful a concept as it was. ...

Furthermore, he later makes a political point by offering his own political analysis (type E7f)¹⁴⁴:

... The ability to recruit migrant labour does actually undermine, to some extent, the ability to construct, and the usefulness of, a concept such as the output gap. (...) but I go back to the point I make each time I come, which is: for heaven's sake, please do not put too much weight on the central projection; it is very unlikely to materialise. A forecast has to focus on the risks as well, otherwise it is of little value.

At a later point in the debate, in question turn T70, John McFall, the Chairman of the Treasury Committee, asks some questions about interest rates in the RPI¹⁴⁵:

[Turn 70a] Could I ask the question about RPI because it is at its highest rate for 15 years and I wonder if I could address this to everyone, the concern about it feeding into pay settlements. **[Turn 70b]** Do you regard it as a temporary phenomenon and **[Turn 70c]** what account of the RPI do you make in your deliberations?

¹⁴⁴ Three equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T49. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E5, since, by attacking the interviewer, the witness is able to change the focus of the question and give a different answer.

¹⁴⁵ Retail Price Index. A measure of inflation published monthly by the Office of National Statistics in the United Kingdom.

As we mentioned in table Eng2, question T70a is an introductory question to T70b, and will therefore not be taken into account. Question T70b requires a reply from a witness from each group, since the Chairman addresses the question to all of the witnesses. There is no reply to T70b from any of the representatives of the Bank of England, which constitutes equivocation (strategy E1). Kate Barker, an external member of the Monetary Policy Committee, also ignores the question, and proceeds to give a reply to T70c:

Well, it is certainly the case that people often talk about RPI as being the index that determines pay settlements, although in fact, if you look back over history, it is by no means a one-to-one linkage and I am personally rather sceptical of the idea that it does influence pay settlements. The main influence on pay settlements almost certainly is demand and supply in the labour market, and we have talked about why migrant labour in particular has eased off skill shortages that were probably otherwise emerging in quite a number of industries. I was in the North East last week and I was very struck by the fact that, of the firms we talked to about pay settlements, the vast majority said that they were settling at, or very little different from, the rate at which they settled last year, despite the fact that RPI is so high. So, whereas RPI may very well be the starting point, particularly in a negotiation where unions are involved, it certainly is not the finish, but the finish depends on how the company is doing and it depends on demand and supply. I was always somewhat sceptical that there would be a direct feedthrough to settlements, but I did recognise that as a risk and it was indeed one of the risks I took into account in voting for higher rates in January, although I have to say so far the evidence is that it has not been realised, but we are a long way from knowing the full story about what has happened to settlements in the first half of this year.

From this it can be seen that the witness does make a valid attempt to answer question T70c in the latter part of her speech: "... but I did recognise that as a risk and it was indeed one of the risks I took into account in voting for higher rates in January, ..." However, no attempt has been made to answer question T70b, or even acknowledge that the question has been asked (type E1). She simply discusses pay settlements and demand and supply in the labour market. This prompts the Chairman to repeat the question in T71: "So you are not sure if it is temporary or not?" After this, Barker again equivocates by questioning the question, asking for clarification (type E3a): "The rise in RPI?" This request for clarification is unnecessary, since question T71 is obviously a repetition of T70b. In answer to the *moodless question* T72 "Yes", both Barker and Sir John Gieve give the information required in T70c.

We will now try to determine the reasons why the witnesses chose a particular type of equivocation as opposed to another, as a means of evasion, in this parliamentary debate. From the above statistics, we can see that strategy E6 (Declines

to answer), was the one which appeared most frequently in the interviewees' answers, with eight uses, or 32.0% of the total number of non-replies. An important reason for this seems to be the fact this was the most obvious strategy to use in situations where, it would seem, the interviewer is trying to obtain information from the wrong people. This circumstance practically forces the witnesses to equivocate. An example of this occurs in question T36a (quoted earlier), where the Governor of the Bank of England declines to answer a question which, he claims, should be answered by a representative from the Treasury. The same strategy is used in answer to question T69:

Q69 Mr Breed: Do you have a comment on the suggestion that in the public sector people are going to get paid differentially for the same job, depending on where they live?

Mr King: I think that is a question you will have to put to those responsible for the public sector.

In this case, King is again forced to equivocate, since he claims that the information required should be obtained from the people responsible for the matter in question. The equivocation type E6 also seems to be the correct option for the interviewees when they are confronted with questions which are tricky in nature. For instance, in question T52b, Sir John Gieve declines to answer a question of a compromising nature put forward to him by the Chairman of the Treasury Committee:

[Turn 52b] Are you optimistic of the future in terms of the inflow of labour to the United Kingdom, and particularly the City of London, where it can keep its competitive global advantage?

Sir John Gieve: I am not going to comment on immigration policy, which is not for me.

The Deputy Governor of the Bank of England very cleverly uses equivocation strategy E6c to avoid commenting on a sensitive matter.

Equivocation type E4 (Attacks the question) is the second most used strategy to avoid answering questions in this session. It could be argued with some degree of certainty, that it is the correct choice for the interviewee with regard to questions involving a communicative conflict. An example of this is question T26, which we analysed earlier. In this case the witness is forced to choose between two difficult alternatives. The interviewee quite probably decided to equivocate by using strategy E4a, since, as a reply must be given, it is practically impossible to ignore the question (type E1), or even to pretend that he did not understand what was being asked by using strategy E3 (questions the question).

We will conclude this sub-section by examining the statistics for question types, and an attempt will be made to establish why a particular type of question was preferred by the interviewers.

As we mentioned earlier, The MPs present posed 100 questions to the witnesses in this debate on inflation, with equivocation occurring in the answers given to 26 questions, or, in other words, 26% of the total. All of the eight question types discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation are present in this parliamentary session. The breakdown of question types with their respective percentages of equivocation is the following, with the total number of questions posed for each category in brackets:

- disjunctive (4): equivocation in 2 questions, or 50.0% of the total;
- implied interrogative word (38): equivocation in 12 questions, or 31.6%;
- declarative (14): equivocation in 4 questions, or 28.6%;
- interrogative word (27): equivocation in 6 questions, or 22.2%;
- indirect (8): equivocation in 1 question, or 12.5%;
- polar (5): no equivocation, or 0%;
- moodless (3): no equivocation, or 0%;
- Imperative (1): no equivocation, or 0%¹⁴⁶.

From the above statistics, it can be seen that the disjunctive question is the one which involved the highest percentage of equivocation in the witnesses' answers (50%), while the polar, moodless and indirect types did not give rise to any non-replies. Although there were only four questions of the disjunctive type in this parliamentary session, there is no doubt that it could sometimes cause the hearer to revert to the use of equivocation strategies. This is because the speaker often takes advantage of its nature in order to force the person answering to decide between two alternatives. Moreover, the latter can sometimes find himself or herself trapped in a question which creates a communicative conflict, as can be seen in the analysis of question T26 above.

It has been pointed out that there were only four disjunctive questions in the whole debate. However, it should be noted that this type was used by the MPs with a specific purpose. From the two alternatives presented in the questions, the interviewee is required to choose between giving an optimistic view, and a less optimistic one. This is done by the interviewer in the hope that it will encourage the witness to reflect, and, in this way, provide some sort of answer. An example of this can be observed in question T33, discussed earlier, where the MP asks Meryn King a question about degrees of volatility: "Do you expect it to continue or do you expect it to be a blip?" The reason for the choice of the disjunctive question can be seen in question T63b, where Andrew Love, the Labour MP, asks the witness a question about the balance of the economy:

¹⁴⁶ See graph n^o8.

[Turn 63b] ... do you think the economy is beginning to rebalance or are we still too dependent on our consumption?

The *implied interrogative word question* is next in line, with equivocation occurring in 31.6% of answers. This type presents a different kind of difficulty to the interviewee because, as we mentioned in chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, in addition to simply answering “yes” or “no”, he or she is expected to provide extra information. It is arguable that this circumstance is what prompts the hearer to avoid giving a reply, as can be seen in the comment made on the answer given by the witness to question T30, analysed earlier.

In addition to being the question type with the second highest percentage of non-replies, it is important to emphasize that the implied interrogative word category was the most used, with 38 questions, exactly 38% of the total number of questions posed. It is quite probable that this type was employed by the interviewees with the main purpose of the witnesses’ opinion on recent tendencies. An example of this can be seen in question T18, where Brooks Newmark, the Conservative MP and Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England are discussing volatility:

Q18 Mr Newmark: Does what is going on in the sub-prime market, though, give an indication of what is in store, effectively, for the prime markets?

Mr King: Not necessarily, no, and certainly not outside the United States.

The MP asks for the witness’s opinion, which is provided. A further example of this occurs in question turn T27, where the same protagonists talk about borrowing and lending:

Q27 Mr Newmark: If I take what you say, you are saying there has been a huge amount of lending historically, and the fact that there has been some tightening (not wanting to put words in your mouth) in the sub-prime or the unsecured market, should I say, is probably a good thing. I am just curious: **[Turn 27a]** what are the consequences of a widespread tightening of lending criteria? **[Turn 27b]** Is there an impact on the economy? **[Turn 27c]** Is there not? Obviously, **[Turn 27d]** there is an impact on people personally.

Mr King: The impact you would see would be in terms of the growth of borrowing overall. As you pointed out, given that secured borrowing, which is the vast majority of overall debt (something like 83% of total borrowing is in the form of secured borrowing), the growth rate of debt overall and, hence, the impact on the economy is largely determined by the secured side, not the unsecured debt.

In this example, Newmark combines an interrogative word question, T27b, with a declarative one, T27d, where he repeats the word “impact”. This is done in order to ensure that the witness gives at least one opinion, either about the impact on the economy, or on people. The reply given by King and the MP’s subsequent acquiescence seem to support this view. Although King gives his opinion about the impact of lending criteria on the economy, he completely ignores question T27d (strategy E1), since no mention is made of the impact on people personally. Nevertheless, the MP does not press the point, and goes on to ask a totally different question in T28:

Q28 Mr Love: Following on from that and some of your earlier answers, Professor David Miles has suggested (he is another expert in this area alongside Kate Barker) that there is an element of speculation in house prices, and that at some stage that has to come out. If you look at the problems in America, the problems have arisen because house prices are falling. Do you have any concerns about that?

The tactic of combining an implied interrogative word question with another type to obtain at least one reply can again be observed in question turn T66, where the same two protagonists discuss wage settlements and inflation. In this example, Love introduces the implied interrogative word question, T66b, with a polar one T66a:

Q66 Mr Love: Earlier in the year, you were expressing concern about wage settlements, that real disposable incomes were not rising and RPI inflation on which most are based was quite high. **[Turn 66a]** Are you still concerned? **[Turn 66b]** Is the outlook now much more benign than it was?

In this case, in contrast to the last example, both questions receive replies from the Governor of the Bank, although somewhat hesitantly:

Mr King: I think it is too early to judge on that and I think that was always one of the risks which we identified. There is certainly no sign of that risk materialising at this stage and nothing we have seen so far would suggest that it has materialised, but I think it is too early to draw any strong conclusion on that front.

The type of question with the third highest incidence of equivocation is the declarative (28.6%). As is the case with the interrogative word question, the hearer is required to be specific in his or her answer. Moreover, it could also be argued that the declarative also bears some similarity to the implied interrogative question type, since, in most cases, the person answering would be expected to give reasons for his or her choice. In this debate, when witnesses were unable or unwilling to give a reply, they

employed different equivocation strategies, as can be seen in the answers to questions T14, T42, and T71, discussed above.

There were 14 declarative questions in this parliamentary session. Which make up 14% of the total number of questions put forward by the MPs. Harris states that declarative utterances are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the interviewee (1991). More importantly, as we mentioned in the previous section of this chapter, the declarative question was sometimes used when the speaker is certain that the hearer will agree with him or her. However, the point that Harris (1991) fails to emphasize is that this type of question also affords the interviewer the possibility of imposing himself or herself on the interviewee. This advantage is rather more pronounced than if, for example, the interrogative word question type were used. This can be observed in question T13, where Brooks Newmark, a Conservative MP, tries to impose his will on Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England:

Q13 Mr Newmark: You know as well as I do that when people have funds to manage, or money to manage, there is a lot of pressure to put that money to work, and they can either put it into some sort of debt instrument or they can put it into equity instruments.

Moreover, the words “You know as well as I do ...” make the question even more forceful. Nevertheless, in this case, King defends himself admirably, replying to the question with well constructed arguments:

Mr King: If they thought that equities were overvalued they would be switching it from equities to another instrument. You do make the important point about the flow of money. This, elsewhere, has been given the name of "the search for yield". There are many investment funds searching for yield. What that does is to drive down the yield on a wide range of assets, but that is the same phenomenon as the low level of long-term interest rates. Since we could not detect that a change in that during 2006 could be used to explain the change in share prices in that year, I am not quite sure that the search for yield itself is an explanation for why prices rose.

In question T14, Newmark continues the argument with another declarative question:

Q14 Mr Newmark: You do not see the people who are managing assets effectively chasing the yield curve down in order to—

The witness is eager to reply, interrupting the question, but then finds it necessary to equivocate, by putting emphasis on a different matter, and thus, changes the focus of the question:

Mr King: There is an element of the amount of liquidity around the world in that period. I think the key thing to stress here is the significance of the world capital market; it is not a series of unconnected, national capital markets. There is a world capital market, and with very accommodative monetary policy over the last few years that has certainly enabled a large amount of liquidity to be made available to investment in assets—"searching for yield"—which has driven down yields. That is absolutely right. However, what we point out in the Report is that it is quite difficult to see what the yields were that were driven down that explain the rise in share prices, unless it were a change in the risk premia that people were willing to hold those assets in return for. It is certainly possible that the amount of liquidity created did affect the risk premia of investors. I do not regard that as a fundamental explanation; it is simply saying a large amount of money was searching for yield, and that affects the risk premia that people are willing to hold. That may have boosted prices.

With regard to the level of equivocation involved in answers given, the declarative question is followed by the interrogative word type, with six non-replies in 27 questions, that is, 22.2% of the total. As we mentioned in Chapter 3, this type of question requires the interviewee to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003), or, in other words, to give a specific reply. This characteristic is the cause of a relatively high percentage of equivocation, since, if the hearer is unable to supply the "missing variable", or provide the specific information required, he or she would tend to revert to the use of strategies in order to deviate attention to other matters. A very good example of this occurs in the witness's answer to question T43b (see analysis above), where as many as four equivocation strategies were used.

From the above statistics we can see that the interrogative word question type was the second most employed by the interviewers in this parliamentary session, with 27 questions (27%) of the total number of questions posed. An important point to take into account, is that, in some cases, the MPs have used this category in pairs of two questions, one of which requires the hearer to describe a given situation, and the other is asked with the purpose of obtaining his or her views on the matter in question. One example of this can be observed in question turn T17, where Brooks Newmark, the Conservative MP, and Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England, are discussing volatility:

Q17 Mr Newmark: As opposed to prices going up in equity markets. **[Turn 17a]** What are your contacts telling you about what is happening? **[Turn 17b]** How has this influenced your thinking or your team's thinking on the economy in general—specifically addressing volatility?

Mr King: Indeed. There was a period of volatility in late February/early March. That has receded, in large part. Many prices have returned to their previous

levels. The process of price discovery did not lead to a very different level of prices resulting as a new equilibrium, except in those cases where there was some observable fundamental that appeared to have changed. I singled out the US sub-prime mortgage market because that is one case where you can visibly see in recent months a sharp rise in defaults. That has led to wider spreads in that market, which have persisted.

In question 17a, information is requested, while an opinion is asked for in 17b. Although King gives a satisfactory answer to the latter question, he completely ignores 17a. Another example where the tactic of the double interrogative question is used by the MP to request opinions on a given situation occurs in question turn T25, where the same protagonists discuss borrowing:

Q25 Mr Newmark: If I can turn to borrowing, unsecured lending growth appears to be diminishing, according to your latest report that I saw, while secured borrowing has continued to grow fairly strongly. One explanation has been that banks are tightening their lending criteria. **[Turn 25a]** How widespread do you think such tightening has been **[Turn 25b]** and what is the chance of such tightening becoming more widespread?

Mr King: There is no doubt that the rate of unsecured borrowing growth has fallen, most extremely, I think, in the case of credit cards, where two years ago credit card borrowing was growing at the rate of more than 20% a year and now it is growing at between 2 and 3% a year. So a very significant fall in the rate of growth of credit card borrowing. To be honest, that is probably a welcome development. We have commented here before that we think that the developments on the secured debt side have largely followed development in house prices and have not given rise to an experience of default or mortgage arrears. The housing market is still a very safe form of lending for the lenders. However, it is in the unsecured market where we have seen the problems of personal debt. Both from the borrowers' side as well as the lenders' side, there has been a recognition that those rates were unwise, and growth rates have really tailed off enormously.

In this case, Newmark asks the Governor to comment on a specific matter, and to give his opinion on the future consequences of this. On this occasion, the witness provides replies to both questions.

The *indirect question* is another type which deserves some attention, although its answers contain a lower rate of equivocation than those mentioned (12.5%). An important factor to take into account is that the use of reported speech in an *indirect question* affords the interviewer the possibility of repeating previous statements. In this debate, we have seen that the purpose of this is two-fold. Firstly, in question turn

T15, which has been analysed above, the Conservative MP formulates a question by repeating what the witness had said previously in order to force him to give a more coherent reply to question T12. Secondly, a speaker could also use reported speech in an *indirect question* to repeat his or her own question, with the same purpose. An example of this can be seen in question T44:

Q44 Mr Fallon: I understand that, and you calculate this measure of total demand for resources. What I am asking you is whether you are forecasting that to increase now.

The Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee uses reported speech to repeat question 43b, as the Governor of the Bank of England did not give a satisfactory reply to the latter. These premises show that it is rather more difficult for interviewees to equivocate when answering *indirect questions*. An obvious possibility would be for the hearer to contradict the speaker by suggesting that he or she has been misquoted (strategy E4e). However, no evidence of this has been found in the parliamentary session on inflation. Of the eight questions formulated of this type, equivocation occurred in only one case, in T15a, as has been mentioned above, where the witness refuses to answer (type E6b).

The question types whose replies involved no equivocation in this debate are *polar*, *moodless* and *imperative*. The polar questions posed in this debate were fairly straightforward, and the witnesses were able to give adequate replies in each case. In question turn T37, David Gauke, a Conservative MP, asks Sir John Gieve the following questions:

Q37 Mr Gauke: Sir John, [Turn 37a] can I ask a quick question, with your experience within the Treasury? [Turn 37b] To what extent are the Treasury inflation projections independent from the Bank of England, [Turn 37c] or do they rely very heavily upon the MPC and the Bank of England's projections?

The *polar question*, T37c, which is, to a certain extent, dependent on T37b, is an uncomplicated question to which Sir John is able to provide a reply without any difficulty:

I think they do their own forecast, but it would be quite a big thing if they came to a very different view from us. So I think they do take our projection seriously.

There are only two *moodless questions* in this session, neither of which caused the witness answering to resort to equivocation strategies. The first of these, T7, simply invites the witness to join the discussion, and give his views: "Sir John?" The second *moodless question*, T72, confirms a clarification of the previous question, requested by the witness:

Q71 Chairman: So you are not sure if it is temporary or not?

Ms Barker: The rise in RPI?

Q72 Chairman: Yes.

Ms Barker: Well, the rise in RPI, the rise and the other indices will be affected very much by what happens to utility bills over the next few months. The expectation is that we will see some fallback from this very high level.

Although the witness equivocates by asking for clarification to question T71, a satisfactory reply is given to the *moodless question*, T72.

The only question of the imperative type in this debate, 59, is really an apology from a previous misunderstanding made by John Thurso, the Liberal Democrats MP, and is not really worthy of consideration: "Forgive my imprecise phraseology then."

In the following chapter, we will analyse the third and final transcript of the British Parliamentary sessions, which consists of a debate on inflation by the Treasury Committee.

6.1.3 Table Eng3: expenditure and administration

In the following table, Eng3: expenditure on administration, we will find the results of our analysis of the third transcript of the corpus, which consists of oral evidence taken before the Treasury Sub-Committee of the House of Commons. This session, which took place on Wednesday 10 October 2007, deals with expenditure and administration in the government of the United Kingdom. The members present are all from the Treasury Sub-Committee, and are the following: Mr Michael Fallon, in the Chair (Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee, Conservative MP), Mr Graham Brady (Conservative MP), Mr Philip Dunne (Conservative MP), Ms Sally Keeble (Labour MP), Rt Hon John McFall (Chairman of the Treasury Committee, Labour MP), Mr George Mudie (Labour MP), Mr John Thurso (Liberal Democrats MP), Mr Mark Todd (Labour MP), and Mr Peter Viggers (Conservative MP). It should be noted, however, that only five of the MPs present participated actively in the debate: Michael Fallon, Philip Dunne, John Thurso, Mark Todd and Peter Viggers. The witnesses who gave evidence were: Mr Nigel Smith (Chief Executive of the Office of Government Commerce¹⁴⁷), Mr William Jordan (Deputy Chief Executive of OGC), and Ms Alison Littlely (Head of OGCbuying.solutions).

URNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENTS
Turn 1	Implied interrogative word: request ¹⁴⁸	No		Introduction: not counted in the total number of questions.

¹⁴⁷ UK Government Office as part of the HM Treasury in 2000. From here onwards, this organisation will be referred to as the OGC.

¹⁴⁸ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. As a request is implied, the witness can only be considered to have given a satisfactory answer if he or she complies with the request (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

Turn 2a	Implied interrogative word: request	No		Question about technical difficulties: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 2b	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 3	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 4	Interrogative word	Yes	E6c	
Turn 5a	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 5b	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 6	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 7	Declarative	No		
Turn 8	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 9	Interrogative word	Yes	E7f	
Turn 10a	Interrogative word	No		Introduction to question T10b: not counted in the total number of questions.

Turn 10b	Interrogative word	Yes	E6d	
Turn 11	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6d	
Turn 12	Declarative	No		
Turn 13	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6e	
Turn 14	Indirect	No		
Turn 15	Implied interrogative word: requires comment ¹⁴⁹	No		
Turn 16	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 17	Indirect	No		
Turn 18	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 19a	Interrogative Word	No		Introduction to question T19b: not counted in the total number of

¹⁴⁹ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. In order to be considered to have given a satisfactory answer, the witness would be expected to give a further comment (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

				questions.
Turn 19b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 20	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 21	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 22a	Polar	Yes	E6a	
Turn 22b	Interrogative Word	Yes	E4a	
Turn 23	Interrogative Word	Yes	E4d	
Turn 24	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6f	
Turn 25	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 26a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 26b	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 27a	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 27b	Implied	No		

	interrogative word: requires comment			
Turn 28	Polar	No		
Turn 29	Polar	No		
Turn 30	Indirect	No		
Turn 31	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 32	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6f	
Turn 33	Polar	No		
Turn 34	Polar	No		Witness asks for repetition. No genuine attempt to equivocate.
Turn 35	Polar	No		Question T34 repeated: not counted in the total number of questions.

Turn 36	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 37	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 38a	Declarative	No		
Turn 38b	Declarative	No		
Turn 39	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 40	Interrogative Word	No		
Turn 41	Declarative	No		
Turn 42	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 43	Moodless	No		Clarification of witness's answer to T42: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 44	Declarative	No		
Turn 45	Declarative	Yes	E7b	

Turn 46a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 46b	Polar	No		
Turn 47	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 48a	Interrogative Word	Yes	E7f	
Turn 48b	Declarative	No		
Turn 49	Interrogative Word	Yes	E4e	
Turn 50	Interrogative Word	Yes	E4c	
Turn 51	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6a	
Turn 52	Moodless	Yes	E6a	
Turn 53	Indirect	Yes	E6e	
Turn 54	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 55	Declarative	Yes	E6c	
Turn 56	Moodless	Yes	E6e	
Turn 57	Declarative	No		
Turn 58	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E3a	

Turn 59	Moodless	Yes	E6a	
Turn 60	Moodless	No		
Turn 61	Interrogative Word	Yes	E6d	
Turn 62	Interrogative Word	Yes	E3a	
Turn 63	Moodless	No		
Turn 64	Disjunctive	No		
Turn 65a	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 65b	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 66	Declarative	No		
Turn 67a	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E1	
Turn 67b	Implied interrogative word: request	Yes	E6e	
Turn 67c	Implied interrogative word: request	No		
Turn 68	Declarative	No		
Turn 69	Declarative	No		
Turn 70	Disjunctive	No		
Turn 71	Indirect	No		

Turn 72a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 72b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Turn 73	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 74a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Turn 74b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Extension of question T74a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Turn 75	Moodless	No		
Turn 76	Moodless	No		
Turn 77	Interrogative word	No		
Turn 78	Interrogative word	Yes	E7g	

In the debate of the Treasury Sub-committee on expenditure and administration, there were 78 question turns used by 5 of the MPs present: Mr Michael Fallon, the Chairman (Conservative, 18), Mr Peter Viggers (Conservative, 14), Mr Philip Dunne (Conservative, 18), Mr John Thurso (Liberal Democrats, 17), and Mr Mark Todd (Labour, 11). In order to arrive at the exact number of questions posed, the following criteria were used. Question turns T2, T5, T10, T19, T26, T27, T38, T48, T72 and T74 all contain two separate questions, referred to by Bull as *double-barrelled questions* (2003:110). Turns T22, T46 and T65 also consist of two questions, although they are semantically linked by the conjunction “and”. On the other hand, question turn T67 involves three separate questions and is given the term *multi-barrelled question* by Bull (2003:111). If we count all of the questions which appear in each question turn, we have a grand total of 93 questions. However, for a variety of reasons, some questions need to be deducted from the total. Question T1, where the Chairman asks the Chief Executive of OGC to identify himself and his colleagues, and T2a which is a question about technical difficulties, will not be counted in the total number of questions, as there is unlikely to be any kind of equivocation in these. Question T10a is an introduction to T10b, and both will therefore be counted as one question. Question T35 is a repetition of T34, where there is no deliberate attempt to equivocate, as the witness did not hear or understand the question. These two will also constitute a single question. Also, in T43, Mr Dunne, the Conservative MP, asks for clarification of the witness’s answer to T42, so both are really the same question, and will be counted as one. Moreover, T19b is really an extension of T19a. These two could also constitute one question. The same could be said of T74a and T74b, which will also be counted as one question. After the deductions have been made, we have a final total of 86 questions.

As can be seen from Table Eng3 above, of the 86 questions posed in this parliamentary debate, equivocation was found to occur in 28 questions (32.6% of the total), while 58 questions (67.4%) were deemed to have received an acceptable reply¹⁵⁰. In order to determine which questions receive a satisfactory reply, we have applied the theory discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, and also section 4.1.3, which deals with what Bull terms immediate replies (1994, 2003). On the other hand, the typology proposed by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2, have been applied to the parliamentary debate in order to determine the type of equivocation observed in each case.

As we mentioned in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, and in previous analyses, the type of question asked will be taken into account in order to determine whether or not an interviewee has provided an acceptable reply. With regard to the questions posed in this parliamentary debate, seven of the eight question types identified in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1 were found. As can be seen from Table Eng1, the number of questions for each type and their respective percentages of the total are the following:

¹⁵⁰ See graph n° 9.

- interrogative word questions, 33 (38.4%);
- implied interrogative word questions, 20 (23.3%);
- declarative questions, 13 (15.1%);
- moodless questions 7 (8.1%);
- polar questions 6 (7.0%);
- indirect questions, 5 (5.8%);
- disjunctive questions, 2 (2.3%)¹⁵¹.

We will now provide a list of the equivocation strategies used in this parliamentary session, after which, statistics of the frequency of the use of each type will be given. An analysis will then be made of at least one example of each type of equivocation observed in the interviewees' answers. This will be followed by a discussion where we will try to determine why a particular strategy was used by the witnesses to avoid answering a question. Finally, the percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each of the different question types will be discussed, and we will also try to establish the reasons why certain question categories were employed by the interviewers.

In this parliamentary debate of the Treasury Sub-committee, five types of equivocation have been identified, namely:

- E1 (*Ignores the question*).
- E3 (*Questions the question*, one sub-type): E3a (request for clarification).
- E4 (*Attacks the question*, four sub-types): E4a (the question fails to tackle the important issue), E4c (the question is based on a false premise), E4d (the question is factually inaccurate), and E4e (the question includes a misquotation).
- E6 (*Declines to answer*, five sub-types): E6a (refusal on grounds of inability), E6c (I can't speak for someone else), E6d (deferred answer. It is not possible to answer for the time being), E6e (pleads ignorance) and E6f (hot potato. The responsibility for answering the question is transferred to someone else).
- E7 (*Makes political point*, three sub-types): E7c (justifies policy), E7f (offers political analysis) and E7g (self-justification).

The frequency with which each type occurs in the questions, and their respective percentages of the total number of questions involving equivocation given in brackets, are the following:

- E6: 15 questions (53.6%);
- E4: 4 questions (14.3%);
- E7: 4 questions (14.3%).

¹⁵¹ See graph n°10.

- E1: 3 questions (10.7%);
- E3: 2 questions (7.1%)¹⁵².

We will now proceed to examine the different types of equivocation found in the answers given by the various witnesses.

In question T9, Michael Fallon, the Chairman of the Treasury Sub-Committee, asks Nigel Smith, the Chief Executive of OGC, a question about the release of certain documents:

Q9 Chairman: The Information Tribunal has twice upheld the ruling of the Information Commissioner that you should release documents relating to the Gateway Reviews of the ID Card Scheme and the NHS IT programme, and its last ruling stated, "We find it difficult to accept that the OGC is really convinced by the arguments put forward on their behalf." Why are you so opposed to releasing these reviews?

This is an *interrogative word question*, which requires the politician (in this case, the witness), to supply a missing variable (Bull 2003:105). Smith uses different types of equivocation strategies in order to avoid answering question T9, and also the questions that follow, T10b, T11 and T13, which are related to the first question. First of all, he makes a political point by giving his own political analysis (equivocation type E7f):

Mr Smith: Can I make a personal comment about my attitude to disclosing information? Firstly, I do believe in public accountability; I also believe in private accountability; but I also believe that it is important that you maintain the integrity of the processes where you have a failure, that you have an open and robust process for investigating why the failure happened and then what you do about it.

Michael Fallon repeats the question in T10b, but the witness declines to answer, by saying that it is not possible to answer for the time being (strategy E6d): "I do not think it is appropriate for me to talk about a court case which is coming up next year." In the exchanges which follow, the Chairman continues to question Smith about the issue:

Q11 Chairman: Who should talk about that?

Mr Smith: I believe it was a decision of government to take the case to the High Court and that is scheduled for March of next year.

Q12 Chairman: But these are your documents. You are the Chief Executive?

¹⁵² See praph n° 11.

Mr Smith: Yes, I am the Chief Executive.

Q13 Chairman: So why are you relying on the Government's decision?

Mr Smith: Well, the decision was not taken whilst I was here, so I am afraid I cannot really add anything to the reasons for it.

In question T11, Smith uses the same strategy (E6d), but still refuses to answer. He provides the obvious reply to T12, but again equivocates in answer to T13, by pleading ignorance (type E6e). It is quite probable that the Chief Executive of the OGC equivocates here by refusing to answer the questions about the release of the documents mentioned, in order to avoid revealing company secrets.

In question turn T22, Peter Viggers, a Conservative MP, poses two questions to Nigel Smith. They are both related to new powers which appear in a document. The first, T22a, is a *polar question*, which simply requires a straightforward answer of “yes” or “no”: “Are these legal powers ...?” The second is an *interrogative word question*: “... what is their status?” In both cases, Smith equivocates because he fails to provide a reply to either of the questions. He refuses to answer the first question, T22a, stating that he is unable to do so (equivocation sub-type E6a): “I could not really say whether they are legal powers ...”. With regard to question T22b, the witness attacks the question by indicating that it fails to tackle the important issue (strategy E4a):

... Could I perhaps just say, though, that my approach is that powers are really not the issue. I believe what is the issue is getting a common grip of what needs to be done across government, and that will be through engaging the spending departments in getting those targets achieved.

In this case, the use of equivocation strategy E4a enables the Governor of the Bank of England not only to avoid answering the question, but also to divert attention by commenting on a matter of his own interest.

Question T24 is also of the *interrogative word* type involving the same protagonists. Peter Viggers asks Nigel Smith:

How do you justify telling other government departments to utilise your services when your procurement specialists, OGCBuying.solutions, have recently been criticised by the National Audit Office for lacking expertise and effectiveness?

This question contains a certain amount of face-threat, since Smith is forced to defend his own image and that of his organization from the criticism of the National Audit Office. In order to do this, he again equivocates by transferring the responsibility for answering the question to another witness (type E6f): “I will ask Alison to make some comment on that in a second ...” It is also arguable that he uses a further equivocation

strategy, as he makes a political point by justifying the internal policy of his own company (type E7c)¹⁵³:

... but I do believe that driving up capability is important, not just for the spending departments, it is also important for OGC. One of the themes of reducing the number of people within OGC partly was to take away certain responsibility, such as the efficiency programme, but also it was to have a smaller number of higher qualified, better trained people that could actually speak with authority within the spending departments.

Another example of equivocation type E4 in this debate occurs in question T49. John Thurso, the Liberal Democrats MP, asks Nigel Smith the following question:

Q49 John Thurso: Mr Smith, when you were responding to the Chairman in his questions you said that one of your key objectives was more for less, I think it was. How can you ensure, in doing that, that the quality of service to tax payers is maintained?

In his answer, Smith begins by attacking the question, stating that he was wrongly quoted (type E4e): “Actually what I said was more value for less, and I think that is the key.” He then goes on to use other strategies of equivocation in order to avoid answering the question directly. He again attacks the question, suggesting that it is based on a false premise (strategy E4c):

I think people's understanding of procurement is that it is buying: it is buying commodities and there is a standard commodity. It is not. Procurement covers a range of goods and services.

Smith then uses the equivocation strategy E7 (*Makes political point*), in three different ways. First, he gives an example from his own experience (E7g, self-justification):

... my daughter this year went off and worked in the care industry looking after people in their homes, people that had various physical disabilities, people that were old, people that could not do things.

This is followed by an external attack on the care industry (type E7a):

She worked in the care industry and the quality of service of the people she worked for was appalling.

¹⁵³ Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T24. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E6f, because the fact that the witness transfers the responsibility of answering the question to another person renders his other comments unimportant.

The final equivocation strategy used by Smith in his answer is type E7f, where he gives his own political analysis¹⁵⁴:

Lowest cost is not value. It is about what service comes from that value and also right across the lifecycle. If you are talking about a car, it is not about the purchase price of a car.

In addition to enabling the witness to avoid answering the question posed by the Liberal Democrats MP, these equivocation strategies allow the former to change the focus of the original question, and Smith is therefore able to give his views on a completely different issue.

As the exchanges continue between John Thurso and Nigel Smith, more equivocation strategies are used by the latter to avoid giving direct and coherent answers to the questions posed. In question T50, Thurso agrees with Smith's observations on value made in his answer to the previous question. Nevertheless, he comments that it is difficult to measure value, and asks Smith the following question: "So how do you ensure that the value is not diminished, that it does not become a least cost operation?" Smith attacks the question by suggesting that it is based on a false premise (strategy E4c): "I do not believe everything is measurable. I believe in getting the data correct and then looking at how you measure. ...". In question T51, the Liberal Democrats MP changes the subject and asks a question about corporate services in the government:

I am going to leave that one there because you have only been in a month, but I look forward to coming back to this next time we meet and see how you got on. It was recently reported that the Government had effectively dropped the idea of merging corporate services within central government. Why was that?

In his answer, Smith again equivocates. First of all, he declines to answer by saying that he is unable to so (equivocation type E6a): "I cannot really comment." It can also be argued that there is a further type of equivocation in his answer, since he then goes on to question the question by asking for clarification (strategy E3a): "This is shared services?" Thurso gives the Chief Executive of the OGC the clarification requested by means of a *moodless question*: "Yes?" (T52). In answer to question T52, the latter still does not give a reply, and simply talks about his own personal opinion:

Mr Smith: I can make a comment about my private views and my experience in private industry and also about what I found of OGC's position, because it is now

¹⁵⁴ Four equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to T49. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E4e, since, by suggesting that he was wrongly quoted, the witness is able to change the focus and give a different answer.

part of shared service within the Treasury for its finance, its IT and its HR service, but I cannot really comment on government---

This reply is interrupted by Thurso because Smith again starts to equivocate by declining to answer, stating that he is unable to do so (type E6a): "... but I really cannot comment ...". It should be noted that although we stated in chapter 4, section 4.1.3, that we would not consider equivocation to have occurred in an interrupted reply, it would seem that, in this case, Smith is clearly equivocating, or is about to equivocate. Because of this, the Liberal Democrats MP decides to pose a different question in T53:

I gather the Government Chief Information Officer indicated the Cabinet Office and OGC had struggled to co-ordinate cross-Whitehall agreements?"

This can be classified as an *indirect question*, since it could be assumed that Thurso uses the reported speech of the Government Chief Information Officer to pose a question to Smith. It is a simple question, similar to the polar type, since it is put forward for agreement or disagreement on the part of the addressee. Nevertheless, in his answer, Smith is again evasive, this time pleading ignorance (strategy E6e): "I am afraid I have no knowledge of that." There seems little doubt that Smith's decision to equivocate in this case reveals his ignorance in these matters, and makes him appear incompetent.

In question T54, Thurso asks Smith another question related to shared services: "In relation to the failure of the IT framework, the shared services agenda was one of the principle causes. Is that something you have had a chance to look into?" This question is given the term *implied interrogative word question* because, although it contains the structure of a *polar question*, answering "yes" or "no" would not necessarily constitute a reply. The person answering is required to provide further information relating to the matter. The answer given by Smith was: "I have certainly not had a chance to look at it." This is considered to be a satisfactory reply. However, had he answered "yes" to the question, he would have been expected to explain *what* he had discovered if he had indeed had a chance to look into the matter.

As he is unable to obtain the necessary information, John Thurso poses his next question, T55, to William Jordan, the Deputy Chief executive of OGC: "Perhaps Mr Jordan could help us here, as he was around at the time?" This is a *declarative question*, which, as Harris (1991) argues, could be treated as a type of yes/no question. In this case, nevertheless, the hearer will also be expected to provide extra information, if his answer is "yes". Jordan, however, equivocates, as he declines to answer, suggesting that it is someone else's responsibility to do so:

Mr Jordan: I certainly was around last year, but you are aware that responsibility for efficiency of shared services was one of the main work streams transferred to the Treasury on 1 April of this year.

The equivocation strategy type E3 (*Questions the question*) is present in the answer given by Nigel Smith in question T58: “Has the finance function now improved to the point that it is not a mess and it could be considered for outsourcing?” Smith replies to the question posed by John Thurso by asking for clarification, thus indulging in equivocation type E3a. It could be argued that this is done by the witness with the purpose of discretely *reformulating* the question (Clayman 1993)¹⁵⁵ to suit his own interests, and the exchanges that follow in the parliamentary debate serve to illustrate this point. In answer to Smith’s question “Within OGC”, Thurso responds with another question, T59, “Within government generally”, in order to prevent the former from evading the issue. However, in giving his response, Smith again equivocates (type E6a): “I am afraid I could notice really comment.”¹⁵⁶ After this, Thurso finally complies in T60, allowing Smith to answer the *reformulated question*, and the latter is able to limit his answer to activities within the OGC.

A similar situation arises in T62, involving the same participants. In reply to Thurso’s question, Smith again asks for clarification (equivocation type E3a): “In terms of OGC’s own internal efficiency programme?” This clarification is unnecessary, as it would appear that Thurso’s question obviously refers to the OGC:

Q62 John Thurso: We noted in our recent report on the efficiency programme that, unlike the other organisations within HNT reporting unit, OGC does not appear to have set out its baseline for financial savings. Why is that?

After the clarification is given, in T63, Smith again evades the answer by transferring the responsibility to another witness (equivocation type E6f): “Can I ask William.” However, since question T63 is answered by William Jordan, we will consider a reply to have been given in this case.

Question turn T67, which consists of three separate questions, is given the term *multi-barrelled question* by Bull (2003:111). Mark Todd, the Labour MP, asks Alison Littley, the Head of OGC buying.solutions, the following questions with regard to a company project:

[Turn 67a] Can you give us a little bit of background as to, firstly, how far it went before it was dropped, **[Turn 67b]** the costs involved **[Turn 67c]** and what were the obstacles that caused it to be?

In answer to the second question, T67b, the witness, Alison Littley, is unable to give a reply, as she does not have the information required. This constitutes equivocation type E6a, (*Declines to answer*: pleads ignorance). She does, nevertheless, acknowledge that a question has been asked, by saying: “I have not got the details of the costs

¹⁵⁵ See Chapter 3, sub-section 3.1.3.3.

¹⁵⁶ The word “notice” is a typographical error which appears in the original transcript.

involved ...” and is able to provide a satisfactory reply to the third question, T67c, as she gives various reasons as to why the project mentioned in T66 was dropped:

... but I can give you details as to why it was dropped. Following the NAO report, one of the things that we undertook to do was to review all current and up and coming frameworks and one of the things that we also had to be cognisant of was how easy it was going to be for people to use frameworks, which was one of the things that also came out of the NAO report. In looking at it as part of that review, it was felt that the spectrum of things within that framework, i.e. from buying a piece of equipment to something that was an all singing and all dancing service, was too wide and the amount of procurement capability that some organisations would need would be too difficult for them to find and therefore it was dropped.

This gives support to our view expressed in Chapter 4, Section 2, that Ms Littley’s inability to reply to T67b may stem from genuine ignorance, rather than a deliberate attempt to equivocate. However, no attempt has been made to answer question T67a, or even acknowledge that the question has been asked. This type of equivocation is classified under the category of E1 (*Ignores the question*).

Another example of the E1 type of equivocation occurs in question turn T72, which is in contrast to the answers given to the two previous questions, T70 and T71, where no equivocation was found. In T70, Mark Todd asks Alison Littley the following question:

Was that not something which might have been identified rather earlier in the process, because it sounds almost an inevitable part of offering something across a wide range of government departments, or was there originally a vision which narrowed that scope down rather more precisely?

This is a *disjunctive question*, a question in which two alternatives are put forward. In this case, the person answering can only be considered to have given a satisfactory reply if he or she chooses one of the alternatives proposed, or suggests another alternative. Ms Littley is deemed to have given a reply because she agrees with one of the alternatives proposed by the Labour MP: “Yes, I think it was one of those things where it certainly had some scope creep.” In T71, Todd poses an *indirect question*, with the intention of obtaining more information on the issue of the scope of the project mentioned earlier: “That is what I was hinting at.” Ms Littley again provides an adequate reply with the information required:

Yes, and I think, with hindsight, the rigor of ensuring that in future frameworks do not become winners for everybody, if you like, which was the idea, is

reviewed earlier. So I think it was an important but, as you say, probably painful learning curve.

In the case of question turn T72, Mark Todd asks two separate questions, defined by Bull as a *double-barrelled question* (2003:10):

[Turn 72a] Is that not perhaps an experience which tells us something about shared services across government as a whole? Getting a clearly defined scope that does not and yet has some value is a pretty repetitive challenge which one sees presented regularly in government. **[Turn 72b]** Is that not right?

These questions are further examples of the *implied interrogative question* (requires comment) type, as, in the case of T54, they have the same structure as a polar question, but require the person answering to provide extra information. The witness would be expected to explain, in answering T72a, *what* the experience tells us about shared services, and in T72b, *why* Todd's observation was correct or not. Nigel Smith, however, makes general comments, talks about his own experience, and gives an account about what he has learnt over the years, but at no stage makes a valid attempt to answer the question posed (equivocation strategy E1):

Mr Smith: If I could comment generally, I believe that looking at specific requirements, if we take the ICT requirement of government, I think what you need to do is to have a look at the outcomes you are trying to get rather than specify the product which you want, and, in my experience, that is a mistake which many organisations fall into.

An attempt will now be made to determine why interviewees preferred a particular equivocation strategy to another, to avoid answering questions posed in this parliamentary session. It can be observed from the figures given above that type E6 was by far the preferred strategy by the witnesses. This strategy was used 15 times, just over half of the total of non-replies (53.6%). It would seem that it was very effective because, since in these cases, the interviews declined to answer, mainly by using equivocation types E6e, E6d and E6a, were able to avoid having to undergo further questioning on a certain type of matter. Examples of these can be found in the answers to questions, T10b, T11 and T13, which have all been analysed earlier. In these cases, it would seem that the witness refuses to answer in order to avoid revealing company secrets. Similarly, in answer to questions T51, T52, T53 and T59, also discussed above, the motive for the non-replies appears to be King's reluctance to discuss matters relating to the Government. Another reason why the equivocation strategy E6 is used can be seen in the answer to question T32, which is face-threatening to a certain extent. Philip Dunne, a Conservative MP, asks Nigel Smith to respond to allegations made against the OGC by its competitors:

Q32 Mr Dunne: Because the Public Accounts Committee report into OGCbuying.solutions was quite critical about the effectiveness of the whole framework regime, there are a plethora of framework agreements. Most of the procurement seems to have been directed through a smaller number of them and there are allegations from competitors that these are being used to featherbed OGC in terms of the revenue raising from the commissions achieved compared with achieving best value for the taxpayer. How would you respond to those allegations?

Mr Smith: I would like Alison to respond.

Ms Littley: It is true that as part of the PSA review we were asked to look at the tail, if you like, of the number of frameworks. Since the PSA review that is underway, and we will need to stop some of the frameworks that we currently do. The dilemma we have always is that somebody uses all the frameworks, and what we have to make sure is that in stopping them, if they are not creating the best value, we make sure that the people who are using them have other places to go and that we do not just leave organisations with no mechanism. So that is being done.

In order to defend the image of his organization, Smith declines to answer (equivocation strategy E6f) by transferring the responsibility to another witness, Alison Littley, who also equivocates. She does not give a direct answer to the question, but instead, makes a political point (type E7d).

The equivocation strategy used by Littley, E7, is, along with type E4, is the second most used in this parliamentary session with four questions each, or 14.3% of the total. In the answers to questions T22a and T22b, analysed earlier, we have seen how the witness combines types E4 and E6 in order to avoid giving replies to the questions, and to divert attention by talking about a matter of his own interest. A similar situation arises in question T23, where Peter Viggers, another Conservative MP, asks Smith a question about a type of deal:

Q23 Peter Viggers: The substance and function of these 12 existing frameworks and collaborative deals: what do they require of departments?

Mr Smith: I think the collaborative deals you are talking about were basically existing framework deals, and these were put out to the spending departments and said, "Okay, you have got your own deals. Have a look at these deals. These deals are going to provide you with better value for money."

The witness skilfully attacks the question, suggesting that it is factually inaccurate (type E4d), as he claims that Viggers is talking about another kind of deal, and diverts attention to a different issue.

In a similar manner as with strategy E4, equivocation type E7 has also been used in combination with type E6, quite probably with the purpose of concealing company secrets, as we observed in the examination of questions T9 and T10b, discussed earlier. Moreover, as we also mentioned earlier, strategy E7 was also used by the witness in combination with type E4 in order to obtain a change of focus when answering question T49. The witness also makes use of strategy E7 in answer to questions T48a and T48b, where Philip Dunne asks a question regarding contract negotiation:

One final question, if I may, Chairman. Another finding of the Public Accounts Committee was a concern that there was insufficient expertise within the senior management team and the individuals responsible for negotiating the contracts within OGCbuying.solutions. **[Turn 48a]** What steps are you taking to review the quality of the team and introducing private sector expertise in particular. **[Turn 48b]** Obviously you represent some yourself.

Mr Smith: Yes. If I can talk about OGC, I think many of the comments are related to OGC as it existed a year ago. If you look at the mix between private sector and career civil servants in OGC there is quite a large element, and certainly in terms of the collaboration area that is almost entirely private sector. I would make the point though that I do not think we should actually tar people with the same brush. The idea that private sector is good and public sector is bad is not correct, in my view. I have been here a month; I have met some extremely talented people. There may be some issues on skills and capability, there may be some issues about getting experience, but I think we can do that. We must not set up a two-status stream within OGC. There is a tremendous contribution that can be made by career civil servants in the procurement profession. In this case, it is arguable that Smith gives a reasonable reply to question T48b, since he briefly describes his own activity. However, no acceptable reply is given to T48a, where the witness makes a political point by giving his views on the private and public sectors (strategy E7f), but at no time does he mention the steps which he is taking to improve the situation.

With regard to the witness's preference of equivocation strategies, It is worthy of note that, although Smith decided to equivocate by using type E7 in answer to T48a, he could also have modified the question (strategy E13) with the same results. Nevertheless, it is important to realise that, where types E6, E7 and E4 have been used

in the questions referred to, it would have been practically impossible to ignore them altogether (strategy E1), since some kind of answer is expected to be provided.

In the transcript of this debate of the Treasury Sub-Committee, five of the question types discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2 of this dissertation have been analysed: the *polar question*, the *interrogative word question*, the *implied interrogative word question*, the *disjunctive question*, the *declarative question*, and the *indirect question*. There are also examples of another category, namely the *moodless question*. With regard to the type of reply required for the latter, we agree with Harris's observation (1991) that most moodless and declarative utterances are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the interviewee (in this case, the witness). Taking this into account, we could argue with some conviction that questions T75 and T76, both moodless in form, receive adequate replies:

Q75 Mr Todd: A best practice process.

Mr Smith: Yes, absolutely.

Q76 Mr Todd: And a clear business case for the project as a whole?

Mr Smith: Yes. There are processes between OGC and the CIO Council where, in fact, we are looking at these issues. It is not directly looking at shared service but it is looking at common solutions. So, I take your point.

It could even be suggested that some moodless questions play the role of implied interrogative word questions, as can be seen in the answer to question T76. In this case, Smith, in addition to agreeing with the Labour MP, provides extra information to support his point of view.

To conclude this sub-section, a study will be conducted with regard to equivocation in the various types of question observed in this parliamentary session. Moreover, an attempt will be made to ascertain why the interviewers, or politicians, preferred the use of a particular question category. The following statistics show the percentages of equivocation observed in the answers to each question type. From the statistics given above, we are able to see that the MPs posed a total of 86 questions in the debate on expenditure and administration, to which there were 28 non-replies, 32.6 % of the total number of questions asked in this parliamentary session. Seven of the eight question types which we discussed in chapter 4 have been used by the interviewers in this debate. The total number of questions posed for each category is shown in brackets, together with the respective percentages of equivocation in the answers given:

- interrogative word questions (33): equivocation in 16 questions, or 48.5% of the total.

- moodless questions (7): equivocation in 3 questions, or 42.9%.
- implied interrogative word questions (20): equivocation in 5 questions, or 25%;
- indirect questions(5): equivocation in 1 question, or 20%.
- polar questions (6): equivocation in 1 question, or 16.7%.
- declarative questions (13): equivocation in 2 questions, or 15.4%.
- disjunctive questions (2): no equivocation, or 0%¹⁵⁷.

From these statistics, we can observe that the interrogative word question was the type which received the highest percentage of equivocation, with 16 non replies, or 48.5%, while the answers to the disjunctive type contained the least equivocation (0%), although it should be observed that there were only two questions of the latter category in the whole debate.

One reason why equivocation strategies were used to avoid answering interrogative word questions in this debate was to evade questions which were potentially face-threatening, as can be seen in T24 and T32, discussed earlier. Moreover, there was a reluctance to comment on government matters in question T61. John Thurso, the Liberal Democrats MP, asks the witness an interrogative word question about outsourcing:

Q61 John Thurso: How far do you think central government is away from being able to consider outsourcing, and I am not saying it is necessarily a good thing, but being able to consider outsourcing finance activity in government departments?

Mr Smith: I have not got a feel for the finance function within government yet.

Nigel Smith declines to answer, saying that it is not possible to answer for the time being (equivocation strategy E6d). A further example of the witness evading questions on government matters has been seen in question T51, analysed above. An interesting interrogative word question is posed by the Chairman of the Treasury Committee in T78, which we can describe as awkward, at the very least. Michael Fallon asks the Chief Executive of OGC what he expects to have achieved in a year's time:

Q78 Chairman: When you come back here in a year's time on the basis of a proper and separate report, what is it you will expect to have achieved?

Mr Smith: Perhaps I can just say that I am no different to most chief executives that come into a new company: they have a strategic review. That is what is being undertaken at the moment. Any strategy should be at least three years and backing up that should be a one-year business plan, and I look forward to talking

¹⁵⁷ See graph n° 12.

to you next year about the success of whatever the objectives are in the business plan but overall OGC, if it is going to justify the money that is being spent and the confidence that has been placed in it, has to make a real difference. That is why I have come in. That is what has attracted me to come in to work in government. If I do not believe I have made a real difference - and it is through my leadership of the team, and the team will do it - then there is no purpose in me being here, I will not be here.

Nigel Smith does not give a coherent reply, but instead, talks about what other executives do, and about what should be done. The fact that he says, "I look forward to talking to you next year about the success of whatever the objectives are in the business plan ..." gives an indication that he has no intention of revealing what he hopes to achieve. He ends up by saying a few words in order to justify his position (equivocation strategy E7g).

From the statistics given above, we can also see that the interrogative word question was the type which was most employed by the interviewers, with 33 questions, which amount to 38.4% of the total number of questions. This was quite often the preferred question type when the MPs needed to insist on replies to specific matters, because of continuous equivocation by the witnesses. In these cases, interrogative word questions were asked in clusters of two or three. This occurs in questions T49, T50 and T51, all of which have been cited and analysed above. A further example can be observed in questions T22b, T23 and T24, where, as in the previous case, three consecutive interrogative word questions are posed, and the witness equivocates in answering all three of them:

Q22 Peter Viggers: *The Transforming Government Procurement - First 100 Days* document in January this year, I understand, refers to "new powers" to require departments to use your frameworks and collaborative deals. **[Turn 22a]** Are these legal powers and, if not, **[Turn 22b]** what is their status?

Mr Smith: I could not really say whether they are legal powers, but certainly the powers relate to comply or explain principally in the area of collaborative procurement. Could I perhaps just say, though, that my approach is that powers are really not the issue. I believe what is the issue is getting a common grip of what needs to be done across government, and that will be through engaging the spending departments in getting those targets achieved.

Q23 Peter Viggers: The substance and function of these 12 existing frameworks and collaborative deals: what do they require of departments?

Mr Smith: I think the collaborative deals you are talking about were basically existing framework deals, and these were put out to the spending departments

and said, "Okay, you have got your own deals. Have a look at these deals. These deals are going to provide you with better value for money."

Q24 Peter Viggers: How do you justify telling other government departments to utilise your services when your procurement specialists, OGCbuying.solutions, have recently been criticised by the National Audit Office for lacking expertise and effectiveness?

Mr Smith: I will ask Alison to make some comment on that in a second, but I do believe that driving up capability is important, not just for the spending departments, it is also important for OGC. One of the themes of reducing the number of people within OGC partly was to take away certain responsibility, such as the efficiency programme, but also it was to have a smaller number of higher qualified, better trained people that could actually speak with authority within the spending departments.

In this case, the MP persists with the same question type, but the witness equivocates in all of the questions, using strategies E4a, E4d and E6f. Viggers ought to have considered a change of tactic, probably by using the implied interrogative word question type in order to rephrase question T24, with a question such as "Are departments required to contribute to the substance and function of these 12 existing frameworks and collaborative deals?" It is just possible that this implied interrogative word question might have encouraged the witness to give a reply.

The moodless question type is second in line with regard to the percentage of non-replies (42.9%). However, it is important to note that there were only seven questions of this category used by the interviewees in the debate on expenditure and administration. It should also be pointed out that these questions were often used in combination with other types, usually with the purpose of clarifying a previous question. This occurs in questions T52 and T59, which are clarifications of T51 (interrogative word), and T58 (implied interrogative word), respectively. Moreover, as we mentioned before, questions T75 and T76 give support to Harris's theory that moodless and declarative utterances are put forward for agreement or disagreement by the addressee.

Third on the list of percentages of equivocation in answers is the implied interrogative word question type with 25%, with five non-replies given to the 20 questions posed. This is a considerably lower figure, if we compare it with those of the interrogative word and moodless types. Moreover, with regard to two of these cases, a particularly interesting point is worthy of note. It could be argued that, in questions T67a and T67b, there is no *deliberate* attempt to equivocate on the part of the witnesses involved. On the contrary, we are of the opinion that equivocation is used with a strategic purpose in the answers to questions T72a and T72b. As we discussed earlier in this sub-section, and in chapter 4, section 2, it would seem that the

interviewee's inability to give a reply to question 67b stems from her ignorance of the matter, rather than genuine equivocation. Furthermore, although it may seem to be a contradiction to what we discussed above, it is possible that our classification of Alison Littlely's non-reply to question T67a as equivocation type E1 is harsh. Her inability to provide an answer, on this occasion, in the same way as with T67b, could also be attributed to her ignorance. In the case of questions T72a and T72b, as we argued earlier, it is deemed that Nigel Smith deliberately equivocates, since he completely ignores both questions and makes general comments.

The implied interrogative word question is the second most used type in the parliamentary session on expenditure and administration, with 20 questions, or 23.3% of the total. One reason for this could be that its structure gives rise to a more polite question than, for example, the declarative type. It has been seen that the latter can, on occasion, be of an imposing nature, where it seems to *demand* a reply, forcing the interviewee to agree or disagree with a statement, as in question T12, cited earlier, or even to reproach him for his lack of thoroughness, as in T47, discussed below. The implied interrogative question contains a more polite structure, and could even be said to encourage the witness to give a reply, as can be seen in question T18:

Q18 Peter Viggers: Are there other second permanent secretaries?

Mr Smith: In the Treasury? I do not believe so, but I have to say, I am not too well up on government grading.

In this case, Peter Viggers's question does not impose himself on the witness by presupposing that there are second permanent secretaries, which allows the latter to calmly answer, and give his reasons.

The implied interrogative word question is also the obvious choice when the interviewer wishes to make a polite request, as occurs in question T20:

Q20 Peter Viggers: The Office of Government Commerce has been described by a newspaper as a shadow of its former self. It had a very grand mission statement to improve efficiency across government and now it is a buying department. Can you summarise for us the key activities for which the OGC will now be responsible?

Mr Smith: Yes. Really there are three major areas. The first is getting better value government procurement spend from third parties. That totals about £125-150 billion. Of that about £75 billion is on common goods and services and, obviously, one of the key roles of OGC is to drive the move towards collaboration in terms of procurement right across government, the second area is within the project space, making sure the right projects are there, they are delivered on time and to

budget, and the third area is the better utilisation of the Government property estate.

The use of the modal expression “Can you summarise ...?” is more polite than if the MP had used, for example, an imperative question.

With regard to the use of the implied interrogative word question to make a request, it is interesting to note that in T47, although the question is introduced by a modal verb, it would seem that the MP’s utterance is more of a reproach than a request. These exchanges occur after Alison Littlely has given suitable replies to both T46a and T46b:

Mr Smith: Could I perhaps make a comment. I do not know the details of this case. I would find it surprising if a framework had a length of time of ten years. That is my personal view.

Q47 Mr Dunne: Could I suggest that you have a look at your own website then.

Mr Smith: I will indeed.

It appears that Dunne is criticizing Smith for not having looked at his website previously.

In the following sub-section of this chapter, we will see a breakdown of the total statistics for the three sessions of the British Parliament.

6.1.4 Total statistics of the British Parliamentary sessions.

The statistics for the analyses of the three parliamentary sessions which took place in the Treasury Committee in the House of Commons will be presented in the following order:

- (1) The percentage of equivocation occurring in the answers provided by the witnesses.
- (2) The question types used by the MPs, and their percentages of the total number of questions posed.
- (3) The equivocation strategies employed by the interviewees, and the frequency with which they occur.
- (4) The percentages of equivocation observed in the answers given to each question category.

In the three debates, a total of 326 questions were posed by the interviewees, of which 96 (29.4% of the total) were considered not to receive adequate replies, while satisfactory replies were given to the other 230 (70.6%)¹⁵⁸. The number of questions for each type used by the MPs, and their respective percentages of the total are the following:

- implied interrogative word questions, 117 (34.1%);
- interrogative word questions, 105 (32.2%);
- declarative questions, 49 (15.0%);
- moodless questions, 18 (5.5%);
- indirect questions, 16 (4.9%);
- polar questions, 11 (3.4%);
- disjunctive questions, 7 (2.1%);
- imperative questions, 3 (0.9%)¹⁵⁹.

The frequency of each equivocation strategy observed and the percentages of the total number of non-replies is the following:

- E1 (25 questions, 25.0%).
- E3 (5 questions, 5.2%).
- E4 (15 questions, 15.6%).
- E5 (1 question, 1.0%).
- E6 (28 questions, 29.2%).
- E7 (8 questions, 8.3%).

¹⁵⁸ See graph nº13.

¹⁵⁹ See graph nº14.

- E8 (5 questions, 5.2%).
- E10 (4 questions, 4.2%).
- E13 (6 questions, 6.3%)¹⁶⁰.

The following statistics show the percentages of equivocation observed in the answers to the various question types. The total number of questions asked for each category is given in brackets:

- interrogative word questions (105): equivocation in 38 questions, or 36.2%;
- implied interrogative word questions (117): equivocation in 34 questions, or 29.1%;
- declarative questions (49): equivocation in 14 questions, or 28.6%;
- disjunctive questions (7): equivocation in 2 questions, or 28.6%;
- indirect questions (16): equivocation in 4 questions or 25.0%;
- moodless questions (18): equivocation in 3 questions, or 16.7%;
- polar questions (11): equivocation in 1 question, or 9.1%;
- imperative questions (3): no equivocation, or (0%)¹⁶¹.

In chapter 7, these statistics will be compared and contrasted with those of the Spanish Parliamentary sessions. In the next section, we shall proceed to analyse the sessions of *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* in *El Congreso de los Diputados*.

¹⁶⁰ See graph nº15.

¹⁶¹ See graph nº16.

6.2 Analysis of the transcripts of parliamentary sessions in *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda of El Congreso de los Diputados.*

6.2.1 Table Esp1: Matters relating to the responsibilities of the Bank of Spain.

The transcript of the first Spanish parliamentary session to be analysed took place in *El Congreso de los Diputados* on 26 June 2007. Table Esp1 shows the results of the analysis of the answers given by the Governor of the Bank of Spain at the meeting in *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* to questions posed by the MPs about matters relating to the Bank's responsibilities. The meeting was presided over by the Chairman of the *Comisión*, Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Vegara, and the MPs present were: Mr Miguel Arias Cañete (Conservative Party), Mr Josep Sánchez i Llibre (Catalán Party), and Mr Ricardo Torres Balaguer (Socialist Party). After a brief introduction by the Chairman, the Governor of the Bank of Spain, Mr Miguel Ángel Fernández Ordóñez, started the session with an opening speech, giving the Bank's annual report for the year 2006. This was followed by various rounds of questions posed by the MPs.

TURNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENTS
TURN 1a				
Q1	Interrogative word	No		
Q2	Implied interrogative word: requires comment ¹⁶²	Yes	E4c	
Q3	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q4	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q5	Disjunctive	Yes	E1	
Q6a	Polar	No		
Q6b	Polar	No		
Q7	Interrogative word	Yes	E4c	
Q8	Implied	Yes	E1	

¹⁶² Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering "yes" or "no" would not constitute a reply. In order to be considered to have given a satisfactory answer, the interviewee would be expected to give a further comment (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

	interrogative word: requires comment			
Q9	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q10	Declarative	No		
Q11a	Imperative	No		This is the first part of what could be considered a multi-barrelled question, that is, a question which deals with various aspects (Bull 2003, 110-111).
Q11b	Imperative	No		
Q11c	Imperative	No		
Q11d	Imperative	Yes	E2	
Q11e	Imperative	No		
Q11f	Imperative	No		
Q11g	Imperative	No		
Q11h	Imperative	No		
Q12	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E10	
Q13	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Interviewee makes his views clear.
TURN 2a				
Q14a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Introduction to question Q14b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q14b	Disjunctive	Yes	E1	
Q15	Imperative	No		

Q16	Interrogative word	No		Question repeated in Q17b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q17a	Polar	No		
Q17b	Interrogative word	No		
Q18a	Disjunctive	No		Repetition of question 11e, turn 1a. Not counted in the total number of questions.
Q18b	Interrogative Word	No		Repetition of question 11e, turn 1a. Not counted in the total number of questions.
Q19a	Interrogative word	No		
Q19b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q20	Interrogative word	No		
Q21	Imperative	No		Extension of Q20: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q22a	Imperative	No		
Q22b	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q23	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	

TURN 3a				
Q24	Disjunctive	No		
Q25	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E10	Question was partly answered in a previous turn.
Q26	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Repetition of question Q25: not counted in the total number of questions.
TURN 1b				
Q27	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q28	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q29	Interrogative word	Yes	E13	
Q30	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Question extended in Q31: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q31	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q32	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Question extended in Q31: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q33	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E7f	
TURN 2b				
Q34a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		

Q34b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
TURN 3b				
Q35	Interrogative word	No		Question posed to Arias Cañete, Conservative Party MP.

As can be seen in table Esp1, the MPs were each permitted two rounds or turns of questions. Mr Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, participated in turns 1a (questions Q1-Q13), and 1b (questions Q29-Q35). Mr Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, was involved in turns 2a (questions Q14a-Q23), and 2b (questions Q34a and Q34b). The Socialist Party MP, Mr Torres Balaguer, used turns 3a (questions Q24-Q26), and 3b (question Q35). The total number of main questions posed to the Governor of the Bank of Spain by all of the MPs is, therefore 35. However, it should be noted that there is one sub-question in each of the following: Q6, Q14, Q17, Q18, Q19, Q22 and Q34. There are also seven sub-questions in question Q11. This would give us a grand total of 49 questions. Nevertheless, before the percentages of equivocation in the answers to the questions can be calculated, a number of deductions need to be made. Question Q14a is an introduction to Q14b, and both will therefore be counted as one question. Moreover, question Q16 is repeated in Q17b, and will be deducted from the total. Also, Q18a and Q18b are repetitions of Q11e, and both will be excluded from the final tally. Question Q21 is an extension of Q20, and both will also be counted as one question. Q25 is repeated in Q26, and both will constitute a single question. Finally, questions Q30 and Q32 are expanded in Q31 and Q33 respectively, and will be counted as one question each. This would give us a final tally of 41 questions.

Table Esp1 above shows that, of the 41 questions to be taken into account, equivocation was found to occur in the answers to 16 questions (39.0% of the total), while an adequate reply was given to 25 questions (61.0%)¹⁶³. In order to determine which questions receive a satisfactory reply, we have applied the theory discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, and also in section 4.1.3, which deals with what Bull terms immediate replies (1994, 2003), in addition to the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2, to the analysis of the parliamentary session. Moreover, this typology leads us to discover the type of equivocation observed in each case.

¹⁶³ See graph nº17.

As we mentioned in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, and in the analysis of the English transcripts, question types are important in determining whether equivocation occurs in an answer. In this regard, six of the eight question types identified in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1 were found in this parliamentary session. As can be seen from Table Esp1, the number of questions for each type and their respective percentages of the total are the following:

- implied interrogative word questions, 13 (31.7%);
- imperative questions, 13 (31.7%);
- interrogative word questions, 8 (19.5%);
- polar questions, 3 (7.3%);
- disjunctive questions, 3 (7.3%);
- declarative questions, 1 (2.4%) .

A list of the equivocation strategies used in this parliamentary session will now be provided, after which we will give statistics of the frequency of the use of each type. This will be followed by an analysis of at least one example of each type of equivocation observed in the interviewees' answers. We will then discuss why a particular strategy was used by the interviewee to avoid answering a question. Finally, the percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each of the different question types will be examined, and we will also try to establish the reasons why certain question categories were employed by the interviewers.

In our analysis of the first parliamentary session of La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda, six types of equivocation were observed. These include:

- E1 (Ignores the question).
- E2 (Acknowledges the question without answering it).
- E4 (Attacks the question, one sub-type): E4c (the question is based on a false premise).
- E7 (Makes political point, one sub-type): E7f (offers political analysis).
- E10 (States or implies that the question has already been answered).
- E13 (Modifies the question).

The following statistics show the number of times each type occurs in the questions, and their respective percentages of the total number of non-replies are given in brackets:

- E1: 9 questions (56.30%);
- E2: 1 question (6.3%);
- E4: 2 questions (12.5%);
- E7: 1 question (6.3%);

- E10: 2 questions (12.5%);
- E13: 1 question (6.2%) .

Examples of the equivocation strategies identified in the answers given by the Governor of the Bank of Spain will now be discussed. In this regard, the following circumstance should be given consideration. In question 25, more than one strategy of equivocation has been observed in the answer given. In this case, we shall take into account the one which we think has the greatest influence on the interviewee's answer, and this will be the type recorded in Table Esp1.

Mr Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, asks the first round of questions, turn 1a, and in question Q2, he suggests that the Governor of the Bank of Spain, Mr Fernández Ordóñez, has not provided full details of the situation of the Spanish economy:

¿Es que le da miedo al gobernador señalar la profundidad que están alcanzando algunos de los desequilibrios de la economía española? (Is the Governor afraid to indicate how serious the instability in the Spanish economy is?)

Although this question contains a polar structure, a simple answer of "yes" or "no" would not constitute a reply. It is, in fact, an implied interrogative question, which requires the person answering to make an additional comment. Had the Governor of the Bank answered "yes" to the question, he would be expected to give reasons as to why he was afraid to discuss the instability in the Spanish economy. However, answering "yes" could make the Governor appear incompetent, which would constitute a serious loss of face. On the other hand, an answer of "no" would mean that he disagreed with the MP's assessment, which would also require some kind of explanation on the Governor's part. Fernández Ordóñez chooses to equivocate by attacking the question, implying that it is based on a false premise (strategy E4c):

Sinceramente, señor Arias, pienso que el informe del Banco de España ha hecho lo de siempre, que es dar una visión equilibrada. (To be honest, Mr Arias, I think that the Bank of Spain's report has provided a balanced view, which it has always done.)

In this way, the Governor of the Bank evades a potential communicative conflict (Bull 2003).

During his first turn (1a), Arias Cañete asks two further questions which do not receive any reply at all from the Governor of the Bank. These are questions Q4, also related to instability in the Spanish economy, and Q5, regarding the Governor's profile:

{Q4} ¿Por qué, además, este paso atrás en un año en que los desequilibrios han seguido ampliándose? (Why has there also been a backward step during a year in which instability has continued to increase?)

{Q5} ¿Es decisión suya o es decisión de su servicio de Estudios, que puede considerar que con el perfil del gobernador actual podemos seguir con el tancredismo que tanto parece gustar al vicepresidente económico? (Is it your own decision or is it that of your group of analysts, who may be of the opinion that with the profile of the present Governor we can continue with the passiveness which seems to be to the liking of the vice-president of economic affairs?)

Question Q4, is an interrogative word question, which requires the addressee to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003). It is another face-threatening question since, if Fernández Ordóñez gave a reply, he would be agreeing with the MP that a “backward step” was taken, which would again reveal him to be incompetent. With regard to question Q5, a disjunctive question, where the interviewee must choose between two alternatives, giving a reply would damage either the Governor’s own face or that of his group of analysts. Fernández Ordóñez, therefore, makes no attempt to answer either of the questions, or even acknowledge that they have been asked (equivocation strategy E1), thereby protecting both his own image and that his colleagues. He simply proceeds to give answers to what he considers to be the important matters: “*Paso a referirme a los temas de la lista que usted ha hecho.*” (I shall now proceed to deal with the number of matters which you mention.)

Questions Q11a - Q11h constitute a multi-barrelled question, a question which deals with several different matters (Bull 2003, 110-111). The Governor of the Bank of Spain is able to provide satisfactory replies to all of the sub-questions, except one, question Q11d:

... quisiera que el gobernador me contestara si el Banco de España ... está realmente preocupado o no ... por el nivel de apalancamiento de las empresas españolas, especialmente las relacionadas con el sector inmobiliario y las grandes operaciones empresariales de los últimos tiempos, en un contexto de subida de tipos de interés como el que se anuncia; (I should like the Governor to inform me whether or not the Bank of Spain ... is seriously concerned ... about the inactivity of Spanish companies, especially those connected with the building sector, and recent business transactions. This is with regard to the increase in interest rates, something which has been forecast.)

Although the initial question is in the imperative form, all of the sub-questions are really similar to implied interrogative questions which require the interviewee to not

only answer “yes” or “no”, but to provide reasons to support his opinion, or, in some cases, provide information requested. As we have indicated, Fernández Ordóñez does this successfully in all of the sub-questions, except Q11d. In the latter case, he does not give a reply, or make any comment on the matters in the question. It could be argued, however, that he acknowledges that a question has been asked, since he provides replies to the first three sub-questions, and then states that: *“La morosidad es el quinto punto que usted señalaba.”* (Delayed payment is the fifth matter which you draw attention to.) By moving on from the third matter to the fifth, it would seem that he is consciously aware that a fourth issue has been asked about. In this case he could be said to be making use of equivocation strategy E2. A possible reason for the Governor’s reluctance or inability to give a reply to question Q11d may again be to avoid appearing ignorant or incompetent.

In question Q12, Arias Cañete asks another specific question:

¿Cree el gobernador que el esfuerzo reformador que está realizando el Gobierno en estos momentos es suficiente para garantizar los próximos cuatro años la continuidad del ciclo de crecimiento económico que afortunadamente venimos viviendo? (Is the Governor of the opinion that the changes being introduced by the Government at the moment are sufficient to guarantee continuity in the cycle of economic growth, which we have had the good fortune to enjoy, for the next four years?)

In the same way as question Q2, this is also an implied interrogative word question, which requires the addressee to make an additional comment in order to justify his reply. However, in his answer, the Governor of the Bank equivocates, stating in a very vague manner that the question has already been answered (strategy E10):

Usted señalaba finalmente si el esfuerzo del Gobierno es suficiente. En mi discurso lo que he hecho ha sido repetir en tres áreas lo que mi antecesor dijo. (Your final question was whether the Government’s efforts are adequate. What I have done in my speech is to repeat what my predecessor mentioned, with regard to three matters.)

It is arguable that this is done to avoid giving the impression that he is supporting the Government in power. This would leave him in an embarrassing situation since, as MPs from the different political parties are present, he would be expected to be impartial.

Fernández Ordóñez does, nevertheless, provide a satisfactory reply to question Q13, which could be considered a follow-up to the previous one:

¿En ese contexto considera usted que la política fiscal española ha sido suficientemente ambiciosa para prevenir futuros riesgos? (In that regard are you of the opinion that the Spanish tax policy is bold enough to prevent future risks?)

In this case, the Governor's reply is concise and to the point:

Creo que la política fiscal española desde el año 1996 hasta hoy es ejemplar, sinceramente; cuando uno lo mira comparado con otros países, se da cuenta de que han sido diez u once años de políticas, primero, de reducción de déficit, luego de generación de superávit ... (I honestly believe that the Spanish tax policy from 1996 to the present day has been exemplary. When you compare it with that of other countries, you realize that certain policies have been in existence for ten or eleven years, firstly, to reduce indebtedness, and then to create a surplus ...)

Fernández Ordóñez does not answer directly "yes" or "no", but his views on the matter do seem to be clear.

In turn 2a, Mr Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, had the opportunity to pose questions to the Governor of the Bank of Spain. From the transcript it can be seen that Fernández Ordóñez gives adequate replies to some of the questions. However, he does ignore others, and therefore, in some cases, incurs in equivocation type E1. In this regard, it would be pertinent to examine questions Q14b and Q15:

{Q14a} ... nos gustaría saber si el Banco de España tiene información sobre cómo va a evolucionar la economía española en el segundo trimestre del año 2007; (... we should like to know whether the Bank of Spain has any information on how the Spanish economy will evolve during the second quarter of the year 2007;)

{Q14b} ... si va a continuar este crecimiento ascendente o si va a experimentar una cierta desaceleración, lo cual podría ser una tendencia negativa, entre comillas, para el segundo semestre del año 2007. (... whether this increasing growth will continue, or whether there will be any kind of decline, which could be a negative tendency, in a manner of speaking, for the second half of the year 2007.)

En segundo lugar, {Q15} nos gustaría conocer la opinión del gobernador del Banco de España en cuanto al proceso de internacionalización de las cajas de ahorro, que nosotros consideramos interesante. (Secondly, we should like the Governor of the Bank of Spain to give us his opinion with regard to the internationalization of savings banks, which we consider to be important.)

As we mentioned in Table Esp1 above, question Q14a is an introduction to question Q14b, and will therefore not be taken into account. In the latter, the Catalán Party MP poses a disjunctive question, which requires the person answering to choose one of two alternatives, or at least propose another alternative (Bull 2003). In this case, Fernández Ordóñez not only does not provide any alternative, but also fails to even acknowledge that the question has been asked. He simply proceeds to give an answer to question Q15:

El señor Sánchez i Llibre, ... ha hecho preguntas muy concretas que paso a contestar. Sobre la internacionalización de las cajas de ahorros, ¿qué hemos señalado? Hemos señalado que esto debe mirarse como se ha mirado el proceso de los bancos, es decir, no cabe pensar que sean muchas cajas de ahorros, sino solo las que tienen capacidad importante para hacer esto y, por tanto, el número es limitado, porque no tiene sentido que cajas medianas y pequeñas se lancen a este tipo de aventuras, aunque hay cajas que sí pueden utilizarlo. (Mr Sánchez i Llibre , ... has asked some very specific questions, which I shall now answer. What did we emphasize with regard to the internationalization of Savings Banks? We emphasized that they should be taken into account in the same way as normal banks. In other words, instead of focusing on the fact that there are a great number of savings banks, we should actually pay attention only to the ones which have the necessary capacity to be involved in this process. Consequently, there would be a reduced number, since it would not be appropriate for medium-sized and small savings banks to dive into this type of adventure although there do exist savings banks which are able to do so.)

Although the Governor of the Bank announces his intention to answer Sánchez i Llibre's questions, he totally ignores question Q14b. It is very important to point out, however, that this question creates an enormous communicative conflict because, if Fernández Ordóñez gives a reply, he would obviously risk exposing himself to personal difficulties in the future. He therefore decides to equivocate, in the same way as in his answer to question Q5, by using strategy E1. This is in keeping with Bull et al.'s typology on political face, point F1(e), discussed in Chapter 3, Section 3.2.2.2 of this dissertation. Bull et al. observe that politicians should avoid making statements which could have a negative effect in the future (1996).

Another example of Fernández Ordóñez's tendency to answer some questions and ignore others can be seen in questions Q22a, Q22b and Q23. Both Q22a and Q22b are, in fact, a single imperative question about two separate matters, although they are related to a certain extent. As we mentioned in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2., imperative questions, in the same way as implied interrogative questions (category b: requests), require the interviewee to comply with the request indicated. It can be observed in the following quotes that the Governor of the Bank of Spain gives an

acceptable reply to question Q22a, but makes no valid attempt to answer question Q22b:

{Q22a} También nos gustaría que nos dijera si el Banco de España ha hecho alguna previsión en función de cómo se están desarrollando los procesos de fusiones y adquisiciones desde la perspectiva de la banca española y ... (We should also like you to inform us whether the Bank of Spain has made an estimate on how merger and takeover procedures are being carried out, with regard to Spanish banking, and ...)

Q22b} ... de sus incursiones en las posibles grandes adquisiciones de otros bancos europeos. Esta es una cuestión que nosotros valoramos de manera muy positiva, desde la perspectiva que la modernización del sector financiero español se pueda traducir en grandes adquisiciones por parte de otras bancas internacionales. (... its involvement in possible large takeovers of other European Banks. This is a matter which we consider to be of the very positive, as we are of the opinion that the modernization of Spain's financial sector could result in large takeover bids by other international banks.)

In his reply, Fernández Ordóñez indicates that:

En el tema de las recientes fusiones y adquisiciones en el sector bancario, creo que la última operación que está en este momento en discusión sí ha sido una operación bastante novedosa que ha cambiado el panorama, lo ha cambiado en dos áreas; una es que antes los grandes bancos se consideraban abrigados ante cualquier operación de este tipo y se ha visto que no porque se puede trocear de alguna forma un banco y, dos, es casi la primera vez, al menos en un banco importante, que se hace una operación hostil. ¿Cuál es la defensa de los bancos respecto a este tipo de operaciones? Ya no queda más que una, que en realidad es la de siempre, gestionar bien, porque si usted gestiona bien nadie puede venir a extraer más dinero para el accionista. Por tanto, los bancos bien gestionados — y en mi opinión, los bancos españoles, en su conjunto, están muy bien gestionados— son los que mejor están defendidos para este tipo de operaciones. (On the subject of recent mergers and takeovers in the banking sector, I believe that the latest operation under discussion at the moment was a relatively new one which has changed the entire picture. Two changes have been brought about. First of all, the bigger banks used to feel protected against any operation of this nature. However, this has proved not to be the case, since any bank can be divided in some way. Secondly, it is practically the first time that a hostile operation has been carried out, at least in an important bank. How can banks defend themselves against this kind of operations? As has always been the case,

there is only one solution: good management. If you have good management, no one can come along and get more money out for the shareholder. Therefore, banks with good management – in my opinion, Spanish banks, as a group, have very good management – are the ones which are better protected against this type of operation.)

In this case he adequately discusses the issue with regard to Spanish banks, but makes no mention of mergers with other European banks. Moreover, no attempt is made to give a reply to question Q23:

En cualquier caso, {Q23} nos gustaría saber si el Banco de España considera que esto podría generar un factor de adquisiciones o fusiones por parte de grandes grupos financieros internacionales que quisieran hacer lo mismo en el sector financiero español, lo cual, en cierta medida, podría afectar a la reestructuración de la banca mediana española. (In any case, we should like to know whether the Bank of Spain is of the opinion that this could result in takeovers and mergers by large international financial groups, which would be willing to do the same in the Spanish financial sector. This could, to some extent, affect the reorganization of medium-sized Spanish banks.)

This is another example of equivocation strategy E1 (Ignores the question). In both cases, it would seem that Fernández Ordóñez equivocates because he does not possess the necessary information to be able to provide an answer to the question, and thereby tries to conceal his ignorance of the matter.

It should be pointed out that the format of the Spanish parliamentary session, which has a different style of turn-taking from the British one, makes it easier for the interviewee to equivocate. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 7.

In turn 3a, the Governor of the Bank of Spain also indulges in equivocation, though of a different nature. Fernández Ordóñez provides a coherent reply to question Q24, posed by the Socialist Party MP, Ricardo Torres Balaguer:

{Q24} ¿Realmente hay riesgos importantes para las familias españolas con la evolución previsible de los tipos de interés o son riesgos que pueden ser menores? (Will the predictable change in interest rates create significant risks for Spanish families, or are these risks of a less significant nature?)

The Governor provides a concise reply:

Una, que es evidente que la subida de tipos va a tener y está teniendo efectos en las familias españolas —lo que estamos viendo es una suave desaceleración del consumo, porque está obligando a mayores cargas financieras— y en el nuevo

endeudamiento. Ahora bien, ¿esto es algo importante o dramático? Visto en perspectiva realmente no solo los tipos de interés ahora son muchos más bajos que en cualquier otro episodio de la economía española, sino que incluso dentro de la unión monetaria la tasa oficial del euribor la tenemos al 4 por ciento, lo subimos en el último consejo y está en el 4,34 por ciento y estará seguramente en torno al 4,5 por ciento, pero en agosto del año 2000 estaba en torno al 5,2 por ciento. Por tanto, no hay que irse muy atrás, sino que en agosto del año 2000 todavía era muy superior al que tenemos ahora, y esto teniendo en cuenta solo un marco de seis o siete años. Por consiguiente, sí y no. (First of all, it is obvious that the increase in interest rates will have, and is presently having, an effect on Spanish families - at the moment, we are experiencing a slight decrease in spending, which is being caused by heavier financial burdens – and on increased indebtedness. So, is this something to be seriously worried about? In perspective, not only are interest rates much lower now than at any time in the history of the Spanish economy, but even in the financial union the Euribor rate is 4 per cent. It was raised at the last council, and is now 4.34 per cent, and is probably now around 4.5 per cent, having been 5.2% in August 2000. Therefore, we can see that not very long ago, in August 2000, it was still much higher than it is now, even bearing in mind that there has been a time span of six or seven years. So, in answer to your question, yes and no.)

In reply to this disjunctive question, Fernández Ordóñez not only chooses an alternative, but also gives convincing reasons to support his point of view. However, he equivocates in two different ways when giving an answer to question Q25. Torres Balaguer poses the following question to the Governor of the Bank of Spain :

{Q25} ... *¿observa usted, señor gobernador, algún problema de financiación para las familias o para las empresas españolas tanto en el ámbito nacional como internacional?* (Governor, can you envisage any difficulty with regard to financial support for Spanish families or companies, both in the national and international spheres?)

Fernández Ordóñez, first of all, implies that he has already answered all of Torres Balaguer's questions, except one (equivocation strategy E10):

Las cuestiones planteadas por el señor Torres prácticamente ya las he contestado, salvo una más concreta ... (I have already answered practically all of Mr Torres's questions, except for one which is very specific ...)

Secondly, although reference was made to a reply given to a similar question posed in turn 1a (Q11g), the Governor's assertion is only partly true:

La penúltima cuestión que usted señalaba se refiere a las dificultades de financiación que puedan encontrar empresas españolas. Globalmente no se está detectando eso. Alguna empresa española puede tenerlas, pero debemos acostumbrarnos a esto; es decir, una vez que estamos en el euro no hay visión de la economía española, son las empresas una a una, las familias una a una, y lo que hemos visto en la Bolsa seguramente lo veremos en la financiación, que una empresa ha caído el mil por cien de su cotización y, sin embargo, otras del mismo sector han aumentado el 3 y 5 por ciento en su cotización. Creo que lo que vamos a ver es que aquel que cometió el error de financiarse en exceso encontrará dificultades de financiación y el que ha diversificado sus actividades, se encontrará con otras situaciones, pero, en principio, no estamos detectando absolutamente nada. (Your penultimate question refers to financial difficulties which Spanish companies could find themselves immersed in. Some Spanish companies may experience difficulties, but this is something that we will have to get accustomed to. In other words, once we start using the euro, there will not be a global vision of the Spanish economy. Spanish companies will be accounted for separately, and so will Spanish families. Moreover, what we have seen on the stock exchange we will almost certainly see in financing, where, for example, a company's value has fallen one thousand per cent, whereas others in the same sector have increased theirs by 3 or 5 per cent. I believe that what we will discover is that those who made the mistake of indulging in excessive financing will have difficulty with finances, while those who have varied their activities will be in a different position. However, we have not yet seen any evidence of this.)

Fernández Ordóñez gives a partial answer to the question, since he only discusses problems related to Spanish *companies*. No thorough explanation is given, however, with regard to Spanish *families*. It can therefore be argued that he has also incurred in equivocation in this case (type E8a). The reason for this is that while the Governor's reply to question Q11g, a more general question put forward by Arias Cañete, is acceptable, his answer is incomplete with regard to the question posed by Torres Balaguer, question Q25, which is more specific:

... quisiera que el gobernador me contestara ... por si ha detectado el Banco de España dificultades crecientes de financiación de la economía española en los últimos meses o considera que la situación sigue siendo exactamente igual; (I should like the Governor to inform me ... whether the Bank of Spain has discerned any increasing difficulty of financing in the Spanish economy in the last few months, or whether it considers the situation to be exactly the same.)

In the second round of questions, in turn 1b, Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, asks a question about the European Interbank:

En este momento, del dinero que circula en el interbancario europeo ... {Q29} cuánto absorbe la economía española, nuestro sistema financiero, para saber si es un porcentaje pequeño, grande o mediano. (At present, with regard to the money circulating in the European Interbank ... how much is acquired by the Spanish economy, our own financial system? We should like to know whether it is a small, large or average percentage.)

The Governor of the Bank of Spain equivocates because, first of all, he completely rephrases the question (strategy E13):

Ha señalado que a cuánto están los interbancarios. Es evidente que estamos financiando todo ese proceso de inversión a través de ahorro exterior. ¿Se está haciendo a través de interbancario? No. Hay una cantidad evidente, pero lo que han hecho las instituciones españolas fundamentalmente ha sido emitir títulos a largo plazo, lo cual da una enorme tranquilidad también porque no son vaivenes del interbancario, aunque insisto —y voy a la parte final que usted señalaba del libro— que aquí va a haber empresas e individuos, y lo hemos visto en este caso. (You mentioned the rates of the Interbank. It is obvious that we are financing the whole process of investment by means of external savings. Is this being done through the Interbank? No, it isn't. There is no doubt that a certain amount of money is involved, but what Spanish organizations have done basically is issue long-term bonds. This has also been very reassuring, because these are not fluctuations of the Interbank. However, I insist, and I will refer to the final comment which you mention, that this will involve companies and individual people, which we have seen in this case.)

Fernández Ordóñez does not answer the MP's question regarding the Spanish economy. Instead, he diverts attention towards the functioning of the Interbank, in order to give his own political analysis. Question Q29 is a very specific question, for which Fernández Ordóñez has to provide exact figures. It could be argued that the Governor of the Bank indulges in equivocation because he is unable to provide the information requested, and admitting ignorance on his part would constitute a serious loss of personal face. He also formulates and answers his own question: "Is this being done through the Interbank? No, it isn't." This is a strategy which he occasionally uses in his speeches to divert attention from the issue in question.

However, the Governor of the Bank does give a clear, concise reply to question Q31, which is really an extension of question Q30. Arias Cañete, while discussing demand and supply in the building sector, poses the following question:

{Q31} *¿Tiene el sector servicios o el sector industrial en este momento potencial de crecimiento a corto plazo para sustituir la pérdida de crecimiento económico imputable al sector de la vivienda? (Does the services sector or the industrial sector have the potential at the moment to compensate, in the short term, for the loss of economic growth brought about by the building sector?)*

Fernández Ordóñez's reply is the following:

En su conjunto el sector público, por no hablar de cómo estaba en otras ocasiones con deudas altas y con déficit, tiene un margen enorme en cualquier momento a través incluso de reducciones fiscales o de cualquier otro tipo. Esto es probablemente lo que lleva a explicar por qué el proceso está siendo absolutamente suave y esperemos que sea de esa forma. (As a whole, the public sector, not to mention its situation in the past with high indebtedness and deficit, has, at all times, a great leeway as a result of tax deduction, or any other type of deduction. This is probably what helps us to understand why the process is going along smoothly, and we hope that it will continue to do so.)

In reply to the implied interrogative word question, reasons are given to support the Governor's view.

Nevertheless, Fernández Ordóñez is again seen to equivocate in answering question Q33, which is really an extension of question Q32. The Conservative Party MP is worried about the effect that Spain's image could have on foreign investment:

{Q33} *¿Empieza a ser perceptible en los mercados internacionales que la imagen internacional de España puede estar siendo debilitada en cuanto a seguridad jurídica, en cuanto a destino atractivo para inversiones del exterior? (Is it beginning to be noticed in international markets that Spain's international image is being deteriorated where the Spanish legal system is concerned, with regard to being an attractive option for foreign investment?)*

The Governor of the Bank of Spain does not give a clear reply to this question, which is also of the implied interrogative word type, but instead gives his own political analysis (equivocation strategy E7f):

... voy a la parte final que usted señalaba del libro— que aquí va a haber empresas e individuos, y lo hemos visto en este caso. Habrá empresas que

llegarán, pero al final uno a quién va a prestar, admitiendo más coste o con más cautela, pues al que tiene menos posibilidades de devolverlo. Por tanto, cuando llegue una empresa española y diga que su situación no depende de qué está pasando en el sector inmobiliario de España, sino de cómo va el aeropuerto de Londres o la autopista de Chicago, o cómo va México, porque en algún banco español el 70 por ciento de los beneficios depende de México y no de España. Por tanto, el proceso de diversificación de las empresas españolas hace que no sea como siempre y que siga la suerte —suerte que no está siendo mala pero que podría serlo— del propio país. Yo creo que eso introduce un elemento de tranquilidad. (I shall now discuss your final comment. You suggest that companies and individuals will be involved in this, which has been seen to be the case. Some companies will come, but we will eventually give loans to ones which are least likely to repay them. This would be done either with more expense or more caution. Therefore, we could be faced with a situation where a Spanish company states that its situation does not depend on what occurs in the building sector in Spain, but on what is happening in London Airport, or the Chicago motorway. It could also depend on how Mexico is doing, since in some Spanish banks, 70 per cent of benefits depend on Mexico, not Spain. Consequently, the diversification of Spanish companies means that the situation in a certain country will not always be the same, with any luck. The luck is not bad at the moment, but this could change.)

Fernández Ordóñez discusses his own ideas, but makes absolutely no mention of whether insecurity in the Spanish legal system affects foreign investment. It should be noted, however, that, in a similar way as Q14b, question Q33 creates a communicative conflict, and the Governor of the Bank is afraid or unwilling to predict what might happen in the future.

In his second round of questions (turn 2b), Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, reminds the Governor of the Bank that some of his queries have remained unanswered. The former states that the Spanish economy is weak in certain aspects, and that if measures are not taken, there could be problems for future generations with regard to productivity, commercial deficit, and I+D+i . He then poses the following questions:

{Q34a} No sé si usted comparte que existe esta vulnerabilidad, en la que coinciden algunos organismos internacionales, y {Q34b} no sé si sería interesante que el organismo que usted preside instara al Gobierno a que tomara las medidas correspondientes para que el futuro de la economía española no se vea amenazado o hipotecado por estas cuestiones o por estas magnitudes económicas que a nuestro grupo le preocupan. (Q34a: I do not know whether you agree that such a weakness exists, and ... Q34b: I do not know whether it would

be a good idea for the organization which you preside to urge the Government to take the necessary measures to prevent the future of the Spanish economy from being threatened or put at risk because of these matters. Both these matters and these huge economic problems are of concern for our political group.)

First of all, Fernández Ordóñez seems to equivocate initially in his answer to question Q34a because he states that he has already answered one aspect (equivocation strategy E10): “*Ya he explicado el déficit comercial.*” (I have already discussed commercial deficit.) Although it could be argued in his favour that this is true, he nevertheless incurs in equivocation because he attacks the question by suggesting that I+D+i is not the important issue (strategy E4a). Moreover, he makes a political point by indulging in self-justification (equivocation type E7g). These strategies can be explained by examining the relevant section of the Governor’s speech:

Ya he explicado el déficit comercial. Existe un tema clave que es la productividad, que lo resume absolutamente todo. ¿Cuáles son los tres elementos esenciales para aumentar la productividad? Usted ha hablado de I+D+i, pero hay otros dos elementos capitales. Yo le remitiría, ya que usted es de por allí, a mi discurso en la Universidad de Barcelona en homenaje a Ernest Lluch, la primera conferencia de la Fundación Ernest Lluch, en la que me decidí de alguna forma a hacer un estudio a largo plazo. Cité la I+D+i pero dije que los otros dos factores fundamentales eran la liberalización ... y la educación. Esa es nuestra gran diferencia. Nosotros pasamos a todos los países en crecimiento y demás pero cuando uno mira los niveles de educación secundaria ... son absolutamente ridículos en comparación a los nórdicos o los europeos. Este es un punto clave. ¿Hemos tenido un aumento en los últimos veinte años espectacular? Es verdad. Estábamos en cifras del veintitantos y estamos ahora en cifras en torno al cincuenta y tantos, pero es que en los otros países están en el ochenta u ochenta y cinco. Yo dediqué esa conferencia —y me ha dado usted oportunidad de decirlo— a decir que el punto esencial de crecimiento de la productividad es la educación, educación y educación. {I have already discussed commercial deficit (states or implies that the question has already been answered). An important point is productivity, which deals with everything. What are the three important factors which enhance productivity? You have mentioned I+D+i, but there are two other major elements (attacks the question – the question fails to tackle the important issue). I would like us to refer to the speech which I made at the University of Barcelona as a tribute to Ernest Lluch, since you are originally from that area. It was the first lecture of the Ernest Lluch Foundation, in which I decided, in a way, to make a long-term analysis (makes political point – self-justification). I did speak about I+D+i, but I also said that two other basic factors were liberalization ... and education. That is the big difference. We have

overtaken all other countries in growth and other aspects. However, if we have a look at the level of secondary education ... it is totally ridiculous in comparison with Scandinavian or other European countries. This is the important point. Have we had a substantial increase in the last twenty years? That is true. Our numbers were in the twenties, and they are now in the fifties, while in the other countries they are between eighty and eighty-five. The purpose of that lecture – I will say this since you have provided me with the opportunity to do so - was to emphasize the fact that the important point of productivity growth is education, education and education.)

However, despite the initial use of equivocation strategies, it is also arguable that, in the latter part of this quotation, the Governor of the Bank of Spain makes his views clear, and that his reply to question Q34a is acceptable. Furthermore, if this is true, then we may also conclude that, although he makes no specific reply to question Q34b, Fernández Ordóñez implies that it would not be necessary for his organization to encourage the Government to take any action. Bearing this in mind, we will consider that equivocation does not occur in the replies to Q34a and Q34b.

We will now try to establish why the interviewee chose a particular equivocation strategy instead of another with the purpose of evading questions posed in this parliamentary session. The statistics given above show that type E1 (Ignores the question), was by far the most used. The Governor of the Bank of Spain employed this strategy nine times, which represents 56.3% of the total number of non-replies. This could be due to the fact that the interviewee, when faced with awkward questions, thought that it would be better to say nothing instead of appearing evasive by using strategies E4 (Attacks the question), or E10 (States or implies that the question has already been answered), each of which comprised 12.5% of the total number of equivocation strategies employed. Fernández Ordóñez decided to use equivocation type E1 when confronted with questions Q8 and Q9, which are posed by Miguel Arias Cañete, the representative of the leading group of the opposition:

{Q8} ¿Considera el gobernador que los organismos reguladores españoles han funcionado satisfactoriamente el año pasado? Excluyo al Banco de España, porque ya sabe usted que tengo un enorme respeto por el Banco de España; estoy hablando de los organismos reguladores a los que todos conocemos. (Does the Governor believe that the Spanish regulatory bodies have operated correctly in the past year? I exclude the Bank of Spain, because, as you know, I have enormous respect for the Bank of Spain; I am referring to the regulatory bodies which we all know about.)

{Q9} ¿No cree que la imagen internacional de España ha sufrido con la injerencia gubernamental en esos organismos? (Do you not think that Spain's international

image has suffered because of interference from the government in those bodies?)

There is little doubt that the interviewee equivocates when answering both questions, because, as we shall see, they both present a situation of communicative conflict. If Fernández Ordóñez answered “yes” to question Q8, he could risk providing incorrect information. On the other hand, if his answer were “no”, he could offend organizations which he has dealings with. Similarly, if he agrees with the MP in response to question Q9 is, he would be voicing his disagreement with government policy. If he answered “no”, it could be interpreted that he is taking sides in a situation where he should be impartial.

Arias Cañete also asks two very specific questions about the Spanish economy, Q27 and Q28:

En este momento, del dinero que circula en el interbancario europeo ... {Q27} cuánto absorbe la economía española, nuestro sistema financiero, para saber si es un porcentaje pequeño, grande o mediano. (How much does the Spanish economy obtain from the money circulating in the European Interbank at the present time ... we would like to know whether it is a small, large, or medium-sized amount.)

{Q28} ¿Tiene la economía española capacidad de diversificación alternativa, según el gobernador, para seguir absorbiendo esa lenta reducción o ese ajuste de la oferta a la demanda en el sector construcción? (Does the Spanish economy, in the Governor’s opinion, possess the alternative diversification necessary to continue to assume the slow reduction or change from supply to demand in the building sector?)

With regard to question Q27, it is probable that the Governor equivocates because of genuine ignorance of the matter. What is even more interesting is that, if he stated that the amount of money was a small one, he could be the target of criticism. Subsequent questions would be asked as to why this was the case. Question Q28 is even more complicated, and, to a certain extent, face-threatening, since the interviewee is required to give an opinion which could have negative consequences in the future. If he answered “yes” to the question, and was later proved to be wrong, he would undoubtedly suffer a serious loss of face. Fernández Ordóñez, therefore, decided that the best option was to completely ignore the question.

To conclude this sub-section, we will now examine statistics regarding question types. We will also try to determine why a particular type of question was preferred by the interviewers. As we mentioned earlier, the MPs who participated in this session posed a total of 41 questions to the Governor of the Bank of Spain, who was found to

equivocate in his answers to 16 questions (39% of the total). Six of the eight question types examined in Chapter 4 of this dissertation are present in the questions put forward by the MPs in this parliamentary session. The following is a breakdown of the question types with their respective percentages of equivocation in the first analysis. The total number of questions of each type posed by the MPs is given in brackets:

- disjunctive questions (3) equivocation in 2 questions, or 66.7%;
- implied interrogative word questions (13): equivocation in 7 questions, or 53.8% of the total;
- interrogative word questions (8) equivocation in 3 questions or 37.5%;
- imperative questions (13) equivocation in 4 questions, or 30.8%;
- polar questions (3) no equivocation, or (0%);
- declarative questions (1) no equivocation, or (0%) .

From the above statistics, it can be observed that the disjunctive question is the type with the second highest percentage of equivocation occurring in answers (66.7%). Replying to this question type presents a very specific type of difficulty, since the hearer is required to choose between at least two alternatives, or failing this, provide his or her own suitable alternative. It should be pointed out that there were only three questions of this nature in this parliamentary session, with equivocation occurring in the answers to two of them. Nevertheless, as we explained in the analysis above, in both questions Q5 and Q14b, Arias Cañete and Sánchez i Llibre very cleverly use this type of question to create communicative conflicts. This causes the Governor of the Bank of Spain to equivocate in order to protect his personal face and that of his colleagues.

The implied interrogative word question type is second on the list of percentages of non-replies with 53.8%. It is evident that responding to a question of this type entails a different kind of difficulty than giving a reply to, for example, a polar question. In the case of the latter, a simple reply of “yes” or “no” is required. However, in answering an implied interrogative word question, an interviewee is expected either to give convincing reasons to support his point of view, or to comply with a request, to be considered to have given an adequate reply. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons why answers given to the implied interrogative word question type contain a high percentage of equivocation, while replies to the polar question type contained no equivocation at all. An example worthy of note is the response given by the Governor of the Bank of Spain to question Q12. On being asked to comment on changes introduced by the Government with regard to economic growth, Fernández Ordóñez avoids giving a reply by stating that the question has already been answered (equivocation strategy E10).

From the statistics given, we are also able to observe that the implied interrogative word question, together with the imperative type, was the most used by

the interviewers in this debate, with 13 questions each (31.7% of the total number of questions posed). One reason for this is that, it requires a more complete answer than, for example, the polar question. As we mentioned before, the addressee, in addition to answering “yes” or “no”, as is the case with the polar question, is expected to give reasons to justify his or her opinion. Another advantage is that, because of the wording of the question, it can actually encourage the hearer to give a reply. An example of this is question Q23, cited above:

... we should like to know whether the Bank of Spain is of the opinion that this could result in takeovers and mergers by large international financial groups ...

Moreover, the careful use of the conditional tense makes the question more polite and less imposing than an interrogative word question, such as: “How could this result in takeovers and mergers ...?” This also occurs in questions Q34a and Q34b (also cited above), where the words “I do not know whether ...” also help to alleviate the violence of the FTA, cause by asking for an opinion. There also exists an FTA in questions Q8 and Q9 (cited earlier), where Arias Cañete seems to make what could be interpreted as reproaches, first to the regulatory bodies, and then the government. The MP’s question, Q8, “Does the Governor believe that the Spanish regulatory bodies have operated correctly in the past year?” seems to imply that this is not the case. Moreover, the fact that Arias Cañete excludes the Bank of Spain from the aforementioned bodies seems to reinforce this point. In question Q9, there is an implied criticism of the government, and the interviewer also uses the same type of question: “Do you not think that Spain’s international image has suffered because of interference from the government in those bodies?” The purpose of the syntactic structure of these implied interrogative word questions is therefore two-fold. First of all, the tone of the questions is more polite. What is of extreme importance, however, is that the questions allow the Governor to give his own opinion. This would not have been possible if Arias Cañete had used an interrogative word question such as: “Why have the Spanish regulatory bodies not operated correctly ...?”, or “How do you think Spain’s international image has suffered ...” These latter questions also contain presuppositions, which could cause the addressee to equivocate.

The interrogative word question type, with a percentage of equivocation in answers of 37.5, is third on the list. The rate of equivocation is usually fairly high in this type, since the interviewee is required to supply a “missing variable” (Bull 2009). An example of this can be seen in the answer given by Fernández Ordóñez to question Q4. As we stated above, he equivocates because he is confronted by a face-threatening question. Another question of the interrogative word type which causes the Governor of the Bank to use an equivocation strategy is Q27. In this case, Fernández Ordóñez avoids giving a reply in order not to appear ignorant on the matter in question (see analysis of Q27 above).

The imperative question is another type which deserves special attention. These questions make up 28.2% of the total number of questions posed in the session, with equivocation occurring in 2 of answers given (18.2%). As we mentioned earlier in this section, imperative questions are similar in nature to implied interrogative word questions, where the addressee is expected to comment on a matter. In questions Q11a to Q11h, the Governor of the Bank of Spain is required to indicate whether he is worried about a number of issues. The actual wording of the initial question posed by Arias Cañete (“I should like the Governor to inform me whether or not the Bank of Spain ... is seriously concerned ... about ...”) make it relatively easy for Fernández Ordóñez to give replies regarding most of the issues. This is because he only needs to give his own impressions about all of the aspects, which he does successfully in all of the cases, except one, Q11d. Question Q11d, in a similar way to Q22b, is a request for information. It is very probable that the Governor of the Bank resorts to the use of equivocation strategies in, in order to conceal his ignorance, as he does in answering Q27.

With, regard to the other two question types, the polar and the declarative, no equivocation was found to occur in the replies given. The reason for this is that replying to these questions did not involve a high degree of difficulty. There were a total of 3 polar questions, which were not particularly complicated, and to which the interviewee was able to provide adequate replies. For example, question Q17a, which is expanded in Q17b, is a straightforward question:

{Q17a} Quisiéramos saber si el Banco de España ha contemplado el caso de que se produzca una cierta desaceleración ... (We should like to know whether the Bank of Spain has considered the possibility of a deceleration ...)

{Q17b} cómo podría afectar al sector financiero español y cómo podría afectar al sector inmobiliario ... (how would this affect the Spanish financial sector, and how would it affect the building sector ...)

Fernández Ordóñez answers “no” to the first question, and then gives reasons for his opinion in answer to Q17b:

Respecto a si me preocupa la desaceleración de la economía española en el sector financiero, sinceramente no ... Entonces, si aquí no hay una catástrofe —y nadie ve una catástrofe, sino una desaceleración de la economía española—, no hay razones para preocuparse. (With regard to whether I am concerned about a slowing down process in the Spanish financial sector, frankly, I am not ... Therefore, unless there is a catastrophe - and no one sees it as a catastrophe, but rather a slowing down process in the Spanish economy – there is no reason to be alarmed.)

In the only declarative question in this session, Arias Cañete asks the Governor of the Bank to provide extra data with regard to families' indebtedness:

En primer lugar, que la deuda de los hogares sigue creciendo al 19 por ciento ... {Q10} El gobernador podrá tener más datos de lo que está pasando y algún dato ha anticipado en 2007. (First of all, household indebtedness continues to grow and has reached the figure of 19 per cent ... The Governor probably has more data in this regard, and he has given us figures in advance for 2007.)

In reply, Fernández Ordóñez was able to give the MP the required data:

... claramente el endeudamiento de las familias, que estaba creciendo desde hace casi tres años por encima del 20 por ciento, está en cifras del 18 por ciento en la parte de la vivienda. (It is quite clear that family indebtedness, which had been increasing for three years and rose above 20 per cent, is now only 18 per cent, as far as housing is concerned.)

In the following sub-section, we will analyse the second transcript of the Spanish Parliamentary sessions, which deals with the situation of the Spanish financial system in the international context.

6.2.2 Table Esp2: The Spanish financial system in the international context.

In the following table, Esp2, we will find the results of the analysis of the second transcript of the Spanish corpus, where the Governor of the Bank of Spain answers questions posed by MPs in the *Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*. This parliamentary session, which took place in *El Congreso de los Diputados* on Tuesday 18 September 2007, deals with the Spanish financial system in the international context. The meeting, which was held at the request of the Socialist Party, was chaired initially by the Chairman of the *Comisión*, Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Vegara, and later by the Vice-Chairperson, Ms Lourdes Muñoz Santamaría. The MPs who attended the session were: Mr Josep Sánchez y Llibre (Catalán Party MP), Mr Miguel Arias Cañete (Conservative Party MP), Mr Pedro María Azpiazu Uriarte, (Basque Nationalist Party MP), Mr Gaspar Llamazares Trigo (United Left-wing Group MP), Mr Luís Mardones Sevilla, (Canary Islands Coalition MP), and Mr Francisco Fernández Marugán (Socialist Party MP). After the introduction given by the Chairman, the Governor of the Bank of Spain, Mr Miguel Ángel Fernández Ordóñez, started the session with an opening speech, after which the various MPs present were each allowed two rounds of questions.

TURNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENTS
TURN 1a				
Q1a	Imperative	No		
Q1b	Imperative	No		
TURN 2a				
Q2a	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q2b	Disjunctive	Yes	E7g	
Q2c	Disjunctive	Yes	E6d	
Q3a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment ¹⁶⁴	No		
Q3b	Implied interrogative word: requires	Yes	E1	

¹⁶⁴ Although this question contains a polar structure, simply answering “yes” or “no” would not constitute a reply. In order to be considered to have given a satisfactory answer, the interviewee would be expected to give a further comment (See Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1).

	comment			
Q4a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E8c	
Q4b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q4c	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q5a	Interrogative word	Yes	E6e	
Q5b	Interrogative word	No		Repetition of question Q5a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q5c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q6a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q6b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q7	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q8a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6d	
Q8b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	

Q8c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q9	Interrogative word	No		Repetition of Q8c: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q10a	Imperative	Yes	E6b	
Q10b	Imperative	Yes	E6b	
Q10c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Question extended in Q10d: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q10d	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E6b	
Q11a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q11b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q12	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q13	Imperative	No		
TURN 3a				

Q14	Imperative	No		
TURN 4a				
Q15	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q16	Imperative	No		Repetition of question Q15: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q17	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q18	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q19	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E4a	
Q20	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q21a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q21b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
TURN 5a				
Q22	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	Important face- threatening question.
Q23a	Imperative	Yes	E1	

Q23b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q24a	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q24b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q25	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q26	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q27	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q28a	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q28b	Polar	Yes	E1	
Turn 6a				
Q29	Disjunctive	Yes	E1	
Turn 1b				
Q30	Disjunctive	No		
Q31	Interrogative word	No		

Q32	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Extension of question Q31: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q33	Imperative	No		
Q34	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q35	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	Question posed to Fernández Marugán, Socialist Party MP.
Q36	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	Question posed to Fernández Marugán, Socialist Party MP.
Turn 2b				
Q37	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Turn 3b				
Q38	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Turn 4b				
Q39	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q40a	Imperative	No		
Q40b	Imperative	No		
Q40c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q40d	Imperative	No		Extension of question Q40c: not counted in

				the total number of questions.
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Table Esp2 shows that the MPs present each participated in two rounds of questions, except Mr Llamazares Trigo, the United Left-wing Group MP, who had only one question turn. Mr Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, was involved in turns 1a (questions Q1a and 1b), and 2b (question Q37). Mr Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, used turns 2a (questions Q2a-Q13), and 1b (questions Q30-Q36). The MP from the Basque Nationalist Party, Mr Azpiazu Uriarte, participated in rounds 3a (question Q14) and 3b (question Q38). As has been mentioned, Mr Llamazares Trigo, the United Left-wing Group MP, used only one question turn, 4a (questions Q15-Q21b). The Canary Islands Coalition MP, Mr Mardones Sevilla, was involved in turns 5a (questions Q22-Q28b), and 4b (questions Q39-Q40d). The last MP to intervene was Mr Fernández Marugán, the Socialist Party MP, who used turns 6a (question Q29), and 5b, where various observations were made, but no specific questions were asked. From these figures it can be seen that the Governor of the Bank of Spain was asked 40 questions in total by all of the MPs. In addition, one sub-question was asked in each of the following: Q1, Q3, Q6, Q11, Q21, Q23, Q24 and Q28. There are also two sub-questions in questions Q2, Q4, Q5 and Q8, and three sub-questions in Q10 and Q40. The total number, including the sub-questions, would therefore be 62. Nevertheless, a number of questions need to be deducted from this total before we calculate the percentages of equivocation in the answers to the questions. Question Q5b is a repetition of Q5a, and both will therefore be counted as one question. The same could be said of questions Q9 and Q16, which are repetitions of questions Q8c and Q15 respectively. Moreover, question Q32 is an extension of Q31, and Q40d is also an extension of Q40c. Both pairs will also be counted as one question each. Also, question Q10c is extended in question Q10d, and the former will be omitted from the final tally. After all of the pertinent deductions have been made, we would arrive at a final total of 56 questions.

From Table Esp2 above it can be observed that, of the final tally of 56 questions, equivocation strategies were used in the answers to 35 of these (62.5% of the total), while the other 21 received acceptable replies (37.5%)¹⁶⁵. In order to determine which questions receive a satisfactory reply, we have applied the theory discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.2, and also section 4.1.3, which deals with what Bull terms immediate replies (1994, 2003). Moreover, with the application of the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2, we have been able to determine the type of equivocation strategy employed.

¹⁶⁵ See graph nº21.

In Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, we stated that question types should be taken into account in order to determine whether an interviewee indulges in equivocation when giving an answer. With regard to this, we were able to identify five of the eight question types discussed in Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1 in this parliamentary session. Based on the statistics given in Table Esp2, the following statistics indicate each question type and their respective percentages of the total:

- *implied interrogative word questions*, 28 (50.0%);
- *imperative questions*, 12 (21.4%);
- *interrogative word questions*, 9 (16.1%);
- *disjunctive questions*, 4 (7.1%);
- *polar questions*, 3 (5.4%)¹⁶⁶.

We will now provide a list of the equivocation strategies used in this parliamentary session, after which, statistics of the frequency of the use of each type will be given. An analysis will then be made of at least one example of each type of equivocation observed in the interviewees' answers. This will be followed by a discussion where we will try to determine why a particular strategy was used by the witnesses to avoid answering a question. Finally, the percentages of equivocation in the answers given to each of the different question types will be discussed, and we will also try to establish the reasons why certain question categories were employed by the interviewees.

The following five types of equivocation have been observed in the analysis of the second parliamentary session of the *Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*:

- E1¹⁶⁷ (*Ignores the question*).
- E4 (*Attacks the question*, one sub-type): E4a (the question fails to tackle the important issue).
- E6 (*Declines to answer*, three sub-types): E6b (unwillingness to answer), E6d (deferred answer), and E6e (pleads ignorance).
- E7 (*Makes political point*, three sub-types): E7g (self-justification).
- E8 (*Gives incomplete reply*, one sub-type): E8c (partial reply).

The frequency with which each type of equivocation occurs in the answers to questions is as follows, with their respective percentages of the total number of non-replies given in brackets:

- E1: 26 questions (74.3%);
- E4: 1 question (2.9%);

¹⁶⁶ See graph nº22.

¹⁶⁷ The code numbers used to identify each type and sub-type of equivocation are the same as those which appear in the equivocation typology in Chapter 4, Section 2.

- E6: 6 questions (17.1%);
- E7: 1 question (2.9%);
- E8: 1 question (2.9%)¹⁶⁸.

These will be examined in detail below.

Examples of the equivocation strategies identified in the answers given by the Governor of the Bank of Spain will now be analysed. In this regard, it should be noted that, in the answer to question Q5a, two equivocation strategies have been used by the interviewee. In this case, we have taken into account the type which we consider to have had the greater influence on the interviewee's answer, and this is the one recorded in Table Esp2.

First of all, it should be noted that there is a very high percentage of the use of the equivocation strategy E1 (Ignores the question). In this regard, the comment made by Fernández Ordóñez at the start of his reply to the MPs' questions is particularly interesting:

Hablaré de algo en lo que han incidido algunos señores diputados, sobre nuestras vulnerabilidades especiales; de un tema que ha salido en otras comparecencias — y también en esta—, sobre endeudamiento y crédito y sobre la solidez del sistema financiero. Más de la mitad de las preguntas del señor Arias se refieren a eso y creo que con la sana intención de que conteste positivamente; no para alarmar, sino justamente para todo lo contrario, y lo voy a hacer. No aludiré a algunas cuestiones concretas como, por ejemplo, el volumen total de liquidez suministrado, que no se puede decir, sino que se sabe dos meses después. Pero en la medida de lo posible, trataré de hablar de la solidez del sistema financiero, porque quizá es el tema más claro que tenemos en nuestro panorama. Finalmente, acabaré con algo que distintos intervinientes han dicho y es cuál debe ser el papel de la política económica en este momento. (I will speak about something which has been mentioned by some MPs, which is our specific weaknesses, a matter which has come up in other sessions, as well as this one: indebtedness and credit, and the strength of our financial system. More than half of the questions put forward by Mr Arias deal with that, and I sincerely feel that he expects me to give positive answers. I do not intend to cause any alarms, but quite the opposite. I shall therefore give direct answers. I will not refer to more specific matters such as, for example, the injection of liquid funds. It is impossible to give this information, since it is not known until two months later. However, I shall try, as far as possible, to speak about the solidity of the financial system, because it is the most obvious matter in this context. I shall speak finally about a matter which some of you have mentioned: the role of the present economic policies.)

¹⁶⁸ See graph nº23.

From these remarks, it is evident that the Governor of the Bank of Spain has no intention of answering a number of questions put forward. In other words, he is indicating, beforehand, his intention to equivocate. However, as we shall see, Fernández Ordóñez does not only decline to answer questions regarding these matters, but he also avoids giving clear responses to queries about other issues.

In turn 2a, Mr Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, poses three questions regarding the credit limitation crisis, none of which receive satisfactory replies from the Governor of the Bank:

{Q2a} *¿Cuánto tiempo cree que durará la restricción de crédito que estamos actualmente viviendo en los mercados de capitales.* (How long do you think that the credit limitations in the capital markets which we are experiencing at the moment will last?)

{Q2b} *¿Cree usted que ya ha pasado todo—posición Rodríguez Zapatero— o cree, como el secretario de Estado de los Estados Unidos, Henry Paulson, que la crisis de confianza en los mercados de crédito podría ser la más larga en dos décadas?* (Do you think that the difficulties have passed – Rodríguez Zapatero’s¹⁶⁹ opinion – or do you think, like the secretary of state of the United States, Henry Paulson¹⁷⁰, that the breakdown in trust in credit markets will be the longest in two decades?)

{Q2c} *¿Esta crisis es de la misma naturaleza o el contexto globalizado en el que nos estamos moviendo introduce elementos de mayor incertidumbre y de mayor duración en la misma?* (Is this a crisis of the same type, or does the globalized context in which we are involved present greater uncertainty and is of a longer timespan?)

Question Q2a is an *interrogative word question*, which requires the interviewee to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003). Fernández Ordóñez makes no attempt to give a reply, nor does he acknowledge that a question has been asked, and therefore indulges in equivocation (strategy E1). He again equivocates when trying to give a reply to the *disjunctive question* Q2b, a type which forces him to choose between two alternatives. In this case, the Governor of the Bank of Spain makes a political point by justifying the action which he himself has taken (equivocation type E7g):

Yo he tomado la posición que creo que un banquero central debería tomar. No sé si los demás pueden ser imprudentes o no; un banquero central tiene que ser

¹⁶⁹ Leader of the Socialist Party and President of Spain from 2004 to 2011.

¹⁷⁰ United States Secretary of the Treasury from 2006 to 2009.

prudente, y la prudencia dice que hay que esperar a ver qué es lo que sucede. (I have taken a stand which I think any central banker should take. I do not know whether or not others will adopt a cautious approach; a central banker ought to be cautious, and caution means waiting to see what will happen.)

Moreover, Fernández Ordóñez also avoids answering question 2c, indicating that it is not possible to answer for the time being (equivocation strategy E6d):

... ¿que esto puede tener, como otras crisis, un impacto negativo? También, pero yo no estoy dispuesto, sin tener datos, sin haber hecho una valoración y tener al menos unos meses de ver cuál es el impacto, decir cuál es. (... will this have, like other crises, negative consequences? It will also, but I am not in a position to say what they are, with no data, and without having made an assessment, or having waited for at least three months in order to see what type of consequences they will be.)

It is evident that questions Q2a, Q2b and Q2c are all potentially face-threatening, requiring the Governor of the Bank to give an opinion on a matter which could have consequences in the future. He therefore chooses to equivocate by using different strategies, since a statement about the future could result in a serious loss of face if he is later proved to be wrong (Bull et al. 1996)¹⁷¹.

Equivocation strategies are also present in the answer to question Q4a, which is an *implied interrogative word question*:

{Q4a} *¿Están teniendo dificultades de financiación las entidades bancarias, bancos y cajas, en los mercados de capitales internacionales? (Are banks and savings banks experiencing difficulties in financing in international capital markets?)*

As has been mentioned before, this question type, in many cases, requires the interviewee to give reasons to justify his answer. Had Fernández Ordóñez answered “no” to the question, he could be deemed to have given an acceptable reply. However, since he implies that Spanish banks do have financing problems, he is also expected to explain *what* these problems are, which he does not do in his answer:

Usted me ha preguntado si los bancos españoles están teniendo dificultades. Yo le diría que menos que los otros. (You asked me whether Spanish Banks are experiencing difficulties. I would say, fewer than other banks.)

¹⁷¹ See also Chapter 3, sub-section 3.2.2.2.

In this case, he has only provided a partial answer, and has therefore incurred in equivocation (strategy E8a). Arias Cañete then asks two further questions related to Q4a:

{Q4b} *¿Conoce el Banco de España cuál es el importe de las emisiones que se han suspendido en España desde julio pasado? (Is the Bank of Spain aware of the cost of issuances which have been suspended in Spain since last July?)*

{Q4c} *¿Cuál es la situación en el interbancario? (What is the situation with regard to the Interbank?)*

The Governor of the Bank of Spain makes no attempt to reply to these questions, nor does he acknowledge that they have been asked (equivocation type E1). Question Q4b is particularly tricky, since it is an *implied interrogative word question*. If the interviewee answers “no” to the question, his lack of knowledge would reveal him to be incompetent. On the other hand, if his answer is “yes”, he would be expected to provide the information asked for. Moreover, Q4c is an *interrogative word question*, which requires the addressee to supply a missing variable (Bull 2003). There is little doubt that Fernández Ordóñez equivocates because he does not possess the necessary information, and giving an evasive answer would reveal his ignorance, a situation which would be extremely face-damaging.

In answer to question Q5a, the Governor of the Bank again equivocates, this time using a different strategy. This is a fairly straightforward *interrogative word question*:

¿Cuál ha sido el volumen total de inyección de liquidez que ha realizado el Banco Central Europeo, sistema de bancos centrales, en los bancos y cajas españolas desde el inicio de la crisis. (What is the total amount of the infusion of liquid funds made by the European Central Bank, the system of central banks, into Spanish banks and saving banks since the start of the crisis?)

In this case, Fernández Ordóñez declines to answer by pleading ignorance (equivocation strategy E6e). It could also be argued that he then makes a political point by giving reassurance (type E7d)¹⁷²:

En cuanto al volumen total de liquidez que se ha suministrado, no puedo decirlo exactamente, pero que me siento comfortable con ello ... (I am unable to give you

¹⁷² Two equivocation strategies can be found in the answer to Q5a. We have decided that the one to be taken into account will be E6e, since, by pleading ignorance, the interviewee’s plea for ignorance makes the remainder of his answer practically untrustworthy.

an exact figure with regard to the total amount of liquid funds. However, I am happy with it ...)

It would seem that by saying “I am happy with it ...”, the Governor is making an attempt to conceal his ignorance regarding the matter in question.

Fernández Ordóñez again uses equivocation strategies when confronted with questions Q7, Q8a, Q8b and Q8c:

La sexta pregunta estaría vinculada al crédito a residentes en España, que ha crecido en los últimos años a más del 20 por ciento anual. {Q7} ¿Cree el gobernador que se va a mantener ese ritmo de crecimiento en el futuro próximo? (My sixth question is related to credit given to foreign residents in Spain, which has increased, in the last few years, by more than 20% per year. Does the Governor think that this rate of increase will continue in the near future?)

Mi séptima pregunta sería {Q8a} si la ralentización del crédito va a tener algún impacto significativo en el consumo y en la construcción ... (My seventh question is whether the deceleration in credit will have a significant effect on public spending, and building ...)

{Q8b} ... y, por lo tanto si se podría dar un ajuste más brusco del crecimiento económico ... (and, therefore, whether there will be a more abrupt change in economic growth ...)

... y {Q8c} del empleo que el previsto por el Gobierno para el año 2008. (... and in employment than that which the Government has forecast for the year 2008.)

First of all, it is important to take into account that, in the same way as questions Q2a, Q2b and Q2c, these are all face-threatening questions in the sense that they require the interviewee to make predictions about the future. The Governor of the Bank of Spain decides to avoid answering questions Q7, Q8b and Q8c by ignoring them altogether (equivocation strategy E1). Nevertheless, he does make an attempt to answer Q8a, although he also incurs in equivocation:

Es evidente que si las condiciones se endurecen, se endurecerán también para los bancos españoles, y es evidente que podrá tener impacto en la desaceleración del crédito. Yo no puedo decir que eso se va a producir, y no lo debo decir porque no tengo datos para saberlo. La historia me dice que debo ser cauto porque tenemos cantidad de acontecimientos. (It is evident that if conditions become tough, they will also become tough for Spanish Banks. I can not say that this will happen, and I should refrain from doing so, since I do not have the necessary data to say that

with any certainty. History suggests that I should be cautious because all sorts of things can happen.)

As he himself admits, he is unable to say what may happen in the future, and therefore refrains from doing so, since he does not possess the necessary data in order to make any predictions. In the same way as he answers question Q2c, the Governor of the Bank of Spain again deliberately equivocates, in this case using a different strategy (E6d), so as to avoid making future predictions which he may regret at a later date (Bull et al. 1996)¹⁷³.

In turn 4a, Mr Llamazares Trigo, the United Left-wing Group MP, having suggested that it is impossible to sustain the level of indebtedness in the economy of North America, poses the following *implied interrogative word question* about the Spanish economy:

{Q19} *¿Es sostenible, en ese sentido, el nivel de endeudamiento de la economía española? (In that sense, can the level of indebtedness in the Spanish economy be maintained?)*

In this case, if Fernández Ordóñez answered “yes”, he would be expected to explain *how* the level of indebtedness could be maintained. On the other hand, if his answer were “no”, he would be required to give reasons as to *why* it could not. The Governor of the Bank of Spain does not give a reply, but instead, attacks the question by suggesting that it fails to tackle the important issue (equivocation strategy E4a):

Nuestro problema ahora, a la vista de dónde nos encontramos, no creo que sea el endeudamiento; el problema —si uno eligiera la senda negativa— es una desaceleración excesiva y rápida del crédito. (With regard to our present situation, I do not think that indebtedness is our immediate problem. The problem, if we use a negative expression, is the excessive and rapid deceleration of credit.)

Fernández Ordóñez is confronted with yet another communicative conflict, where he does not want to make future predictions, but is, nevertheless, expected to give some sort of answer. In consequence, he opts out of the situation by equivocating.

The Governor of the Bank of Spain also chooses not to reply to some further questions posed by Llamazares Trigo, specifically Q20, Q21a and Q21b:

{Q20} *¿Cuál ha sido el papel de los bancos centrales, en concreto del Banco de España, a la hora de supervisar, vigilar y prevenir los riesgos de esta crisis, es*

¹⁷³ See also Chapter 3, sub-section 3.2.2.2.

decir, garantizar la transparencia y prevenir los riesgos? (What was the role of central Banks, specifically the Bank of Spain, with regard to supervising, monitoring and preventing risks in this crisis, in other words, guaranteeing transparency and preventing risks?)

{Q21a} *¿Considera el gobernador del Banco de España que es posible evitar este tipo de crisis en nuestro modelo global financiarizado y con plena libertad de movimientos de capital?* (Does the Governor of the Bank of Spain think that it is possible to avoid this type of crisis in our financed global model, and with full freedom of capital movement?)

{Q21b} *¿Es posible controlar la hipertrofia de los flujos financieros sin mecanismos como la tasa Tobin?* (Is it posible to control the excess of non-mechanical financial flows, such as the Tobin tax?¹⁷⁴)

Fernández Ordóñez makes no attempt to answer these questions, nor does he acknowledge that they have been asked (equivocation strategy E1). It could be said that they are fairly straightforward, and that there does not seem to be any justification as to why the Governor of the Bank should be unable to provide replies. The same could be said of questions Q27, Q28a and Q28b, put forward by the Canary Islands Coalition MP, Mr Luís Mardones Sevilla:

{Q27} *Yo le pregunto a este respecto si se puede entender que junto a que España está recibiendo ahorro del exterior España también está exportando no solamente capitales en cuestiones de infraestructuras o de obras que se están realizando en el exterior, sino un capítulo cada vez más importante en estos últimos años, que son las remesas al exterior de los emigrantes en España.* (In this regard, my question is whether it can be assumed that, in addition to the fact that Spain is receiving money from abroad, she is also exporting not only capital from infrastructures or construction being carried out overseas, but a matter which has become more important in the last few years. I am referring to the remittances made by emigrants in Spain.)

{Q28a} *Sabe usted que en este año estamos en una media de 600 millones de euros mensuales de remesas que los emigrantes envían a sus respectivos países ...* (Did you know that this year an average of 600 million euros has been transferred by emigrants to their respective countries ...?)

¹⁷⁴ A means of taxing spot currency conversions that was originally suggested by American economist James Tobin. (Investopedia)

... y {Q28b} que en el primer semestre, según cifras oficiales, se ha alcanzado la cifra de algo más de 3.800 millones de euros. (... and that, according to official figures, this sum exceeded 3,800 million euros in the first quarter.)

These are simple *polar questions*, to which an answer of “yes” or “no” would be acceptable. Moreover, it could be added that they are not particularly face-threatening. However, Fernández Ordóñez again equivocates, using the same strategy (E1). Nevertheless, where face-threat is concerned, question Q22 is worthy of our attention:

¿Hay una previsión de que el Banco Central Europeo y el Banco de España recomienden, en estos casos, una legislación más directa, que exija mayor grado de transparencia a estas agencias de calificación de riesgos y de calidad o de solvencia, que han fallado estrepitosamente porque no fueron capaces —esa es la impresión que tiene el ciudadano común— de detectar la crisis que se les venía encima en determinados sectores bancarios norteamericanos por la concesión de estas hipotecas que en un gran porcentaje tenían un mayor riesgo bancario? (Has an allowance been made for the European Central Bank and the Bank of Spain to recommend, in these cases, a more direct legislation, which demands a higher level of transparency from agencies whose function is to calculate the level of risks and quality control or solvency? These agencies have failed disastrously – that is the opinion of the average citizen – because they were incapable of foreseeing the approaching crisis in certain North American bank sectors, as a result of the granting of mortgages, a great percentage of which involved a high bank risk.)

This question is extremely face-threatening for a number of reasons. First of all, Mardones Sevilla is very critical of the agencies, although he tries to soften the blow by saying “... that is the opinion of the average citizen ...”, stating clearly that they were unable to foresee the upcoming crisis. Furthermore, he seems to indirectly hold the Bank of Spain partly responsible for not recommending stricter laws in order to supervise the work of the aforementioned agencies. Therefore, if Fernández Ordóñez replied to question Q22, he would be agreeing with the Canary Islands Coalition MP, which would constitute serious face damage to the Bank of Spain, and to him personally. In consequence, the Governor avoids giving an answer (equivocation strategy E1). Whether intentional equivocation is justifiable is arguable, but we can understand his reluctance to even attempt to give a reply to such a question.

In the politicians’ second round of questions, Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, in turn 2b, asks the following question:

{Q37} *Nos gustaría saber cuál es el segmento—podríamos calificarlo de alarma roja, entre comillas— de familias que en estos tres o cuatro últimos años se ha endeudado con unos tipos de interés muy bajo y que ahora, lógicamente, con la repercusión de unos tipos elevados, van a sufrir un poco económicamente. (We should like to know what percentage of families – we could classify this as a red alert, in a manner of speaking – who in the last three or four years incurred debts with very low interest rates, and who, with the present impact of very high rates, will have a few economic problems.)*

Fernández Ordóñez, once again, decides to ignore the question (equivocation strategy E1). However, he also uses a tactic which he has employed on other occasions, that of substituting the question posed with his own question (type E13):

¿Qué va a hacer el Banco Central Europeo? Mire usted, somos dieciocho personas —no sé ahora con Chipre y Malta—las que nos reunimos allí en la primera reunión del año. Por cierto, me preguntó usted sobre un periódico que dice que el 2 de agosto, en la reunión en la que se discutió la incertidumbre, no estuve. La incertidumbre y el problema aparecieron el 8 de agosto. La reunión fue el 13 y estuve; lo digo por si quieren ustedes saberlo. No se de dónde sale eso. En esa reunión ¿qué decidimos? Decidimos en función de una cuestión importante, y es que no aparezca la inflación, porque fíjense ustedes que una de las grandes ventajas de lo que estamos haciendo los bancos centrales europeos en este último tiempo es que, si durante esta crisis aparecieran dudas sobre la inflación, nadie duda que los bancos centrales vamos a mantener la inflación. ¿Eso que significa? Eso significa decidir unos tipos de interés que cuando estaban en el 2 por ciento y creaban los problemas que ha dicho el señor Sanchez Llibre, y que son verdad, en las familias, podían crear unos problemas de inflación, y la inflación afecta a todos, a pensionistas, asalariados... (What is the European Central Bank going to do? You see, there were eighteen of us – I do not know now with Cyprus and Malta – present at the first meeting of the year. By the way, you asked me about a newspaper which states that on August 2nd, there was a meeting where the uncertainty was discussed. I was not there. The uncertainty and the problem came up on August 8th. What decisions did we make at that meeting? We made decisions with regard to an important matter, that inflation should not appear. This is because, you see, one of the big advantages of what we are doing as central banks in recent times is that, if during the present crisis any uncertainty were to emerge regarding inflation, no one would doubt that we, the central banks, would control inflation. What does this mean? It means fixing interest rates which, when they were at 2 per cent, and were causing families the problems mentioned by Mr Sánchez Llibre, could also cause inflation problems. And inflation affects us all, pensioners, wage-earners, etc.)

In this case, it can be seen that the Governor of the Bank of Spain does not answer question Q37, but rather formulates his own questions and answers them instead. However, he does give an adequate reply to question Q39, or at least seems to make his views clear. Mr Mardones Sevilla, the Canary Islands Coalition MP, poses the following question:

{Q39} *¿Usted estaría de acuerdo, mientras persistan estas turbulencias e incertidumbres, en que el Banco Central Europeo subiera los tipos del euribor y del precio del dinero, o no? (Would you be in agreement, while the climate of confusion and uncertainty persists, if the European Central Bank were to raise the rate of the euribor and the cost of money, or not?)*

Fernández Ordóñez's reply is the following:

La inflación sabemos que es la mayor desgracia que podemos tener. Por tanto ¿qué es lo que hacemos ahí? Fijar el tipo de interés que consideramos que va a mantener la inflación en torno a ese 2 por ciento. ¿Y qué decidimos el último día, por cierto, unánimemente? No subir los tipos ¿Por qué? Por las mismas razones que he explicado yo aquí. ¿Por qué creemos que esto va a ir mal o bien? No, porque no lo sabemos. Probablemente si no hubiera habido turbulencias, la decisión hubiera sido distinta, porque la tendencia de la economía europea es correcta. (We know that inflation is the worst misfortune we could have. Therefore, what are we doing about it? We are fixing the rate of interest which we think will control inflation around that 2 per cent level. And what decision did we make, unanimously, on the last day? We decided not to raise the interest rates. Why? For the same reasons which I have explained here. Because we think that the result will be good or bad? No, because we do not know. If this climate of confusion did not exist, our decision would probably have been different, because the European economy is taking steps in the right direction.)

Although, the Governor of the Bank of Spain does not give a direct answer of “yes” or “no” to the question, his views do appear to be clear.

We will now conclude this section, by examining the statistics for the question types which have been seen in this parliamentary session in *El Congreso de los Diputados*. The influence of these question types on whether a reply has been given or not will also be discussed. In addition to this, an attempt will be made to ascertain why a politician decided to use a certain question type.

In paragraph 2 of this section, we indicated that a total of 56 questions were put forward by the MPs present in this session. It was also mentioned that the Governor of the Bank of Spain used equivocation strategies while giving answers to 35 of these questions. Five of the eight question types discussed in Chapter 4 of this dissertation

can be observed in the questions posed by the politicians. The breakdown of the question types with their respective percentages of equivocation is as follows, with the total number of questions of each type posed by the MPs is given in brackets:

- polar questions (3) equivocation in 3 questions 100%¹⁷⁵;
- interrogative word (9): equivocation in 8 questions 88.9%;
- disjunctive questions (4): equivocation in 3 questions 75.0%;
- implied interrogative word questions (28): equivocation in 16, or 57.1%;
- imperative questions (12): equivocation in 5 questions 41.7%.

From these statistics, it can be seen that the polar question is the type which contained most equivocation in the answers given. The structure of a *polar question* is such that, in theory at least, it does not present the interviewee with the same kind of conflict as other types, since it requires a simple reply of “yes” or “no”. However, only three questions of this type were asked in this parliamentary session, and Fernández Ordóñez decided to equivocate by ignoring all three of them (strategy E1). With regard to question Q27 (cited earlier in this section), it would seem that the Canary Islands Coalition MP, Luís Mardones Sevilla, chose this type of question not only because he wanted to elicit a specific answer of “yes” or “no” from the Governor of the Bank, but also to draw his attention to the matter of remittances which emigrants living in Spain made to their countries of origin. This point is further reinforced by the syntactic structure of questions Q28a and Q28b (also cited earlier in this section). Instead of using an *interrogative word question* such as, for example: “How much money has been transferred by emigrants to their respective countries?”, to which the Governor of the Bank could easily have declined to answer by pleading ignorance (equivocation strategy E6e), Mardones Sevilla decides to use the *polar* structure, giving detailed figures in order to confront him with the bold facts. Fernández Ordóñez’s subsequent refusal to reply to these questions could be due to two reasons. Although it is arguable that he may be ignorant of the facts, it seems more likely that he is unwilling to acknowledge the veracity of the MP’s comments. In this case, he could be considered not to have paid attention to an important matter, which would constitute a serious loss of face.

Of the nine *interrogative word questions* posed in this parliamentary session, the Governor of the Bank of Spain was seen to equivocate in eight of them (88.9%). With regard to this type, which requires the interviewee to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003), questions Q2a, Q18 and Q20 are particularly worthy of consideration. As we mentioned earlier in this section, Fernández Ordóñez avoids answering Q2a (cited earlier), a potentially face-threatening question, because he needs to protect his face by not commenting on a future matter. Question Q18 is put forward by Gaspar Llamazares Trigo, the United Left-wing Group MP, to the Governor of the Bank:

¹⁷⁵ See graph nº24.

*Todo indicaba que la crisis hipotecaria iba a producirse antes o después, porque está cantado que las familias con rentas modestas e hipotecas abusivas acabarían por no poder hacer frente a los pagos. Me he referido a algunos modelos de esas hipotecas. {Q18} ¿Cómo es posible, también en nuestro país, que se hayan consentido estas situaciones que ahora, si acaso, podremos modificar con la nueva Ley de Hipotecas que está tramitándose en el Congreso de los Diputados y que nosotros creemos debería acotar estas hipotecas de riesgo? (The indications were that the mortgage crisis was going to occur sooner or later, because it is absolutely true that families with modest salaries and abusive mortgages would end up not being able to pay their bills. I have made reference to some examples of those mortgages. How is it possible – and this has also happened in our country – that these situations were allowed to happen, which, just by chance, we are able to change with the new law on mortgages which is being negotiated in the *Congreso de los Diputados*¹⁷⁶, and which we believe should include the high risk mortgages?)*

This is also a question which threatens the Governor's personal face and that of the organization which he presides, since it is implied that they are responsible for the problems created for poorer families by the concession of high interest mortgages, due to a lack of foresight. There is little doubt that the MP's choice of question type, the *interrogative word question*, makes the accusation more forceful. Fernández Ordóñez once again avoids giving a reply by ignoring the question (equivocation strategy E1). Question Q20 (cited above) is also a face-threatening question to a certain extent. It is quite probable that Llamazares Trigo uses the same type of question to imply that central banks, and specifically the Bank of Spain, did not play their part in reducing risks in order to prevent the crisis occurring. In this case, the Governor of the Bank plays right into the MP's hands since, by using the equivocation strategy of ignoring the question (type E1), he gives the impression that he and his organization failed to act, which again results in face loss.

The *disjunctive question* is third on the list with regard to the percentages of equivocation involved in answers to questions of this type. It should be noted that there were only four such questions, with equivocation occurring in three of the answers given. Nevertheless, they will be examined carefully, since all three are inherently face-threatening. As has been mentioned, the *disjunctive question* type forces the interviewee to reply by choosing one of two alternatives, or at least by suggesting a third option. It is arguable that the interviewer or the person asking questions makes use of this type because of its restrictive nature. By this we mean that, in contrast to the *interrogative word question*, where the interviewee may formulate his or her own reply, the *disjunctive question* forces the person answering,

¹⁷⁶ Spanish Parliament

in many cases, to choose between one of the options proposed by the interviewer. In reply to question Q2b (cited earlier in this section), we mentioned that Governor of the Bank of Spain chose to equivocate by making a political point (type E7g). This, we said, was done to avoid making future predictions (Bull et al. 1996). However, it could also be argued that the Conservative Party MP, Arias Cañete, uses the *disjunctive question* type in order to make Fernández Ordóñez give support to either the opinion of José Luís Rodríguez Zapatero, the leader of the Socialist Party in Spain, or that of Henry Paulsen, a member of the Republican Party of the United States. This would be another reason why the Governor chooses to equivocate.

The *implied interrogative word question* type, with a percentage of equivocation in answers of 59.3%, is fourth on the list. Most of the questions put forward in this parliamentary session were of this type (48.2% of the total). Many of these questions, especially those which involved a high degree of face-threat because they dealt with future matters, specifically questions Q7, Q8a, Q8b, Q8c, Q19, Q21a and Q21b, have been discussed earlier in this section. However, there are other *implied interrogative word questions*, namely Q15, Q17, and Q26, which also, to a certain extent, present a threat to the Governor's personal face, and to that of his organization. These will now be examined separately. Question Q15, posed by Llamazares Trigo, deals with what he considers to be abusive mortgages:

... cabe preguntarse en estos momentos a pesar de que no tenemos hipotecas de alto riesgo, si no tendremos algún tipo de productos financieros que podrían ponerse en cuestión por su falta de transparencia y por sus riesgos. Es una cuestión que queremos plantearle al gobernador del Banco de España: hipotecas abusivas, hipotecas que se heredan dentro de una familia, prácticamente; hipotecas a un número de años que, más que garantizar el acceso a crédito de los ciudadanos, parecen formar parte de un proceso especulativo con el territorio. (... despite the fact that we do not have high risk mortgages at this point in time, the question should be asked whether we will have any type of financial product which could be called into question because of its lack of clarity or the risks involved. It is a matter which we should like to mention to the Governor of the Bank of Spain, and could include: abusive mortgages, and mortgages practically handed down within a family; mortgages over a number of years which, instead of guaranteeing that citizens have access to credit, appear to form a part of a speculative process in this field.)

In the same way as other politicians have done in this session, the United Left-wing Group MP appears to criticize the Governor of the Bank of Spain for the abusive mortgages which affect families, and asks him for his comments on the issue. Since Fernández Ordóñez makes no attempt to reply to this question (equivocation strategy

E1), he shows that he is unable to provide the alternatives requested, and therefore suffers a loss of face. Question Q17 is also put forward by Llamazares Trigo:

¿El dinamismo de nuestro sector exterior compensa en estos momentos la pérdida de impulso del sector de la construcción y el consumo interno? Algunos datos apuntan a que no, a que no se compensa todavía. (Does the dynamic nature of our foreign sector compensate for the loss of impetus in the building sector and in local buying? Some data indicate that it does not yet do so.)

In this case the MP again seems to criticize the Governor of the Bank of Spain. If Fernández Ordóñez answered “no” to this question, he would be seen to be incompetent regarding this matter. On the other hand, if his answer were “yes”, he would be expected to give reasons for his reply. Since he is unable to do this, he tries to protect his personal face and that of his organization by choosing to equivocate, ignoring the question (strategy E1).

The following *implied interrogative word question*, Q26, is posed by the Canary Islands Coalition MP, Luís Mardones:

¿Tiene el Banco de España y en correlación también con el Banco Central Europeo algunas líneas de actuación para potenciar las inspecciones sobre las provisiones que vienen haciendo los bancos y las cajas a los créditos de dudoso cobro o créditos de riesgo? (Does the Bank of Spain, in conjunction with the European Central Bank, have any lines of activity to promote inspections on the provisions which banks and savings banks have been making for loans with suspicious repayments, or loans involving risk?)

The MP’s question seems to imply that neither the Bank of Spain nor the European Central Bank has contemplated the possibility for the plan of action suggested. The fact that Fernández Ordóñez refuses or is unable to give a reply (equivocation strategy E1) would appear to confirm this idea.

The *imperative question* is the type with the least amount of equivocation occurring in answers given in this session (46.2%). These questions are used by MPs because the initial wording facilitates a more polite or indirect way of posing the question. Examples of this are expressions such as: “It would be interesting to know ...” (in question Q10a, cited earlier in this section), “I should like to know the Governor’s opinion ...” (in Q23a), and “It would be necessary to see ...” (in Q25). The use of impersonal expressions in Q10a and Q25, and of the conditional tense in all three, constitute negative politeness strategies, and make the questions more indirect (Brown and Levinson 1987). This is of particular importance in question Q23a, which appears to contain an inherent accusation:

La liquidez bancaria que ha ordenado el Banco Central Europeo se habrá dirigido a determinados países, pero parece ser que ninguna entidad financiera española ha sido receptora de esta liquidez que el Banco Central Europeo ha inyectado, semanas pasadas, en el sistema. {Q23a} Me gustaría conocer alguna apreciación del señor gobernador al respecto. (The bank liquidity arranged by the European Central Bank must have been sent to certain countries. However, it seems that no Spanish financial entity has received the liquidity which the European Central Bank injected in this system in the last few weeks. I should like the Governor to comment on this matter.)

Mardones Sevilla, the Canary Islands Coalition MP, states that the liquid funds from the European Central Bank destined for Spain do not seem to have reached any Spanish financing entity, and is probably implying that they have disappeared. Although the Governor of the Bank of Spain is not directly accused, his opinion on the matter is politely requested. Fernández Ordóñez, however, again chooses to ignore the question (equivocation type E1).

In question Q25, Mardones Sevilla is critical of the commission charged by banks, and also makes use of an *imperative question* in an indirect manner:

Habría que ver también si ha llegado el momento de plantearse en qué medida las comisiones bancarias están actuando sobre esos incrementos de rentabilidad de una manera mucho más fuerte, tal como las asociaciones de consumidores vienen denunciando. (We would also need to see whether the time has come to think about the manner in which commission charged by banks affects increases in profitability much more strongly, as consumer organizations have been reporting.)

Once again the MP, with a careful choice of question structure, seems to suggest that the banks' commission is high, and once again, Fernández Ordóñez equivocates by ignoring the question (strategy E1).

The following sub-section of this chapter will deal with the analysis of the third transcript of the Spanish Parliamentary sessions.

6.2.3 Table Esp3: The Spanish Competition Act

Table Esp3 shows the results of the analysis of the third transcript of the Spanish corpus. This consists of a parliamentary session where the Chairman of the National Competition Commission (CNC)¹⁷⁷, Mr Luís Berenguer Fuster, outlines his plans and priorities for the future, in compliance with the Spanish Competition Act of 3 July 2007. The meeting, which took place in *El Congreso de los Diputados* on Tuesday 23 October 2007, was presided over by the Chairman of the *Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*, Mr Antonio Gutiérrez Vegara. The MPs present were: Mr Miguel Arias Cañete (Conservative Party MP), Mr Josep Sánchez y Llibre (Catalán Party MP), Mr Pedro María Azpiazu Uriarte (Basque Parliamentarian Group MP), and Mr Ricardo Torres Balaguer (Socialist Party MP). At the beginning of the session, the Chairman of the *Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* immediately hands over to Luís Berenguer Fuster, who gives details of his plans. This was followed by various rounds of questions put forward by the MPs.

TURNS	QUESTION TYPES	EQUIVOCATION	EQUIVOCATION TYPE	COMMENTS
TURN 1 ^a				
Q1a	Interrogative word	No		
Q1b	Interrogative word	No		
Q1c	Interrogative word	No		Question extended in Q1d: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q1d	Disjunctive	No		
Q1e	Disjunctive	No		Makes views clear.
Q1f	Imperative	No		Repetition of Q1a, Q1b and Q1d: not counted in the total number of questions.
	Interrogative	No		

¹⁷⁷ La Comisión Nacional de la Competencia (CNC). A Spanish competition regulator responsible for enforcing competition law. (Wikipedia)

Q2a	word			
Q2b	Interrogative word	No		
Q2c	Interrogative word	No		
Q3a	Interrogative word	No		
Q3b	Interrogative word	No		Repetition of Q3a: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q3c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q4a	Disjunctive	Yes	E1	
Q4b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q4c	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	Yes	E1	
Q4d	Interrogative word	Yes	E7c	
Q5	Interrogative word	Yes	E6d	
Q6a	Interrogative word	No		Question expanded in Q6b: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q6b	Interrogative word	No		Reply given in the second round of answers provided by the interviewee.
Q6c	Indirect	No		Reply given in the second round of answers provided by

				the interviewee.
Q6d	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		Reply given in the second round of answers provided by the interviewee.
Q7a	Imperative	No		Question extended in Q7b and Q7c: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q7b	Disjunctive	No		
Q7c	Imperative	No		
Q8a	Interrogative word	No		Question extended in Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q8b	Imperative	No		Question extended in Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h: not counted in the total number of questions.
Q8c	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q8d	Imperative	Yes	E6d	
Q8e	Disjunctive	Yes	E6d	
Q8f	Imperative	Yes	E6d	
Q8g	Imperative	Yes	E6d	
	Interrogative	Yes	E6d	

Q8h	word			
Q9	Imperative	No		Repetition of Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h: not counted in the total number of questions.
TURN 2a				
Q10	Interrogative word	No		
Q11a	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q11b	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q12	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q13a	Imperative	No		
Q13b	Declarative	No		
Q14a	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q14b	Implied interrogative word: requires comment	No		
Q14c	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	Repetition of Q14a and Q14b: not counted in the total number of questions.
TURN 3a				
Q15	Interrogative word	Yes	E7c	
Q16	Interrogative word	Yes	E7c	
Q17a	Imperative	No		Reply given in the second round of

				answers provided by the interviewee
Q17b	Interrogative word	No		Reply given in the second round of answers provided by the interviewee
Q18	Imperative	Yes	E1	Question posed to Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP
Q19	Imperative	No		
TURN 4a				
Q20	Imperative	No		
Q21a	Interrogative word	No		
Q21b	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q21c	Interrogative word	Yes	E7d	
Q21d	Interrogative word	No		
Q21e	Interrogative word	Yes	E1	
Q21f	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q21g	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q21h	Polar	Yes	E1	
Q21i	Imperative	No		Repetition of Q21b, Q21c, Q21d, Q21e, Q21f, Q21g and Q21h: not counted in the total number of questions.

Q21j	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Turn 1b				
Q22a	Imperative	Yes	E2	
Q22b	Imperative	Yes	E2	
Turn 2b				
Q23	Imperative	Yes	E1	
Q24	Imperative	Yes	E4c	

In Table Esp3 we can see that the MPs participated in four questions turns. Mr Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, was allowed turn 1a (questions Q1a-Q9), and turn 1b (questions Q22a and Q22b). Mr Sánchez i Llibre, the Catalán Party MP, only used one question turn, turn 2a (questions Q10-Q14c), and 2b (question Q37). The Basque Nationalist Party MP, Mr Azpiazu Uriarte, was involved in turns 3a (questions Q15-Q19), and 2b (questions Q23 and Q24). Finally, the Socialist Party MP, Mr Torres Balaguer, participated in turn 4a (questions Q20-Q21j). In the second turn which he was allowed, no specific questions were asked. These figures show that the MPs posed 24 basic questions to the Chairman of the CNC. To these another 39 sub-questions must be added. There is one sub-question in questions Q11, Q13, Q17, and Q22, and two sub-questions in questions Q2, Q3, Q7 and Q14. Questions Q4 and Q6 contain three sub-questions each, and as many as five sub-questions were asked in question Q1. Moreover, question Q8 contains seven sub-questions, and a further nine were posed in question Q21. This would give us a total number of 63 questions. However, various questions will be not be taken into account, as was the case in previous analyses of the parliamentary sessions. Questions Q1c and Q6a are extended in questions Q1d and Q6b respectively. Both pairs will therefore be counted as one question each. Question Q7a, which is extended in Q7b and Q7c, will also be deducted from the total. Questions Q8a and Q8b are also extended in Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h, and will not be included in the final tally. In addition, the following will not be included, since they are repetitions of previous questions: Q1f (repetition of Q1a, Q1b and Q1d); Q3b (repetition of Q3a); Q9 (repetition of Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h); Q14c (repetition of Q14a and Q14b); and Q21i (repetition of Q21b, Q21c, Q21d, Q21e, Q21f, Q21g and Q21h). After these ten questions have been deducted, we arrive at a final tally of 53 questions.

Table Esp3 shows that the interviewee used equivocation strategies in his answers to 27 of the 53 questions posed (50.9% of the total), while he gave acceptable replies to 26 of these (49.1%)¹⁷⁸. In the same way as we did in the analyses of the previous parliamentary sessions, we applied the typology presented by Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2003), and our own additions discussed in Chapter 4, Section 2, in order to establish which equivocation was employed in each case.

As we observed In Chapter 4, sub-section 4.1.1, the category of question asked can have a direct influence on the use of equivocation in answers. In this parliamentary session, six question types were observed. The question types identified and their respective percentages of the total number of questions asked are as follows: *interrogative word questions*, 20 (37.7%); *imperative questions*, 11 (20.8%); *implied interrogative word questions*, 10 (18.9%); *disjunctive questions*, 5 (9.4%); *polar questions*, 5 (9.4%); *declarative questions*, 1 (1.9%); and indirect questions, 1 (1.9%)¹⁷⁹. We will now discuss the various strategies of equivocation used by the interviewee in this session, and this will be followed by an examination of how these strategies are influenced by the different question types.

In our analysis of the third parliamentary session of the *Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*, five types of equivocation were identified in the answers given:

- E1¹⁸⁰ (*Ignores the question*).
- E2 (*Acknowledges the question without answering it*).
- E4 (*Attacks the question*, one sub-type): E4c (the question is based on a false premise).
- E6 (*Declines to answer*, one sub-type): E6d (deferred answer).
- E7 (*Makes political point*, two sub-types): E7c (justifies policy), and E7d (gives reassurance).

The following is a breakdown of the frequency with which each strategy was used, together with their respective percentages of the total number of non-replies in brackets: E1: 14 questions (51.9%); E2: 2 questions (7.4%); E4: 1 question (3.7%); E6: 6 questions (22.2%); and E7: 4 questions (14.8%)¹⁸¹.

We will now proceed to discuss examples of the equivocation strategies observed in the answers given by the Chairman of the CNC.

The Conservative Party MP, Mr Arias Cañete, is the first to speak, and poses the following four questions in turn 2a, with regard to fines imposed on savings banks in the Basque and Navarra areas:

¹⁷⁸ See graph nº25.

¹⁷⁹ See graph nº26.

¹⁸⁰ The code numbers used to identify each type and sub-type of equivocation are the same as those which appear in the equivocation typology in Chapter 4, Section 2.

¹⁸¹ See graph nº27.

Mi pregunta es, {Q4a} ¿la Comisión Nacional de la Competencia está realizando actuaciones de investigación en otros territorios y respecto a otras cajas o es una actuación singular y aislada que no afecta más que a un territorio determinado? (My question is, is the National Competition Commission carrying out investigation in other areas and other savings banks, or is this a special, unique one, which does not affect more than one particular area?)

{Q4b} *¿Hay otros expedientes de investigación? (Is there any other inquiry open?)*

{Q4c} *¿Hay otro tipo de líneas de investigación en marcha? (Are there any other lines of investigation in progress?)*

{Q4d} *¿Qué está haciendo la comisión para garantizar que hay competencia en el sistema financiero entre todos los agentes del mismo? (What is the Commission doing in order to ensure that there is competition in the financial system among all of its agents?)*

In question Q4a Arias Cañete seems to imply that investigations are being carried out only in the regions mentioned, and not in any other. Although this is a *disjunctive question*, the type which requires the interviewee to choose between two or more alternatives, giving an answer is much more complicated than it might appear at first. This is because it could be said that the first alternative takes the form of an *implied interrogative word question*, while the second alternative is indeed a question of the *polar type*. If Berenguer Fuster decided to reply choosing the first alternative, he would be expected to give evidence of *which* other regions were being investigated. On the other hand, if he chose the second alternative, it could imply that the Basque and Navarra areas were being singled out specifically for investigation. In this case, the organization which he presides would be accused of being prejudiced towards the aforementioned regions, which would constitute a serious loss of face to the CNC and to him personally. He therefore decides to opt out of the situation by ignoring the question altogether (equivocation strategy E1). Nevertheless, he does provide a reply to question Q4b:

Pregunta S.S. sobre si hay otros expedientes en materia de cajas. Que yo recuerde, en estos momentos no. (Gentlemen, you asked me whether there are any other inquiries open regarding savings banks. My answer is, as far as I can remember, not at the moment).

The reply is quite clearly “no”, although he mitigates it by saying: “As far as I can remember ...” However, had he answered “yes” to this *implied interrogative word question*, he would have been expected to say *who* the other inquiries involved.

Question Q4c is another question of the *implied interrogative word type*, since, if the reply were “yes”, the Chairman of the Commission would have to explain *what* lines of investigation were in progress. However, he again chooses to equivocate by ignoring the question (type E1). In the same way as with question Q4a, there is little doubt that Berenguer Fuster evades the question because he can not provide evidence of other possible lines of investigation, and thus, in order to protect his self-image, he avoids getting involved in an argument about discrimination towards savings banks in the Basque and Navarra regions. With regard to question Q4d, he does not reply to the question posed, but instead makes a political point by trying to justify the work being done by his organization (equivocation strategy E7c):

Estamos trabajando, y quiero decirle que no tenemos las ideas claras, sobre cuál es el grado de información que podemos dar cuando se abre un expediente, si en algunos casos se puede dar información sobre quiénes son los presuntos implicados en la infracción, pero trataremos de combinar el respeto a la confidencialidad, es decir, no poner previamente una sanción por la apertura de un expediente que posiblemente luego finalice en una resolución absolutoria, con el grado de transparencia que se debe a todas nuestras actuaciones. (We are working – and I wish to say that we do not have a clear idea at the moment – on what kind of information we can reveal when we open an inquiry. It is true, in certain cases, that we can reveal information about who the suspects involved in illegal activity are. However, we will try to respect their privacy. In other words, we will not, with the same degree of transparency as with all our other courses of action, impose any fines beforehand connected with the opening of an inquiry which could possibly end up with a not-guilty verdict.)

The Chairman of the CNC simply describes the action taken regarding the imposition of fines, but does not discuss competition in the financial system. His answer is therefore completely irrelevant to the question posed. This decision to equivocate undoubtedly makes him appear to be incompetent.

The following question which Arias Cañete asks, Q5, deals with an investigation inquiry regarding mobile phone companies:

Nos gustaría saber en qué fase de investigación se encuentra un expediente que afecta a muchos millones de ciudadanos. (We should like to know the situation of an inquiry which affects millions of citizens.)

Berenguer Fuster equivocates by declining to answer, stating that he is unable to predict what will happen in the future (strategy E6d):

Obviamente, estamos todavía en un periodo muy inicial de la tramitación del expediente, y yo ni puedo ni debo manifestar cuál puede ser el futuro ... (We are obviously only in the initial stages of the processing of the inquiry, and I can not and should not reveal the future of it ...)

It is evident that the Chairman of the CNC chooses to equivocate, either because he is ignorant of the facts, or because he is trying to avoid getting involved in an argument about the matter. In both cases, he is seen to be incompetent, which constitutes serious face loss, both for him personally, and for his organization.

In question Q6b, Q6c and Q6d, Arias Cañete asks the following questions:

{Q6b} ... *qué están ustedes investigando en un tema que preocupa mucho a los ciudadanos como es el encarecimiento de la cesta de la compra ...* (... what are you investigating in a matter of serious concern to citizens, which is the rise in prices of the shopping basket ...)

{Q6c} ... *que preocupa mucho a los agricultores, que se quejan de que ellos en origen perciben precios muy bajos y en destino son muy altos, etcétera, etcétera.* (... which is of serious concern to farmers, who are complaining about obtaining very low rewards for their products, while the market prices are very high, etc., etc.)

{Q6d} ... *quería saber si la comisión y la dirección de investigación están afrontando esto con rigor, con seriedad y con investigaciones profundas.* (... I should like to know whether the Commission and the bureau of investigation are treating this matter with absolute seriousness, and are carrying out a thorough investigation.)

In this case, three different question types are presented. Question Q6b is an *interrogative word question*, where the interviewee is expected to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003). Question Q6c is really of the *indirect type*, since the MP uses what we may consider reported speech (the complaints of the farmers) to pose a question a question to Berenguer Fuster. The third question, Q6d, although in the *imperative form*, should be treated as an *implied interrogative word question*. The reason for this is that, if the Chairman of the CNC answered “yes” to Q6d, he would be expected to explain *what* action is being taken, and *what type* of investigation is being carried out. In addition, if his reply were “no”, he would also be required to offer some justification as to *why* the matter is not being considered seriously. It should be noted that Berenguer Fuster does not address these questions in his first round of answers, but does give a reply in the second round:

Estoy totalmente de acuerdo con las apreciaciones que ha hecho respecto a la industria agroalimentaria. Precisamente se trata de un sector de los más complejos —S.S. lo conoce muchísimo mejor que yo—, es complejo el proceso de formación de precios en los productos agroalimentarios ... pero quiero decirle que indudablemente lo estudiaremos, tanto desde el punto de vista teórico como mediante los mecanismos de investigación, para asegurar que solamente se producirá una sanción si hay una convicción plena de que ha habido una infracción de la legislación de la competencia ... (I totally agree with the comments you made regarding the food and agriculture industry. It is precisely one of the most complex sectors – you know much more about it than I do. The procedure for fixing prices on food and agricultural products is complex ... However, I wish to say that we will undoubtedly study this matter, both from a theoretical point of view and by means of investigation, in order to ensure that a fine will only be imposed if we are absolutely convinced that there has been an infringement on the law of competition ...)

This is considered to be a valid reply to the three questions, because the Chairman of the CNC promises to tackle the issue, and also gives an example of the investigation that will be carried out.

The Conservative Party MP later poses various questions to Berenguer Fuster about his plans regarding professional associations:

{Q8c} *Nos agradecerá que estas comparecencias sean permanentes para que podamos ver cuáles han sido los planes estratégicos. (We would be pleased if you could make an appearance on a more permanent basis so that we can see what the strategic plans are.)*

{Q8d} *No solo le pregunto por el establecimiento de los objetivos anuales; (I am not only asking you about the yearly objectives ...)*

{Q8e} *... también quería saber si está pensando en plantear objetivos plurianuales o si los planes van a ser meramente anuales. (... I would also like to know whether you are contemplating long-term objectives, or whether these plans will simply be organized on a yearly basis.)*

{Q8f} *Nos gustaría tener la ocasión de conocer los planes en toda su dimensión ... (We should also like to have the opportunity to know about the full extent of these plans ...)*

{Q8g} *... y el grado de cumplimiento de los objetivos, porque una de las cuestiones que más nos preocupan es que se hacen muchos planes y muchos*

planes estratégicos, pero dedicamos muy poco tiempo a ver si los objetivos se han cumplido ... (... and the degree to which the objectives have been achieved, because one matter that we are concerned about is that many plans, especially strategic plans, are made, but we do not spend much time on seeing whether the objectives have been achieved ...)

{Q8h} ... *y, si no es así, cuáles son las razones del incumplimiento.* (... and, if they have not been achieved, we would like to know the reasons for this.)

Question Q8c is of the *imperative type* which, as we mentioned earlier in Chapter 4, Section 4.1.2, is similar to the *implied interrogative word question* (category b: requests), in that it requires the hearer to carry out a speech act. In this case, Berenguer Fuster, would be expected to make some sort of comment regarding the frequency of his future appearances in parliamentary sessions. However, he makes no mention of the matter. In other words, he ignores the question, and does not even acknowledge that it has been asked. He therefore incurs in equivocation (type E1). He again equivocates with regard to questions Q8d, Q8e, Q8f, Q8g and Q8h, this time making use of a different strategy. He infers that the report which deals with the matters mentioned in these questions is yet to be examined by the council:

... y prácticamente tenemos terminado nuestro informe, pero todavía no ha sido sometido al consejo. Una vez que lo aprobemos lo pondremos en conocimiento de esta Comisión para, si lo consideran oportuno, poder intercambiar opiniones con SS.SS. sobre el contenido. (... and we have almost finished our report, but it has not yet been examined by the council. As soon as it has been approved, we shall inform the Commission so that they can discuss opinions with you, if they so desire.)

Berenguer Fuster declines to give a reply, stating that it is not possible to answer for the time being (equivocation strategy E6d).

In turn 3, Mr Azpiazu Uriarte, the Basque Parliamentarian Group MP, poses a question about the investigation carried out on savings banks in the Basque and Navarra areas, a matter which was also commented on by the Conservative Party MP, Arias Cañete in question Q4a. Azpiazu Uriarte is suggesting that the Basque and Navarra savings banks were penalized simply because they acted in a more specific manner with regard to agreements adopted with other entities, than savings banks in other areas. The latter operated in a similar manner, but this was unnoticed because they were not as specific in their dealings. He goes on to explain that the Competition Defence Tribunal (TDC)¹⁸² of the Basque Autonomous Region, which requested to

¹⁸² Tribunal de Defensa de la Competencia (TDC). It preceded the National Competition Commission until 1 September 2007 (Wikipedia).

handle the matter, did not find conclusive proof in the report that the Navarra savings bank had operated in an illegal manner. In this regard, the Basque Parliamentarian Group MP asks the following question:

{Q15} *¿Cómo explica esta divergencia en la valoración de los hechos objeto de este expediente sancionador? (How do you explain this difference in the assessment of the facts relating to this disciplinary action?)*

This is an *interrogative word question*, to which the interviewee is expected to supply a missing variable (Bull 2003). In his answer, the Chairman of the CNC equivocates because he does not give an acceptable reply, but instead makes a political point by justifying the action taken (strategy E7c):

... se adoptó esa resolución en una reunión del consejo de la semana pasada, se firmó el viernes, fue notificada ayer, y obviamente no damos publicidad a las resoluciones hasta que no tenemos la seguridad de que a los primeros que han sido informados se les ha notificado la correspondiente resolución. ¿Y por qué en estas fechas? Señoría, muy fácil: en la Ley de 1989 —puesto que es un expediente tramitado con arreglo a la Ley de 1989—el Tribunal de Defensa de la Competencia tenía un plazo de doce meses para dictar su resolución a partir del momento en el que se admitió a trámite, y ese expediente fue admitido a trámite, si no recuerdo mal, en fecha 27 de octubre del año 2006, por lo cual si no hubiéramos adoptado la resolución el día 26 o el día 27 de este mes hubiera caducado. Por tanto, créame cuando le digo que simplemente es una casualidad. Respecto al conjunto de nuestra resolución tengo que afirmar que, como en todas las resoluciones, nosotros actuamos en derecho, y bien saben SS.SS. que en derecho no hay ni blancos ni negros, sino, como decía un profesor mío, una variada gama de grises, es decir que puede haber diferentes opiniones al respecto sobre si es fácil o no es fácil. Es cierto que había unas pruebas de que se habían recogido las actas de la federación, y así se recoge en la resolución de la Federación de Cajas de Ahorro Vasco-Navarras, donde se habían reflejado determinadas manifestaciones por las que nosotros hemos interpretado que existen unos acuerdos anticompetitivos, y fundamentalmente en ese aspecto, pero no solo a partir de esas manifestaciones, hemos basado nuestra resolución. (... that resolution, which was made at a council meeting last week, was signed last Friday, and made public yesterday. We obviously do not make resolutions public until we are certain that the first people to be informed have been duly notified. And why was this done on the dates mentioned? Gentlemen, the reason for that is simple. According to the 1989 law – this inquiry was processed in accordance with the 1989 law – the Competition Defence Tribunal had a time limit of twelve months in which to pronounce judgement starting from the day

when proceedings were started. If I remember correctly, proceedings were started on this inquiry on 27 October, 2006. Therefore, had we not adopted the resolution on the 26th or 27th of this month, we would have exceeded the deadline. For this reason, believe me when I tell you that this simply happened by chance. With regard to our resolutions as a whole, as is the case with all types of resolutions, we act in accordance with the law. And, as you gentlemen are well aware, where the law is concerned, matters are not black or white, but, as a teacher of mine once said, different shades of grey. By this I mean that there could be different opinions as to whether or not this was a straightforward process. It is true that some evidence appeared in the final draft of our association, which also appears in the resolution of the Association of Basque and Navarra Savings Banks. In the latter resolution there were certain statements, which led us to conclude that a number of agreements did exist, which constituted illegal competition. Our resolution is based principally, but not only, on those statements.

Berenguer Fuster, despite giving a long talk about the matter, does not provide a clear reply to the question, but tries to convince the MPs that the correct course of action was taken by his organization. First of all, he uses a metaphor as a strategy to make his speech more credible: "...where the law is concerned, matters are not black or white, but, as a teacher of mine once said, different shades of grey." This strategy, in fact, as we shall see later, backfires because his remark is challenged in question Q23 by Aspiazu Uriarte, who requests a more coherent explanation. Moreover, his last comment is rather vague, and can only give rise to speculation: "Our resolution is based *principally*, but not only, on those statements." The use of the word "principally" begs the question, "What else is the resolution based on?"

Aspiazu Uriarte later mentions two other instances in 1996 and 1998, where decisions adopted by the TDC with respect to savings banks in other regions of Spain differed essentially from the present one concerning the Basque and Navarra savings banks. In connection with this, he asks the following question:

... **{Q16}** *¿Por qué esa diferencia de criterio?* (Why do we have this difference in the method of judgement?)

Once again, the Chairman of the CNC is unable to give a straight answer to an *interrogative word question*, and, in the same way as in question Q15, simply confines himself to justifying the decision adopted by his organization:

Es cierto que hay un informe del Tribunal Vasco de Defensa de la Competencia que difiere de los criterios reflejados en la resolución, lo cual puede obedecer como mínimo a dos causas: la primera es que en derecho hay muchas opiniones

que son divergentes y no hay por qué descalificar unas y otras, y la segunda es que, como S.S. ha mencionado, el tribunal vasco tuvo conocimiento exclusivamente del informe de propuesta, mientras que el Consejo de la Comisión Nacional de la Competencia ha tenido a su disposición los distintos tomos de las actuaciones, y a partir del conjunto de esas actuaciones ha dictado su resolución considerando que existían pruebas de una actuación anticompetitiva, y por ello ha sancionado. (It is true that there is a report of the Basque Competition Defence Tribunal which differs from the guidelines laid down in the resolution. There are at least two reasons for this. First of all, where the law is concerned, many different interpretations can emerge, and it is not possible to discard all of them. Secondly, as you have mentioned, the Basque Tribunal only possessed information about the proposal report, while the National Competition Commission Council had, at its disposal, the various files of the activities performed. As a result of those activities, it passed judgement, since it considered that there was evidence of activities which constituted illegal competition, and therefore applied disciplinary action.

It could even be argued, in this case, that Berenguer Fuster, to a certain extent, repeats his answer to the previous question (equivocation strategy E9).

In questions Q17a and Q17b, the Basque Parliamentary Group MP, after having expressed his opinion that the proceeds of fines imposed should be deposited in the corresponding regional tax departments, asks the following question:

{Q17a} *Quisiera saber, si usted tiene alguna idea al respecto {Q17b} y qué es lo que piensa en relación con esta cuestión.* (I should like to know whether you have any idea about this matter, and your opinion in this regard.)

The Chairman of the CNC does not give a reply to this question in his first round of answers, but does address the issue towards the end of the parliamentary session:

Perdone, señor Azpiazu, que no haya hecho referencia con antelación a su propuesta sobre que se deba ingresar en las haciendas forales o no. Eso, obviamente, no me corresponde, corresponderá a quien la ley haya establecido. Supongo que es la Agencia Tributaria la que recauda las multas que los órganos nacionales de la competencia imponen, pero el destino de las mismas le aseguro desde luego que no es potenciar, afortunadamente, ni incrementar el presupuesto de los órganos de la competencia. (Forgive me, Mr Azpiazu, for not having referred to your suggestion before as to whether or not the proceeds of fines should become part of the corresponding regional tax revenue. That is obviously not my responsibility; it is the responsibility of the person appointed by the law. I suppose that it is the Income Tax Department which collects the money

from fines imposed by the CNC. However, I can certainly assure you that the final aim of this money, fortunately, is not to increase the financial backing of the agencies responsible for competition.

He equivocates initially by saying that this matter is beyond his control (strategy E6b), but since only his opinion has been asked for, which he provides, his answer may be accepted as a valid reply.

In turn 4a, Mr Torres Balaguer, the Socialist Party MP, asks a number of questions with regard to commercial distribution:

{Q21a} *¿Qué pasa con la concentración de la distribución comercial?* (What can you tell me about concentration in commercial distribution?)

{Q21b} *¿Dónde está el punto de equilibrio?* (Which is the point where it breaks even?)

{Q21c} *¿Cuáles son los límites de la unidad de mercado?* (What are the limits of market unity?)

{Q21d} *¿Qué pasa con las normas autonómicas que, bajo la apariencia de regular por interés general, son obstáculos que, si no invisibles, afectan a la libre circulación en algunos casos?* (What can you tell me about autonomous regulations which, although they seem to establish rules for general interest, are difficulties that are undetectable, and affect a free flow in some cases?)

{Q21e} *¿Qué pasa con la cuestión de los productos básicos recientemente denunciada por las asociaciones de consumidores?* (What about the matter of basic necessities which the consumers' association have recently made an official complaint about?)

{Q21f} *¿Es cierto o no que la comisión está estudiando de oficio estas prácticas colusorias?* (Is it or is it not true that the Commission is legally investigating these collusive activities?)

{Q21g} *¿Está o no evaluando estos problemas en los elementos de primera necesidad?* (Are you or are you not assessing these problems with regard to basic necessities?)

{Q21h} *¿Hay escasez o no hay escasez?* (Are there or are there not any products in short supply?)

{Q21j} ... y me gustaría que en una fecha posterior nos emplazásemos para hablar más a fondo de todos estos temas y recibir un poco de luz de usted o de los miembros de la comisión. (... and I should like to set a deadline to be able to have a more detailed discussion about these matters in the future, and to be enlightened about them, either by you or by the members of the Commission.)

Berenguer Fuster starts by giving an acceptable reply to Q21a, which is an uncomplicated *interrogative word question*:

En materia de distribución comercial es cierto que ... hemos hecho mención ... sobre los efectos distorsionadores de la competencia que se ocasionan como consecuencia de la denominada segunda licencia y el denominado urbanismo comercial. (With regard to the matter of commercial distribution, it is true that ... we have made mention ... of the negative effects on competition caused by the so-called second licence, and the so-called commercial urbanism.)

However, he chooses to completely ignore question Q21b, and does even acknowledge that a question has been asked (equivocation type E1). This is another fairly simple *interrogative word question*, where the interviewee is required to provide a missing variable (Bull 2003). There is the suggestion of a certain amount of face-threat in this case, because the question seems to imply that there is no equilibrium in commercial distribution, and that the MP considers the Chairman of the CNC and his organization responsible for this. Thus, Berenguer Fuster tries to protect his own image and that of the CNC by equivocating.

He again equivocates in his answer to question Q21c, this time employing a different strategy, as he is again unable to provide the missing variable to another *interrogative word question*, giving the following answer:

Ya sé que esta Cámara, o una Cámara anterior a esta, no coincidió con las opiniones del Tribunal de Defensa de la Competencia, y en la medida en que me parece que la Ley de ordenación del comercio minorista, la Ley 1/1996, fue aprobada por unanimidad, SS.SS. no tienen por qué seguir los criterios del Tribunal de Defensa de la Competencia ... (I know that this House, or a previous one, did not agree with the opinions expressed by the Competition Defence Tribunal, and since it seems that the law governing retail commerce ... was unanimously approved, you are under no obligation to adhere to the judgement of the Competition Defence Tribunal.)

Berenguer Fuster does not make a genuine attempt to answer the question posed, but his suggestion that the House is “under no obligation to adhere to the judgement of

the Competition Defence Tribunal” could be interpreted as making a political point in an attempt to give reassurance (equivocation strategy E7d).

Nevertheless, he does give what we consider to be an acceptable reply to question Q21d:

... en la medida en la que existen unas legislaciones o unas autoridades autonómicas que son más permisivas que otras a la hora de conceder licencia para grandes establecimientos comerciales, para grandes superficies, la segunda licencia puede ocasionar una diferencia de tratamiento entre la variedad, calidad, cantidad y precio de determinados bienes que pueden obtener los ciudadanos de unas y otras comunidades autónomas, según se encuentren en comunidades autónomas que aplican un criterio más liberalizado o en otras que aplican un criterio más contrario a la apertura de grandes establecimientos. ¿Qué querríamos nosotros? Que desapareciera ese sistema de segunda licencia, que no hubiera diferencias entre la apertura de establecimientos de acuerdo con el tamaño de los mismos. Con base en esa Ley de ordenación del comercio minorista, la totalidad de las comunidades autónomas han legislado en uso de sus competencias, y unas han establecido unos criterios más restrictivos aún que los de la propia ley en materia de apertura de grandes establecimientos y otras han ido al mínimo. (... it should be taken into account that there do exist certain laws or certain autonomic authorities which are more permissive than others with regard to issuing licences to big businesses and big surface areas. In this case, the second licence could give rise to differences in the variety, quality, quantity and price of certain products obtained by citizens of one autonomic region or another. This would depend on whether they live in autonomic regions where more flexible laws are imposed or in others where stricter laws are enforced in the case of big businesses. What were we in favour of? We wanted to abolish the second licence system, so that there would be no differences in the opening hours of businesses simply because of their size. Using the law governing retail commerce, all of the autonomous regions have applied it in accordance with their legal capacity. Some of them have imposed even more restrictions than those required by the law itself, while others have established a minimum.)

Since only an opinion has been requested, we have thought it pertinent to consider that a reply has been given, although the Chairman of the CNC does not give details of any specific action taken in this regard by his organization.

Question Q21e is another potentially face-threatening question, dealing with a tricky matter. Torres Balaguer, the Socialist Party MP, refers to a complaint made by the consumers’ association about competition with regard to products of basic necessity. Berenguer Fuster decides not to become involved in the issue, and ignores this *interrogative word question* altogether (equivocation type E1).

The Chairman of the CNC uses the same strategy of equivocation in order to avoid answering questions Q21f, Q21g, Q21h and Q21j. In Q21f, Azpiazu Uriarte seems to imply that the Commission is making no attempt to investigate dubious activities

being carried out. In this case, there is little doubt that Berenguer Fuster's decision to equivocate makes him appear incompetent, and causes a loss of face. Similarly, no comment is made with regard to problems relating to basic necessities which the Basque MP refers to in questions Q21g and Q21h. Moreover, Berenguer Fuster makes no reply regarding the request for a future discussion on all of the problems, made in question Q21j.

In turn 1b, Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, asks two *implied interrogative word questions*, in the form of requests:

{Q22a} ... *le pido que esta comparecencia sea recurrente ...* (I request that you make more frequent appearances ...)

{Q22b} ... *y esperemos que en la próxima comparecencia nos remita antes de la misma su plan estratégico completo para poder analizarlo ...* (... and we hope, when you make your next appearance, that you will send us your full plan of strategy beforehand, so that we can study it ...)

The Chairman of the CNC answers the question in a vague manner:

... confío en ver a todas SS.SS. aquí en la próxima legislatura, porque mi mandato se extenderá en buena parte de la próxima. (... I trust that I will see you all in the next period of government, because my term of office will continue for some time after it begins.)

Berenguer Fuster agrees to meet the MPs, but no mention is made either to the frequency of his appearances, or to whether he will present his plans before the next appearance. We interpret this to mean that he acknowledges that the questions have been asked, but fails to answer them. He therefore incurs in equivocation (strategy E2).

In turn 2b, the Basque Parliamentarian Group MP, Azpiazu Uriarte, poses two questions to the Chairman of the CNC. These are, in fact, repetitions of questions which he asked in turn 1b, concerning fines imposed on savings banks in the Basque Navarra region. In his earlier questions, Azpiazu seemed to imply that discrimination existed towards savings banks in the Basque and Navarra areas, suggesting that they did not receive the same treatment as those in other areas. He repeats questions Q15 and Q16 in questions Q23 and Q24 respectively, and states, quite correctly, that these questions were only answered in a haphazard manner. We mentioned earlier in the analysis to Berenguer Fuster's answer to Q15, that a metaphor was used in an attempt to convince the MP that the correct course of action was taken with regard to the fines imposed on savings banks in the Basque and Navarra areas: "... where the law is concerned, matters are not black or white, but, as a teacher of mine once said, different shades of grey." Azpiazu Uriarte states that this is not a satisfactory

explanation for people who are not professionals in law, and requests a more explicit answer:

{Q23} *Me gustaría que las cosas fueran más claras porque no pueden estar al arbitrio de consideraciones no sé si estrictas en el derecho pero sí en consideraciones políticas. (I would like you to give us a clearer idea, because these matters should not depend on the interpretation of considerations which I do not know whether they are strict in law, but they certainly are from a political standpoint.)*

In question Q24, the Basque MP refers to the two cases connected with savings banks in other regions which he mentioned in question Q16:

*Sobre esa cuestión no me ha dicho gran cosa pero **{Q24}** si me puede aclarar algo porque puede ser objeto de controversia, me gustaría que me lo dijera. (You haven't said much about that matter, but I would like you to shed some light on the case if possible, since it could be subject to controversy.)*

We mentioned earlier that the Chairman of the CNC equivocated when answering questions Q15 and Q16 (strategy E7c). However, with regard to question Q23, he chooses not to reply at all (equivocation type E1). In answer to question Q24, he again equivocates, this time using a different strategy, and proposes the following argument:

... el de las cajas de Manresa, eran cajas de menor tamaño que las que estaban implicadas en el expediente al que S.S. ha hecho mención y, además era una actuación muy concreta que afectaba a los cajeros automáticos, por tanto, de menor trascendencia. Aun así, si no recuerdo mal, me parece que la multa en aquella época, el año 1996, en que se puso esa sanción, fue del orden de 600.000 euros. Fue una multa bastante elevada en aquel tiempo. Por eso no se pudo producir ninguna diferencia de trato entre unas cajas y otras. (... with regard to the savings banks in Manresa, it was a case of much smaller ones than those involved in the inquiry which you mention. Moreover, it was a very specific investigation which dealt with cash points, and was therefore less important. Even so, if I remember correctly, I think the fine in 1996, the year in which it was imposed, amounted to 600,000 euros. That was a very heavy fine at the time. Therefore, there was no difference in the handling of matters between some savings banks and others.)

Berenguer Fuster tries to convince the MPs present that there was no discrimination towards savings banks in the Basque and Navarra areas, as Azpiazu Uriarte seemed to imply in question Q16. In this case it can be assumed, with some certainty, that he is

attacking the MP's question, suggesting that it is based on a false premise (equivocation strategy E4c).

To conclude this section, an analysis will be made of the question types used by politicians in this parliamentary session. We will also try to explain why a certain category was used more than the others. We will also discuss why a particular type caused a greater degree of equivocation in answers. The breakdown of question types with their respective percentages of equivocation is the following, with the total number of questions posed for each category in brackets¹⁸³:

- polar questions (5): equivocation in 5 questions, or 100%;
- imperative questions (11): equivocation in 10 questions, or 90.9% of the total;
- interrogative word questions (20): equivocation in 9 questions, or 45%;
- disjunctive questions (5): equivocation in 2 questions, or 40%;
- implied interrogative word questions (10): equivocation in 1 question, or 10.0%;
- declarative questions (1): no equivocation, or 0%.

From these figures it can be seen that the *imperative question* was the type which was most used by the politicians. However, it is important to realize that although these questions contain an imperative structure, many of them are indeed polite forms which introduce questions of other categories. Fourteen of them are really interrogative word questions, three are implied interrogative word questions, another three are polar questions, while four of them are genuine requests to perform a speech act. In most of these cases, the MPs used a polite expression to introduce the question posed. Question Q14a is an example of a question where polite expressions were used:

Finalmente, nos gustaría conocer, si es posible, cuál es su opinión respecto de dos temas que son de rabiosa actualidad y que también están pendientes de resolución. (Finally, we should like to know, if possible, what your opinion is with regard to two very recent matters which still need to be solved.)

In question Q14a, the MP's use of the conditional tense "we should like ...", and of the expression "if possible" are polite expressions used to introduce the question.

A notable exception to the use of politeness strategies was question Q7c, where Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP, makes a request in a manner which Brown and Levinson describe as "without redressive action, baldly" (1987:69). The MP is referring to the funds available to the CNC:

¹⁸³ See graph nº28.

En caso de que sea insuficiente, dígame cuál es el grado de insuficiencia ... (If they are inadequate, tell me the level of inadequacy ...)

In this case, the request, classified by Brown and Levinson as an FTA which threatens the hearer's negative face (1987:66), is made directly without any attempt to minimize the face threat. It is worthy of note, nevertheless, that the use of politeness strategies did not have the desired effect, as far as the MPs were concerned, since the percentage of equivocation in answers was the second highest (69.6%).

The above statistics also show that the *interrogative word question* was the second most employed by the MPs in this parliamentary session. This type of question affords the speaker the advantage of making the hearer give a precise reply, since a missing variable is required (Bull 2003). However, in this case the degree of equivocation involved was also one of the highest (43.8%). The disjunctive question, used by the interviewers to force the interviewee to choose one of the alternatives presented, or at least present another alternative, has an advantage because it narrows down the latter's scope of reply. However, only five questions of this type were used by the MPs, and 40 % of the answers given contained equivocation strategies. There were fewer cases of the implied interrogative word type, which was observed in only four questions, and the polar category, of which there were three questions. The least used types were the declarative and the indirect questions, with one question each.

In the following the total statistics will be given for the Spanish Parliamentary sessions.

6.2.4 Total statistics of the Spanish Parliamentary sessions.

We will now see the statistics for the analyses of the three parliamentary sessions which took place in *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* in *El Congreso de los Diputados*. These will be presented in the following order:

- (1) The percentage of equivocation occurring in the answers provided by the interviewee.
- (2) The question types used by the MPs, and their percentages of the total number of questions posed.
- (3) The equivocation strategies employed by the interviewee, and the frequency with which they occur.
- (4) The percentages of equivocation observed in the answers given to each question category.

In the three question and answer sessions, the interviewers asked a total of 150 questions. It was found that equivocation strategies were used in the answers to 78 of these questions (52.0% of the total), while the interviewee was deemed to have given an acceptable reply to the other 72 (48.0%)¹⁸⁴. The number of questions for each type used by the MPs, and their respective percentages of the total are the following:

- implied interrogative word questions, 51 (34.0%);
- interrogative word questions, 37 (24.7%);
- imperative questions, 36 (24.0%);
- disjunctive questions, 12 (8.0%);
- polar questions, 11 (7.3%);
- declarative questions, 2 (1.3%);
- indirect questions, 1 (0.7%)¹⁸⁵.

The frequency of each equivocation strategy observed and the percentages of the total number of answers which did not receive replies is the following:

- E1 (49 questions, 62.8%).
- E2 (3 questions, 3.8%).
- E4 (4 questions, 5.1%).
- E6 (12 questions, 15.4%).
- E7 (6 questions, 7.7%).
- E8 (1 question, 1.3%).
- E10 (2 questions, 2.6%).

¹⁸⁴ See graph nº29.

¹⁸⁵ See graph nº30.

- E13 (1 question, 1.3%)¹⁸⁶.

The following statistics show the percentages of equivocation observed in the answers to the various question types. The total number of questions asked for each category is given in brackets:

- polar questions (11): equivocation in 8 questions, or 72.7%;
- disjunctive questions (12): equivocation in 7 questions, or 58.3%;
- interrogative word questions (37): equivocation in 20 questions, or 54.1%;
- imperative questions (36): equivocation in 19 questions, or 52.8%;
- implied interrogative word questions (51): equivocation in 24 questions, or 47.1%;
- indirect questions (1): equivocation in 0 questions or 0%;
- declarative questions (2): equivocation in 0 questions, or 0%¹⁸⁷.

In chapter 7, these statistics will be compared and contrasted with those of the British Parliamentary sessions.

¹⁸⁶ See graph n°31, p.

¹⁸⁷ See graph n°32, p.

CHAPTER 7: A CONTRASTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE USE OF EQUIVOCATION IN QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSIONS IN COMMITTEES IN THE BRITISH AND SPANISH PARLIAMENTS: A CROSS-CULTURAL EXMINATION.

In order to conduct an accurate contrastive study of the use of equivocation in the British and Spanish parliamentary sessions which we have analysed, it would be necessary, first of all, to focus our attention on how these sessions are structured. Moreover, it would be helpful to recap on what exactly took place in the sessions which we analysed in detail.

As we mentioned in chapter 5, section 5.1, in the British Parliament, witnesses (the interviewees in a parliamentary session in the United Kingdom), after having submitted written evidence to the House, are invited by the committees to give oral evidence. However, in *El Congreso de los Diputados*, committees are summoned by the Chairman, or at the request of two Parliamentary Groups, or one-fifth of the members of the committee. In the sessions which we analysed in chapter 6, three, five, or even six witnesses or interviewees attended the sessions in the House of Commons. In contrast, only one person answered questions in the sessions held in the Spanish Parliament. In both Parliaments, MPs from the respective political parties played the role of interviewers. In the British Parliament there is no established order regarding who asked the questions. However, in the sessions of our corpus which took place in *El Congreso de los Diputados*, the first MP to pose questions was a representative from the leading opposition party, followed by politicians from the other opposition parties in order of importance, and finally, an MP from the ruling party. In the House of Commons, the chairman of a committee participates in the question and answer sessions in the same way as the other MPs. In the Spanish Parliament, on the contrary, the chairman of the committee chairs the session, but only the MPs present pose questions to the interviewee.

An important aspect which we have observed in the Spanish sessions is the fact that the politicians, in the question and answer sessions, ask rival politicians questions, and even criticize their activities. Moreover, they make use of the opportunity to foment propaganda to support their own party. The following example occurs in the first parliamentary session to be analysed. Ricardo Torres Balaguer, the Socialist Party MP (the ruling party at the time), objects to criticism made by Miguel Arias Cañete, the Conservative Party MP (the leading party of the opposition) about the Spanish economy:

Cuando el señor portavoz habla de la economía española sin la presión de tener que criticar al Gobierno, aun con datos extremadamente positivos, diría que sus discursos son hasta interesantes, pero en cuanto tiene la premisa de criticar, a pesar de encontrarnos en la mayor fase alcista del ciclo y con los datos más brillantes, lógicamente ya no queda tan bien y yo calificaría su discurso de tremendista. (When the honourable representative discusses the Spanish

economy without being forced to criticize the Government, even with extremely positive data, I would even say that his speeches are interesting. However, when he takes on the premise to criticize, despite the fact that we find ourselves in the most upward phase of the period, and with the most brilliant figures, it does not look right, and in that case I can only regard his speech as opportunistic.)

Torres Balaguer then goes on to assure the Governor of the Bank of Spain of his confidence in him:

Por tanto, señor Fernández Ordóñez, yo prefiero que usted siga de gobernador y que no pase al servicio de estudios, como le ha propuesto el señor Arias Cañete (El señor Arias Cañete: Yo no he propuesto eso. ¡Ojo!) lo cual podría ser interesante para él, pero para nosotros es mejor que usted siga en su puesto. (Therefore, Mr Fernández Ordóñez, I would prefer you to continue as the Governor instead of moving to the study department, as Mr Arias Cañete suggested {Mr Arias Cañete interrupts: That is not what I suggested. Be careful.}, which would be in his interest. However, we would prefer you to continue in your position.)

At a later stage of the meeting, Torres Balaguer makes the following observations to Arias Cañete:

Comprendo que el Grupo Popular tenga que hacer legítima oposición y señale aquellas debilidades de la economía española que le preocupen, aunque para ello tenga que forzar situaciones y cifras, como hemos visto, o acogerse al dato de que hay unas décimas de convergencia, por mucha explicación que tengan. Se ve claramente que hemos crecido no solo en términos absolutos sino también en términos relativos, que comparados con los de la época de su legislatura han sido mejores. Pero le voy a decir algo que no entiendo, señor Arias Cañete. Insiste mucho en la credibilidad de la economía española y en cómo se nos ve desde fuera, pero tengo la impresión que en su legítima crítica sobrepasa algún límite. Le voy a poner un ejemplo concreto. Hablaba usted de los organismos reguladores. Pues bien, lo que ustedes han hecho con toda la cuestión de la CNMV ha sobrepasado los límites. El hecho de que ustedes pidan la comparecencia del señor Conthe en el Parlamento Europeo, después de que compareciera en esta Cámara y pudieran preguntarle lo que quisieron y de que contestara a todo lo que ustedes quisieron, no tiene ningún sentido. {Q33} ¿Por qué llevan ustedes a Europa la comparecencia del señor Conthe? Por el ánimo de hacer ruido. Eso es hacer daño a la imagen de los organismos reguladores, porque ustedes no van a obtener ningún dato ni ninguna información adicional. Es solo para hacer daño. Si tanto les preocupa la imagen de España en el mundo, sean consecuentes y coherentes porque, si no, pensaremos que lo único que les preocupa a ustedes es hacer daño al Gobierno a pesar de que puedan hacer daño

a la economía española. (I understand that the Conservative Party Group would like to conduct opposition in a fair manner, and highlight the weaknesses in the Spanish economy which they are worried about. However, in order to do this, as we have seen, they need to invent facts and figures, or fall back on data that are fractionally outside the norm, however well this can be explained. It can clearly be seen that we have grown, not only in a total manner, but in a relative manner, which is much better than when you were in power. Nevertheless, Mr Arias, there is one thing that I do not understand. You place a lot of emphasis on the credibility of the Spanish economy and how people see us from abroad. But I get the impression that your fair criticism has exceeded certain limits. I will give you a specific example. You spoke about regulatory bodies. Very well, what you did with regard to the CNMV has exceeded the limit. The fact that you asked Mr Conthe to appear in the European Parliament after he appeared in this House, when you were able to ask him whatever you wanted, and after he answered all of your questions, makes no sense at all. Why did you make Mr Conthe appear in Europe? That was done to attract attention. That was simply to damage the image of the regulatory bodies because you are not going to obtain any additional information. If you are really worried about Spain's image in the world, you should be consistent and coherent, because if you are not, we will think that your only aim is to harm the Government, even if this damages the Spanish economy.)

Arias Cañete's reply is the following:

Le voy a explicar por qué el señor Conthe está en el Parlamento Europeo. Primero, porque cuando compareció en esta Comisión no hubo réplica. Segundo, porque han votado ustedes en contra de una comisión de investigación. Si ustedes no quieren que el Parlamento sea el centro de la vida política nacional, lo serán las instituciones europeas. Ustedes tuvieron la oportunidad de que compareciera en una comisión de investigación pero votaron en contra. Cuando el señor Conthe intervino nosotros tomamos la palabra, y cuando contestó no pudimos tener réplica porque se cortó el orden del día inmediatamente. Lo siento mucho, señor Torres, pero su grupo no ha querido que este Parlamento entrara a fondo, teniendo en cuenta que el señor Conthe después de aquella intervención hizo otras declaraciones ante los medios de comunicación mucho más potentes que las que hizo en sede parlamentaria. (I will explain why Mr Conthe is in the European Parliament. First of all, because when he appeared in this Committee, no one objected. Secondly, because you voted against an investigation commission. If you do not wish Parliament to be the centre of the national political world, then the European institutions will have that honour. You had the opportunity to get him to appear in an investigation commission, but you voted against that. When Mr Conthe made an appearance, we had our say, and when

he replied we could not answer back because the agenda was closed immediately. I am really sorry, Mr Torres, but your group did not want Parliament to get to the bottom of the matter, bearing in mind that Mr Conthe made much more potent remarks before the press than he did in Parliament.)

We found no evidence of this kind of argument in the transcripts of the debates held in the British Parliament. It could be argued that it does seem rather unnatural that, during a parliamentary session which really consists of a debate on particular issues, and where the focus should be on questions posed to the interviewees, the Spanish politicians use this as an opportunity to attack each other. This could give rise to the opinion that the Spanish have a greater tendency towards internal disputes than the British, which is a possible cultural difference between the politicians of the two nations. In this case, the Spaniards reveal a more warlike nature than their British counterparts.

As can be seen from the corpus, there are certain differences between the formats of the question and answer sessions of the two parliaments. It is arguable that this could reflect a cultural difference between the British and Spanish parliamentarians. In the Spanish Parliament, as we mentioned earlier, politicians formulate all of their questions together in various rounds, which are, in turn answered by the interviewee in two stages. In the House of Commons, on the other hand, a question needs to be answered immediately after it has been asked, although occasionally, as we have seen in the debates, sometimes two, or even three questions may be posed at once. Moreover, in the meetings held in La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda, the MPs, in addition to formulating questions to the interviewer, also tend to make general comments about the issues being discussed. This is in contrast to the sessions held in the British Parliament, where a straightforward question is usually put forward to the witnesses, without there being a great deal of discussion by the interviewer. With regard to replying to questions, the interviewee in the Spanish Parliament also indulged in a great deal of discussion while giving his answers. In the sessions held in the Treasury Committee, the answers given by the witnesses were, for the most part, brief and to the point. The difference in culture mentioned previously could be that while British parliamentarians tend to limit themselves to focussing directly on the matter in hand, the Spanish are more chatty and long-winded while asking and answering questions.

Differences in culture between the two nationalities can also be observed if we examine the total statistics of the analyses of the sessions which took place in the two parliaments. The figures provided show that both the British and Spanish interviewees resorted to language evasion when they considered that it was necessary. Nevertheless, it can be noted that there is a marked difference between the percentages of non-replies given in the British Parliament (32.6%), and its Spanish equivalent (52.0%). This undoubtedly shows the Spanish to be rather more evasive than the British, in this regard. Furthermore, a closer examination of the statistics

reveals a rather interesting fact. The interviewees of both parliaments preferred the use of equivocation strategies E1 (Ignores the question), and E6 (Declines to answer). However, while there was not a great deal of difference between the use of each type by the witnesses in the House of Commons, with E6 comprising 29.2% of the total number of non-replies, the Spanish interviewee show a tremendous bias towards the E1 type (62.8% of the total), and E6 (15.4%). Although it is arguable that the different style of turn-taking makes strategy E1 the most natural choice for the Spanish addressee, a fundamental difference in the character of the two societies seems to arise. It would appear that the Spanish, when faced with an awkward question, prefer to say nothing, while the British feel that an attempt should be made to provide an answer, or at least to say something, even at the risk of being evasive or insincere. In this regard, the British interviewees found E6 to be a useful strategy, since its sub-types helped them to make some kind of utterance: (i) refusing to answer because of inability (E6a); or (ii) showing an unwillingness to answer (E6b); or (iii) not being able to speak on behalf of another person (E6c); or deferring the answer (E6d); or pleading ignorance (E6e); or indeed, transferring the responsibility to answer to another person (E6f).

It is also interesting to note that equivocation strategy E7 (Makes political point) was one that was sparingly used in both parliaments. It comprised 8.3% of non-replies in the British sessions, and 7.7% in the Spanish meetings. Another similarity between the debates of the two nations is that the strategy least used by the witnesses in the House of Commons was E5 (Attacks the interviewer), with only one occurrence of this case in the debates of the Treasury Committee, and none at all in the replies given by the Spanish interviewees. Bull (2009) observes that British politicians are more likely to attack the question, than to attack the interviewer (the exception being Margaret Thatcher). The statistics provided give support to Bull's opinion, since uses of type E4 (Attacks the question) amounted to 15.6% of the total number of non-replies. This occurs despite the fact that, in our corpus, the roles are reversed, since it is the politicians who pose the questions to the interviewees. The same could be said of the Spanish interviewees, who did not resort to the use of strategy E5 at any time, and who attacked the question on 5.2% of occasions. Moreover, there were no instances of types E11 (Apologises), and E12 (Literalism), of equivocation types E9 (Repeats answer to the previous question), in either the British or the Spanish answers. It could be argued that these strategies are more usual in interviews where political agents are the ones being interviewed.

With regard to question types, the statistics reveal that the implied interrogative word question was the most used in the question and answer sessions in both parliaments. The numbers are almost identical, comprising 35.9% of the total number of questions posed in the debates in the British Parliament, and 34.0% in La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda. Since the interviewers were politicians, it could be said that these figures give us some indication that the two nations, to a certain extent, treat

the discussion of political matters in a similar manner. As we mentioned in chapter 4, section 4.1.2 of this dissertation, when confronted with an implied interrogative word question, the addressee is often expected to elaborate on the matter, or give reasons to justify his answer. This characteristic, as we have seen, also makes this question type less imposing than the interrogative word question, since it does not contain the presuppositions which are quite often an integral part of the latter type. Moreover, both the British and the Spanish politicians show a preference for the implied interrogative word question over the declarative type, which, as we have seen, also has an imposing nature. Declarative questions amounted to 15% of the total in the British Parliament, and it was even used to a lesser extent in the Spanish interviews, with only two questions of its type in total. It is possible to assume, therefore, that the politicians of both nations tend to be flexible, allowing the interviewees the opportunity to give their own opinions when replying to questions.

Nevertheless, the interrogative word question is second on the list of preferences of both the British (32.2% of the total) and the Spanish MPs (24.7%). This shows that although the politicians of two nations maintain, to a certain extent, the flexibility we discussed, they do have a fairly high preference for more specific questions. The lower percentage of the interrogative word question in the Spanish Parliament is due to the fact that there are a number of imperative questions, many of which are really interrogative word questions, asked with a more polite structure. Questions beginning with a conditional structure such as “We would like ...”, or “We would be grateful if ...” are fairly frequent in the Spanish debates. Imperative questions account for 24.0% of the total number of questions posed in the Spanish sessions which we have analysed, while the corresponding figure in the House of Commons is only 0.9%, with a total of three questions in the debates. However, it should be noted that the imperative question type is quite often replaced by the implied interrogative question (category b: request), the semantic nature of which is basically the same as the former, as we discussed in chapter 4, section 4.1.3. This shows us that negative politeness strategies are used in both cultures to alleviate the possible violence of face-threatening acts.

With regard to equivocation in the answers given, if we establish a minimum of 15 questions per category, we find that the interviewees in the Treasury Committee evaded giving answers primarily when faced with interrogative word questions and those of the implied interrogative word type. On the other hand, the percentages of non-replies were high in the Spanish Parliament in answer to the aforementioned categories, and the imperative type. The British witnesses used equivocation strategies in answers given to 36.2% of the interrogative word questions asked, 29.1% in those of the implied interrogative word type, and 28.6% of the declarative type. On the other hand, the interviewees in El Congreso de los Diputados avoided responding to 54.1% of the interrogative word questions posed, 52.8% of the imperative type, and the implied interrogative word category obtained 47.1% of non-replies. As we mentioned previously, many of the imperative questions fulfill the role of interrogative word

questions. These statistics lead us to believe that the Spanish have a tendency to be more imprecise than the British when specific questions are asked.

In chapter 2, section 2.4, we discussed impersonalization and ambiguity in political discourse, and it was observed how politicians sometimes make use of the vagueness of pronouns to equivocate. Although there were a few examples in the sessions of both parliaments, it was not really a consistent tactic used by the interviewees to avoid answering questions. As a matter of fact, we only observed one instance in the British debates where pronoun ambiguity was used with a genuine attempt to equivocate. This occurs in session 2, question 12, in the Treasury Committee, where Brooks Newmark, the Conservative MP, is discussing prices and cash flow with Mervyn King, the Governor of the Bank of England:

Q12 Mr Newmark: You can look at prices from a historic basis and look at them from a cash flow multiple, and prices from a cash flow multiple standpoint seem to be going up a lot. If you can take one sector of the economy that looks like it is driving it, the amount of money that is flowing into private equity, for example, is pushing up equity prices; there is cheap capital from the City, so if I look at the level that banks are prepared to lend to companies to buy other companies or to lend to private equity firms, the cash flow multiples that they are willing to lend at seem to be, sometimes, two or three multiple points higher than they were, for example, two to three years ago. That is one area that seems to be driving it. There is a sense that I pick up from the City that people think that equity prices are overvalued. I am just curious: do you believe that or not?

Mr King: If enough people thought that equity prices were overvalued you would think that they would be selling them and they would not be overvalued any more.

There is no doubt that the question "... do you believe that or not?" is addressed to King personally. However, the witness not only attacks the question by suggesting that it is based on a false premise (strategy E4c), he also gives an answer in the third person.

Nevertheless, a pronominal shift does not always necessary indicate an intention to equivocate. This can be seen in the following example, taken from session 1 of the English Parliament. Peter Viggers, a Conservative MP, poses the following question to the witnesses:

Q14 Peter Viggers: [Turn 14a] Can I ask the lead witness from each of your groups, how would you define, in simple terms, financial stability? [Turn 14b] What are you seeking with financial stability?

Mr Cunliffe: I think you are seeking to ensure that the financial system can operate, can play the role that it needs to play in the economy as a whole.

In this case, the pronoun “you”, in both questions, is used to refer to the witnesses personally. Although, in his reply, Cunliffe makes a pronominal shift to the impersonal use of “you”, this does not constitute an attempt to equivocate, since a satisfactory reply is given.

In the session 1 of the Spanish Parliament, we observed an example which was similar to that in question 12 of the second session of the British Parliament. Arias Cañete, the Conservative MP, poses the following question to Fernández Ordóñez, the Governor of the Bank of Spain:

¿Es que le da miedo al gobernador señalar la profundidad que están alcanzando algunos de los desequilibrios de la economía española? (Is the Governor afraid to indicate how serious the instability in the Spanish economy is?)

There is no doubt that the pronoun “le” (him) in the question refers to the Governor personally. However, the latter, in the same way as King does in the example given above, attacks the question by implying that it is based on a false premise (strategy E4c), and also answers using the third person:

Sinceramente, señor Arias, pienso que el informe del Banco de España ha hecho lo de siempre, que es dar una visión equilibrada. (To be honest, Mr Arias, I think that the Bank of Spain’s report has provided a balanced view, which it has always done.)

Another example of pronoun ambiguity occurs in session 2 of *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda*. Llamazares Trigo, who is discussing indebtedness, poses the following question to Fernández Ordóñez:

{Q19} *¿Es sostenible, en ese sentido, el nivel de endeudamiento de la economía española? (In that sense, can the level of indebtedness in the Spanish economy be maintained?)*

The interviewee’s reply is the following:

Nuestro problema ahora, a la vista de dónde nos encontramos, no creo que sea el endeudamiento; el problema —si uno eligiera la senda negativa— es una desaceleración excesiva y rápida del crédito. (With regard to our present situation, I do not think that indebtedness is our immediate problem. The problem, if we use a negative expression, is the excessive and rapid deceleration of credit.)

First of all, it can be observed that the Governor attacks the question by stating that it does not tackle the important issue (equivocation strategy E4a). Moreover, it is not absolutely clear who is alluded to by the pronoun “our”. Does he mean the Bank, or the people, or the Bank and the people? This is ambiguous.

To sum up, it could be said that, in a similar fashion, both the witnesses in the House of Commons and the interviewee in the Spanish Parliament combined the ambiguous nature of pronouns with equivocation strategies to avoid giving direct answers to questions. However, as we have seen, this tactic was employed on a limited number of occasions.

In the following chapter, we will provide the final conclusions reached in our dissertation.

CHAPTER 8: CONCLUSION

The statistics in graphs nº13 and nº29 in appendix 1, which show the total percentages of equivocation in the answers given to questions posed in the Treasury Committee and *La Comisión de Economía y Hacienda* respectively, show that British and Spanish interviewees are both guilty of language evasion when they answer questions in parliamentary debates. However, it can be noted that there is a marked difference between the percentages of non-replies given in the British Parliament (32.6%), and its Spanish equivalent (52.0%). This suggests that the Spanish tend to be rather more evasive than the British. Moreover, from the data given in graphs nº15 and nº31, it can be observed that the two nations differ with regard to the preferences of the equivocation strategy employed. While the British interviewees showed a slight bias towards the use of type E6 (Declines to answer), which accounted for 29.2% of the total number of non-replies, their Spanish counterparts reveal a significant dependence on strategy E1 (ignores the question), with 62.8%. This seems to indicate that, as we also mentioned in chapter 7 of this dissertation, when the Spanish interviewee wishes to avoid giving a reply to a particular question, he or she would prefer to say nothing rather than make a remark that could be considered insincere. On the other hand, the preference of the British parliamentarians for type E6 gives the impression that they would prefer to give some sort of answer, even at the risk of appearing to be untruthful. Nevertheless, the figures given also show that type E1 was the second choice of non-reply used by the British witnesses. With regard to this circumstance, it should be stressed that ignoring questions in the sessions which took place in the Treasury Committee was a strategy which needed to be utilized skillfully, and with the utmost care, as we observed in the analyses of three debates. In an article written on techniques of political interview analysis, Bull mentions the importance of skill (2009):

... it should not be assumed that equivocation is always unskillful. For example, a high degree of skill was shown by Tony Blair in televised interviews during the 1997 general election campaign.

Because of the nature of the British sessions, it is more difficult to ignore questions with any degree of frequency. One way of doing this as we observed in the analysis of the debates, is, for example, when an interviewer poses two or three questions together, the witness may use the tactic of giving replies to the last one or two questions, while ignoring the first. This does not mean, however, that the British parliamentarians are more skilled than their Spanish counterparts in this regard. This tactic was also used in the Spanish Parliament, since a number of questions were asked consecutively before the interviewee had the opportunity to answer them.

As far as equivocation strategy E6 is concerned, we have mentioned that it was the most natural choice in the British Parliamentary sessions. However, the Spanish

interviewee also made use of it, though to a considerably lesser extent (15.4). This was done in order to avoid answering queries for which he did not possess sufficient knowledge, and also to evade face-threatening questions which could impose restrictions on future freedom of action.

In the parliamentary debates of both nations, there was considerably less use of the other equivocation strategies. Type E7 (Makes political point) accounted for 8.3% of non-replies in the British sessions, and 7.7% in the Spanish meetings. Another similarity between the meetings of the two nations is that the strategy least used by the witnesses in the House of Commons was E5 (Attacks the interviewer), with only one occurrence of this case, while there were no instances of this type in the Spanish Parliament. The observation made by Bull (2009) that British politicians are more likely to attack the question, than to attack the interviewer has been seen to be true for both the British and Spanish interviewees who participated in the sessions which we analysed.

In chapter 2 of this dissertation, it was mentioned that politicians frequently make use of pronoun ambiguity to evade difficult questions. Although there have been cases of pronominal shifts in the British sessions, it can not be said that the intention to equivocate on the part of the witness was always the case. There was, as we saw in the last chapter, some evidence of this in the Spanish debates. However, there were not enough cases for it to be considered significant.

In conclusion, it would seem, from the statistics observed, that there exists a greater tendency to equivocate in the Spanish culture than the British one, and that Spanish interviewees prefer not to answer a particular question instead of giving an evasive answer and running the risk of being insincere. However, it should be pointed out that this study is based on a corpus with a limited scope, both in the number of sessions analysed and in the themes discussed. It would, therefore, be necessary to conduct a more extensive and varied examination to be able to apply this view to the entire British and Spanish societies.

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