A corpus-based investigation of selected pragmatic politeness features used during Question Time in the national parliament of Ireland

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This dissertation is the original work of the author, and it has not, in full or in part, been previously submitted to this or any other institution

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A corpus-based investigation of some pragmatic politeness features utilised during Question Time in the national parliament of Ireland

This research investigates some politeness features used by Irish politicians during Question Time (QT) in the national parliament of Ireland, through the prism of some corpus linguistics tools and an examination of some aspects of facework utilised in that setting. It also investigates the feasibility of building a corpus from data drawn from the official parliamentary record in Ireland. The study draws on approaches and theories from politeness theory, language variation and pragmatics to frame the analysis of six months of Dáil QTs, providing a database of 950,000 words of transcribed data, which is examined using quantitative and qualitative corpus-based techniques. The guiding question is to determine how the use of certain politeness features and strategies in Dáil Eireann differ from usage of the same features and strategies in a comparable parliamentary setting, the House of Commons in London, focusing in depth on two specific features; the use of “please” and “thank you”, and the use of “yes” and “no” in response to questions.

The analysis begins by investigating through a preliminary study the linguistic accuracy of the official Dáil transcripts which are made available to the public on the www.oireachtas.ie website. This study is supplemented by interviews with key personnel in the production of the Official Report. From this initial study it is noted that certain politeness strategies during QT (such as the use of modal verbs, and the use of terms of address) are unsuitable for analysis through a corpus linguistics framework. Caution should be used when using official parliamentary transcripts for linguistic analysis, while linguists (particularly corpus linguists) should choose carefully which linguistic items to study when availing of this data.

Having isolated certain politeness features which are amenable to corpus analysis, these features are then examined using corpus-linguistics techniques, including word lists and concordances. Results of the corpus-based dimension of this research show that a view of lexical features as simple politeness markers seem to be inadequate when accounting for the complexity of usage of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in both the national parliaments of Ireland and Britain. A range of factors (including sentence structure, topic under discussion and speakers’ ideological views) need to be considered.

Following the corpus-based examination, extracts from the Irish and British corpora were examined in detail, with a particular focus on two aspects of facework, FTAs and positive
politeness strategies. 24 QT exchanges (12 from the Irish setting and 12 from the British setting) are examined in detail, in order to identify some aspects of facework used in this setting. Results of this aspect of the investigation indicate that politicians use a mixture of strategies during QT, including talking up their own positive face, ignoring FTAs, mitigating techniques and self-justification. Face-threatening acts (FTAs) occur with similar frequency in the Irish and British settings, but there is a greater preponderance of positive politeness strategies in the Irish setting. Possible reasons for this difference are discussed.

Results of all three aspects of this research are then integrated. It is argued that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory can provide useful insights into discourse practices during QT, but this should be supplemented with impoliteness research (particularly Jonathan Culpeper’s work), and the concept of ostensible mitigation (Link and Kreuz), to provide a more rounded picture of how these politeness features are utilised in both the Irish and British setting. It is seen that a Communities of Practice approach can help to identity what is sanctioned by institutional norms, and when these norms are violated. Implications for future research in the areas of parliamentary discourse and politeness studies are discussed, as are the implications for future research in the area of Irish English.
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Positive face, negative face and face aggravation are all important aspects of political facework. That is to say, politicians will seek to present themselves in a favourable light, to defend their freedom of action, and in an adversarial political system, to attack the face of their political opponents while defending their own [ . . . ] political facework needs to be considered in situated context. (Bull and Fetzer, 2010: 162)

The importance of cross-cultural pragmatic research into the English spoken in England and in Ireland is undeniable (Barron, 2005b: 141)

1.1 Aim and scope of the study

There is much focus, academic and otherwise, on the language used by politicians while engaging in the practice of politics. Attention is particularly paid to the language used by politicians in their national parliament. Meanwhile, politeness strategies and relational work in Irish English in various contexts has been the subject of recent enquiry in papers by numerous authors (for example, Murphy and Farr, 2012; Clancy and Vaughan, 2012; Clancy, 2011; Farr, 2005; Martin, 2005; Kallen, 2005; Binchy, 2005). It is somewhat surprising to note, then, that there have been very few linguistic studies focused on the language produced by Irish politicians in the national parliament of Ireland, Dáil Eireann (one exception is a paper by Mary O’Regan (2010), entitled ‘Political language as a flexible friend: Irish parliamentary debate on the Iraq war’, which focuses on Irish parliamentary discourse from a CDA perspective). This study fills that gap somewhat, by analysing some politeness features used during Question Time (QT) in Dáil Eireann, and by examining how certain aspects of
facework (which feature these tokens) are used in this context. This study utilises a comparative approach, by comparing language used in the Irish national parliament, Dáil Eireann, with language used in the national parliament of Britain, the House of Commons in Westminster. Anne Barron has pointed out why a comparative approach is important when examining pragmatic features of discourse;

Pragmatic descriptions of a particular variety of language provide a snapshot of language use in that particular culture. They fail, however, to underline what, if anything, is distinctive about polite language conventions in the particular culture. Consequently, their value in understanding varieties of a particular language is limited unless findings can be compared to those of similar investigations of other varieties of language

(Barron, 2005b: 168).

Barron further notes that little is known about possible divergences between Irish English and British English “on the level of polite language use – a situation in keeping with the dearth of cross-cultural pragmatic research into non-standard varieties” (2005b: 141). This study aims to address that omission somewhat. The study makes use of some Corpus Linguistics tools, supplemented by a close reading of selected texts. This study intersects a number of fields, including corpus linguistics, parliamentary discourse, and politeness studies, but it can most accurately be considered to be part of the field of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies (CADS: Partington, 2004; 2009);

Corpus-assisted discourse studies tends to reject the dichotomy of corpus-based or corpus-driven linguistics (Tognini-Bonelli 2001), in favour of combining them, in an approach which uses both theory and data as starting points for the research, and therefore shunts between qualitative/quantitative analyses and theoretical interpretative frameworks as the research progresses

(Taylor, 2011: 9).

This study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches by first focusing on a corpus examination of certain politeness tokens, and utilising traditional corpus tools (word lists, concordancing), before examining exchanges which feature these tokens in some detail, in order to reveal politeness strategies utilised during QT in both Dáil Eireann and Westminster.
The three broad aims of the study are as follows;

1. To reveal whether a corpus compiled from the Official Report of Dáil Éireann is a suitable resource for linguistic research, and to investigate the potential usefulness of corpus approaches to politeness in an institutional context

2. To reveal how the linguistic tokens (a) ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are used during Dáil Éireann QT, and how this differs from House of Commons QT

3. To investigate facework during Dáil Éireann QT by focusing on some FTAs and positive politeness strategies (which feature the same tokens as mentioned in the previous aim) in this setting, and by comparing findings with similar exchanges in the British setting.

This study makes a contribution to the fields of pragmatics and Irish English, and in particular politeness in Irish English; this study also extends corpus studies in Irish English to a formal, institutional setting. In very recent years, there have been a number of studies on politeness during QT in differing settings (Taylor, 2011; Bull and Wells, 2011; Ambuyo et al., 2011; Bull and Fetzer, 2010), and it is clear that this is a field of study which has much potential for the linguist. This study makes a contribution to that on-going discussion, and extends that discussion to the Irish context.

1.1.1 The research questions

Based on issues raised in the literature, the results of preliminary studies, and personal professional interests, the following primary research questions were formulated to direct the present research.

1. How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary discourse?

2. What does a corpus-based analysis of certain politeness markers (the use of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and the use of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to yes/no interrogatives) during QT in Dáil Éireann reveal, when compared to a similar setting, QT in the House of Commons in England?

3. Are there differences in some aspects of facework employed during exchanges which include the linguistic tokens (a) ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ during Dáil Éireann QT, and to investigate how these (im)politeness strategies differ in exchanges during House of Commons QT?
4. Is politeness theory (specifically Brown and Levinson’s terminology of positive and negative face, and FTAs) a useful analytical framework for examining language use in Dáil Éireann? Does impoliteness research have a role to play in examining language use in this setting?

5. Where differences occur in the use of certain politeness strategies between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?

Other topics which will be explored during the course of the analysis in this thesis can be summarised as follows;

1. Are the official Irish parliamentary transcripts a suitable resource for the corpus linguist?
2. Are biases evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors, as has been found to be the case with the British Hansard? How does this affect the final product in Ireland?
3. Are there similarities and differences between the usage of face-threatening acts (FTAs) in Dáil Éireann and Westminster during QT?
4. Are there similarities and differences between positive politeness strategies utilised in these two settings?

1.1.2 Structure and contents of the thesis

This opening chapter begins by describing the aim and scope of the study, including the limitations of the study and the research methodology of the study. This chapter outlines the primary and secondary research questions which guide the investigation. An overview of the Irish political context is provided, since this context provides the backdrop to the entirety of this study. Differences between QT in Ireland and Britain are discussed, and a small-scale preliminary study (undertaken for this research) which examines length of speech turn and the number of supplementary questions in both Dáil Éireann and Westminster is described. This chapter also describes the corpora used in this study, including how the corpora have been built and the software used in examining the corpora. This section of chapter 1 also touches on the questions of corpus size and representativeness, before finally addressing ethical and copyright issues which are germane to the study. Chapter 1 illuminates the remainder of the study by clarifying exactly what is to be examined in this study, and how it is to be examined.
Chapters 2 and 3 review the literature which is of significance to this study. Chapter 2 outlines the theoretical background and framework underpinning the study, while chapter 3 describes the context of the study. Chapter 2 focuses initially on politeness, with a particular focus on the facework theories of Brown and Levinson, the concept of impoliteness (Culpeper) and the concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ (Tracy); these theories (in particular Brown and Levinson) will be the primary analytical framework used to examine politeness strategies in Dáil Eireann. The concept of Communities of Practice (CoPs), which is utilised in chapter 7 of this thesis is also discussed. Chapter 2 argues for the feasibility of using some corpus linguistics tools to study language use in Dáil Eireann, and discusses some of the strengths and weaknesses of using corpus linguistics. It also discusses whether a small-scale corpus-based study is a suitable vehicle for linguistic analysis of the language used in the Irish parliament. Chapter 3 gives further background to this study, describing Irish English in some detail, with a particular focus on pragmatics and politeness research to date in that area. It also focuses on parliamentary discourse, and focuses on previous studies into politeness and parliamentary discourse. This chapter helps to situate this research in the on-going dialogue in this particular field of pragmatics.

The following four chapters contain the majority of the findings unveiled by this research, and focus on the three broad aims of the research mentioned in section 1.1. Chapter 4 opens the investigation and answers the question, ‘How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary discourse?’ A brief review of related literature in the area of transcription in parliaments is found in section 4.2. This chapter reveals that the Official Report contains systematic inaccuracies and omissions which make it a somewhat unreliable resource for linguists. In particular, it will be seen that pronoun usage and orality features (such as repetitions, interjections, false starts, etc.) are not recorded in a systematic way by Dáil reporters; it will also be seen that the linguistic tokens analysed in detail in this research appear to be recorded faithfully in the Official Report. This is a reflection on the requirements of the linguist, (when compared with the needs of the historical record), and is also a reflection of the fact that the Official Report is compiled for a readership rather than for a listenership. This chapter lays the groundwork for the following two chapters, which are corpus-based investigations. Chapter 4 suggests that the corpus-based aspect of this research can be considered as based on reliable data. Chapters 5 and 6 contain detailed analysis of the linguistic features chosen
for analysis; ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and ‘yes’ and ‘no’. A brief theoretical background to these tokens is provided at the beginning of chapters 5 and 6. Word list findings for these linguistic tokens are first discussed, before these tokens are examined in the more specific contexts of question (from opposition) followed by response (from government). Corpus findings are examined through a prism of politeness theory, particularly Brown and Levinson’s framework. It will be suggested that the theory of ‘ostensible mitigation’, together with Karen Tracy’s terminology of ‘reasonable hostility’, appears to offer a more satisfactory explanation for how these tokens are used in the parliamentary settings than Brown and Levinson’s framework alone. Findings which indicate differences between the Irish setting and the British setting will also be discussed.

Chapter 7 analyses the same linguistic features as the preceding two chapters, but expands the investigation by examining (via a close reading) entire exchanges which feature these tokens. Random examples of ‘please’, ‘thank you/I thank’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ have been chosen from the corpus, and these exchanges are then examined in terms of some politeness features used in these particular exchanges. Particular attention is paid to face-threatening acts (FTAs) and positive politeness strategies in these exchanges. This investigation reveals that FTAs are used very similarly (almost identically) in both the Irish and British setting, but there is a greater preponderance of positive politeness strategies in the Irish setting, suggesting a significant difference in politeness norms between the Irish setting and the British setting.

Chapter 8 completes and concludes this thesis. Results from the corpus-based investigation in chapters 5 and 6 are merged with results from the investigation into politeness strategies in chapter 7. This helps to provide a more rounded picture of how these politeness tokens are used in Dáil Eireann, and gives some insights into politeness norms in Dáil Eireann, and how these politeness norms differ from politeness norms in Westminster during QT. Final comments and conclusions form the basis of chapter 8, where the original research questions are revisited; results from the corpus-based analysis and the politeness strategies section of this thesis are used to provide appropriate answers and raise final issues for discussion and future consideration.
1.1.3 Overview of the research methodology

The three primary aims of this study, as identified in section 1.1 and in the three primary research questions, are investigated separately in this thesis. The question of the suitability of the Irish Official Report as a corpus linguistic resource is primarily addressed through a preliminary study which investigates the linguistic accuracy of the Official Report. This methodology broadly follows the methodology of Mollin (2007) and Slembrouck (1992), who have produced seminal studies on the linguistic accuracy of the Hansard transcripts in Britain. This preliminary study involved the researcher compiling an exact linguistic transcript of certain Dáil Eireann debates, and comparing these transcripts with the Official Report. To supplement this data, the researcher travelled to Dáil Eireann in order to observe the process behind the production of the Official Report, and also carried out a lengthy interview with an editor of the Official Report. This helps to add an extra dimension to the preliminary study, as well as helping to answer the secondary research question; “what biases are evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors, and how does this affect the final product?” A detailed description of the methodology behind this preliminary study is found in chapter 4, section 4.3 of this research.

Having discussed the first primary research question, the focus of this study moves on to the corpus-based investigation. This study is a comparative study, aimed at comparing a similar discourse event (that is, QT) in different regional settings. Two corpora have been compiled for this research, one compiled from QT exchanges in Dáil Eireann, and one compiled from QT exchanges in Westminster. These are named the QTC (Question Time Corpus/Corpora) throughout this thesis. A detailed description of the QTC and issues related to the construction of the corpora, their size and representativeness and the software used to examine the QTC corpora are found in section 1.4 of this thesis. The QTC were examined in detail for the specific tokens identified as being of interest for this study, with attention paid to word lists, key word findings, and concordances. A detailed examination of corpus findings is revealed in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis.

Chapter 7 extends and expands on these corpus findings by examining some random extracts from the corpora in some detail (extracts which feature the aforementioned tokens), and by identifying some FTAs and some positive politeness strategies in these extracts. This approach places this investigation at the heart of corpus-based discourse studies, which is
distinguished from traditional corpus linguistics by examining corpus-based texts in a number of ways, rather than relying on the corpus (and corpus tools) alone. This approach utilises the benefits of corpus linguistics, while expanding on corpus findings to provide broader insights into language use in this particular discourse event. The random extracts chosen for analysis are described in detail in chapter 7, and a list of FTAs and positive politeness strategies found in these extracts has been compiled. These have been based on previous papers by Bull and Wells (2011) and Chilton (2005), which systematically identified FTAs and positive politeness strategies utilised during QT. These findings are then discussed in some detail. The methodology underpinning the CADS aspect of this research follows a broadly similar methodological framework to recent studies by Partington (2008, 2009, 2010) and Taylor (2011). Taylor, for example, examines the token ‘with respect’ (as well as personal pronoun use) during parliamentary exchanges, in her paper ‘Negative Politeness Forms and Impoliteness Functions in Institutional Discourse; a Corpus-assisted Approach’. Similarly, Alan Partington examines the token ‘just’ in press briefings in his 2009 paper ‘The Armchair and the Machine’. A detailed description of the methodology and research underpinning this aspect of the research can be found in section 7.2 of this thesis.

1.1.4 Limitations of the study

This study is primarily interested in politeness in Dáil Eireann, and in identifying nuances in politeness norms in this Irish English formal, political context. However, the author has also compiled a comparative corpus from QT sessions in the House of Commons, Britain. It is believed that this comparative corpus can provide direct comparisons with the Irish context. In addition, any similarities between the two corpora may give interesting insights into the nature of language in political contexts, specifically national parliaments. Kilgarriff (2001: 98) points to the importance of having a comparative corpus; “If an interesting finding is generated using one corpus, for what other corpus does it hold?” He points out that the corpus linguist should always ask the two questions, “how similar are two corpora?” and, “how different are two corpora?” (2001: 98). There are clearly similarities between QT in different countries (Mollin, 2007; Bayley, 2004), and this study partly follows the methodological approach of Fenton-Smith (2008), who examined QT exchanges in the Australian parliament. However, it should be noted throughout that the primary focus of this study is Irish English, and specifically language use in Dáil Eireann. As such, greater attention is paid in both the literature review sections and the analysis sections to the Irish setting and the Irish data.
Having noted the nature of Dáil debates, Dáil committees and Dáil QT (see section 1.2 for a thorough description of the varying activities which take place in Dáil Eireann), it was decided that the most potentially fruitful data for a study focusing on politeness and Irish English was Question Time (QT). This is primarily because of the more interactive nature of QT compared to debates, and also because Dáil QT is broadly similar in structure and in nature to QT in the House of Commons, enabling a comparative corpus to be built from that setting. In addition, a number of studies in recent years have focused on politeness during QT in Britain, and also on Prime Minister’s QT in Britain – examples include ‘FTAs and Erskine May; Conflicting Needs? Politeness in Question Time’ (de Ayala, 2001), ‘Face, Facework and Political Discourse’ (Bull and Fetzer, 2010), ‘Adversarial Discourse in Prime Minister’s Questions’ (Bull and Wells, 2011), ‘Negative Politeness Forms and Impoliteness Functions in Institutional Discourse: A Corpus-Assisted Approach’ (Taylor, 2011) and ‘Face-threatening Acts and Standing Orders; ‘Politeness’ or ‘Politics’ in Question Time Discussions of the Kenyan Parliament’ (Ambuyo, et al., 2011). This existing, current research has helped to situate this current study in the on-going discussion in this field of pragmatics, and helped the researcher in deciding to limit this research to QT only.

It should be noted that this study is not intended to be an exhaustive or complete taxonomy of facework during QT, in either the Irish or British setting. Facework is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon, and in a study such as this it would be impossible to quantify all of the multiple and overlapping uses of positive and negative facework during a single discourse event. Rather, this research focuses on two specific aspects of facework only (FTAs, and positive politeness strategies aimed at the face of the interlocutor), and examines them closely. The rationale for choosing these particular aspects of facework is outlined in the methodology section of chapter 7 of this thesis. This approach also follows recent research in this field; for example, Taylor (2011) has focused on negative politeness strategies during QT, while Ambuyo et al. (2011) focused on FTAs only during QT in the Kenyan parliament. It should also be emphasised that this study is not intended to be a definitive study of politeness during QT in the two settings. Rather, it illustrates some of the ways in which certain politeness features are used in this setting, and how certain politeness strategies are used in this setting, in an attempt to add to existing research in this area.

A number of features of Irish English (‘Irishisms’, use of Irish words and phrases, reflexive
pronoun use, double or multiple negation, modal verb use, use of discourse markers, responses to yes/no questions) can be seen as relevant to a study of politeness and pragmatics in an Irish English setting. Due to the limitations of a corpus-based study, and due to the transcription issues identified in chapter 4 of this work, grammatical features are not studied in this work; it was decided that the main body of this research should focus on two features identified as being of particular interest to researchers investigating politeness in Irish English; the discourse markers ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ (and the giving and receiving of thanks in Dáil Eireann), as well as the responses to yes/no questions. A more complete justification for the rationale behind this choice can be found in section 3.4 of this thesis.

This thesis utilizes a comparative approach, and the only data utilized in this study are the two corpora built by the researcher for the purposes of this study. It is acknowledged that aspects of this study would benefit from ‘control’ data (i.e. non-parliamentary data). For instance, in chapters 5 and 6, there are occasional references to the ‘greater formality’ of parliamentary discourse, which could be further enhanced by reference to non-parliamentary data. This is also discussed in chapter 4 (section 4.3), where the pilot study on transcription and the Official Report could have been supplemented with reference to the SPICE-Ireland corpus. There are a number of excellent resources which could have been used as control data to be compared with the QTC. For example, the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (LCIE) and the SPICE-Ireland corpus are large-scale resources which are invaluable to the scholar studying Irish English. However, in part due to considerations of time and space, as well as the specific research questions examined for this study, control data has not been utilized. This comparative approach (without reference to external control data) has been followed in many previous studies in the areas of politeness and parliamentary discourse (Harris, 2003; Moumni, 2005; Bull and Wells, 2010; Bull and Wells, 2011), which acknowledge this limitation, while also pointing to the specialized nature of the discourse events that take place in parliamentary settings. This is further discussed in the concluding chapter, under the ‘future research’ section (section 8.3).

Finally, the concept of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) should be mentioned at this point. “In parliamentary systems debate is generally constructed in terms of a conflict between government and opposition” (Bayley, 2004: 3). It is clear that the notion of power is of importance when looking at parliamentary discourse. Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), a term coined by Fairclough (1992, 1995, 2001), looks on discourse as a political, social and
cultural construct; it is concerned with examining power, and how power is related to discourse. “Critical discourse analysis is a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context” (Van Dijk, 2001, 352). Power is, of course, highly significant in political discourse, and CDA has often been used in analysing political discourse – perhaps most notably in the work of Fairclough (2001) and Chilton (2004). Other significant works in which CDA is utilised to examine language in parliamentary settings include recent papers by Bhatia (2006), Blas-Arroyo (2000, 2003) Lorda and Miche (2006), and Lorenzo-Duz (2005, 2006), as well as a recent book by Wodak (2009). How interlocutors in the setting of QT remain polite or use politeness techniques, despite differing access to power, is a fascinating question. However, it must be noted that as a pragmatic analysis primarily based on a corpus, this research is not directly concerned with Critical Discourse Analysis, and CDA will only be referred to in passing during this research.

1.1.5 Software used in this research

Corpus software has a number of advantages for users: it produces word lists and counts occurrences of individual search items, it allows for the presentation and (re)organisation of data in a way that facilitates the identification of patterns, it automatically produces cluster and collocation lists, and most software has a keyword tool, which allows a comparison of lexis between corpora to identify relatively significant items. In this way it becomes easier to comment on the collocation, colligation, semantic preference (Sinclair 1996), and semantic prosody (Louw 1993) of lexico-grammatical items

(Farr, 2005a: 132).

This research has been carried out using Wordsmith 4, corpus analysis software developed by Mike Scott which has been in use since 2004. Since this research was begun, a newer version (Wordsmith 5) of the software has been developed – this was made available to the public in 2010. Although Wordsmith 5 has a number of advantages over Wordsmith 4, it is believed that Wordsmith 4 is sufficient for the purposes of the research carried out here. There are three basic tools which Wordsmith 4 utilises; word lists (that is, frequency lists), key word lists, and concordances. Key word lists directly compare lists of frequently found words between two corpora, and notice significant differences and similarities; “A key-word list includes items that are either significantly frequent (positive key words) or infrequent (negative key words), and is a useful starting point for many corpus linguistic analyses”
Evison notes that the two most significant features of a corpus study are the production of frequency lists (a list of how often a particular item appears in a corpus) and the production of concordances (what does a particular item appear with? In what context does the item appear?). “These two basic operations represent two core corpus-handling techniques, but of course, simply counting items or displaying their occurrences does not actually tell us anything in itself; it is the associated analysis, which may be both quantitative and qualitative, which provides the insights” (2010: 122). One of the limits of frequency lists is that they do not take into consideration lemmas (‘smile’ ‘smiles’ ‘smiling’ ‘smiled’) are all counted separately – although the newest version of Wordsmith, Wordsmith 5, now recognises lemmas. Frequency lists are most useful when two corpora are compared side by side, in order to see points of similarity and points of difference. When comparing frequency counts across corpora of different sizes, a process of normalisation is required. The most common method of normalisation is to calculate an item according to its appearance per million words (McEnery et al., 2006:52). This method has been followed in this research, due to the differing sizes of the QTC for Ireland and the QTC for Britain. This approach has been followed with all word list searches and concordances here.

Concordancing is a valuable analytical technique because it allows a large number of examples of an item to be brought together in one place, in their original context. It is useful both for hypothesis testing and for hypothesis generation. In the case of the latter, a hypothesis can be generated based on patterns observed in just a small number of lines, and subsequently tested out through further searches (Evison, 2010: 129).

One needs to be careful when looking at tokens (words) in a corpus, because words standing alone can be interpreted in many different ways; the token ‘can’ may be either a noun or a verb, for example. Concordance searches place words in context, which allows the researcher to search for patterns of usage, as well as clarifying exactly what definition of a word is being used. Partington (2003: 24) cites an amusing example of the value of concordance searches from his own research into political language in Britain and the United States; in this research, the word ‘strikes’ appeared far more often in his American (White House) data than in the British (House of Commons) data. This puzzled him initially, since there was considerable industrial unrest in Britain at that particular time. However, a concordance search with the word ‘strike’ quickly revealed that in the US data the word collocated frequently with ‘air’, ‘NATO’, and ‘bombing’. Further reflection on the context revealed that
at the time of data collection, the US was leading NATO action in Kosovo, thus accounting for the higher frequency of ‘strikes’ in the American data. This illustrative example points to both the dangers and opportunities of using corpus linguistics to research language use in a political context, and highlights the value of concordance tools (and the value of co-text strategies) in order to keep the original context to the fore at all times.

1.1.6 Ethical and copyright issues

Permission was granted by the University of Limerick Ethics committee to proceed with this research in February 2009. A copy of all correspondence between the researcher and the Ethics Committee can be found in Appendix C of this thesis, as well as a copy of consent forms completed by the interviewee in chapter 4 of this thesis (an Official Report editor). At the request of the Ethics Committee, this interviewee clarified that she was permitted to discuss the production of the Official Report, and that there were no legal issues surrounding a Dáil Éireann Official Report editor speaking to a researcher. This editor was fully informed about the aim and nature of this study, and was told in advance about the nature of the interview. Participation in the study was voluntary, and she was free to withdraw at any time. Her anonymity has been fully guaranteed. The interviewee was informed that interviews would be audio-taped and that these recordings would be destroyed after the research was completed. Only the researcher had access to these tapes, and it was stated that the audio-taped material would only be used for the purpose of this research. The confidentiality of the interviewee was guaranteed.

In terms of copyright, a number of corpus researchers have noted the significance of copyright issues when building a corpus for the researcher’s own purposes (McEnery et al., 2006; McEnery and Wilson, 1996; Biber et al., 1998; Sinclair, 1996). However, the fact that all parliamentary transcripts in Ireland and Britain are part of the public record means that copyright issues are not relevant to this study. Indeed, the House of Commons Information Office officially notes that Hansard “may be reproduced for purposes of private study or research without permission”. This was also confirmed to the researcher by administrators in Dáil Éireann.
1.2 Overview of the Irish political context

A glossary of terms related to the Irish political context, as well as a list of the most frequent speakers during the QTC (and their positions in Dáil Eireann at that time) can be found in appendix B of this thesis.

1.2.1 The Irish Political System

Due in large part to its historical origins as well as its adversarial form of political engagement, the Houses of the Oireachtas are firmly positioned within the Westminster ‘family’ or cluster of legislatures, alongside those of Australia, Canada, India and other former British colonies (Manning, 2010: 36).

Bayley (2004: 20) has noted that a thorough awareness and description of the unique political context of a particular country is vital to linguists examining political language in that country, even if that importance is not immediately apparent. He notes that issues such as whether a parliament is unicameral or bicameral, and the system of voting (proportional representation or first-past-the-post, for example) can have an important, if unconscious, effect on the linguistic behaviour of politicians. Despite the fact that Dáil Eireann is a relatively young institution (Murphy, 2006: 437), the long term economic and social processes which have formed the Ireland of today have produced a society in which uniquely ‘Irish’ political cultural values are likely to flourish (Coakley, 2010: 28; also Collins and Cradden, 2001: 1: also Girvan, 1986: 3). It is all the more surprising, then, that to date there has been few linguistic studies of language used in Dáil Eireann; this study hopes to rectify that situation somewhat. Before examining language use in the national parliament of Ireland, then, an overview of the Irish political system is necessary.

The Irish political system is largely based on the British liberal democratic system, in which a government is chosen by a parliament (Dinan, 1986: 74).

Given the centuries-long British rule on this island, it is not surprising that the legacy of British rule has left a lasting imprint on the Irish political mentality. Whether or not Ireland was a willing participant, Britain bequeathed to its neighbouring island its dominant language, much of its culture, many of its social practices and [. . .] its political vocabulary, concepts, institutions and patterns of behaviour (Coakley, 2010: 47).
The Irish parliament derives its power from the constitution of 1937, which replaced the constitution of 1922; this 1922 constitution was based on the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 (Fitzgerald, 2003: 40). The 1937 constitution provides Ireland with a bicameral system of government; the two houses of the Irish parliament (Oireachtas) are the Dáil (the lower house) and the Seanad (the upper house). The power of the Seanad is limited, and the Dáil is essentially where policy is debated and made. According to Gallagher (2010), the Dáil essentially follows the “Westminster model” for a national parliament; that is, the parliament is seen as a “forum” where government proposals can be discussed; “the government gets to justify its measure, and the opposition gets the chance to make the case against it” (Gallagher, 1992: 115). The Dáil, then, has three major functions; to appoint and dismiss a government, to make laws (in the form of bills), and to “scrutinize the executive” (Murphy, 2006: 438).

Gallagher (2010a: 73) notes that the Irish system of government, although similar in many respects to the Westminster model, has been different from Westminster since the foundation of the Irish state in 1922. Gallagher notes that the founders of the Irish state were anxious to avoid an over-centralisation of power in the cabinet, and wanted to make the Irish parliament more accountable to the people (and in turn the government more accountable to the parliament) than the Westminster model allows. For this reason, Ireland utilised a proportional representation electoral system, in contrast with the British single member plurality system (colloquially known as ‘first past the post’). Today, Ireland utilises a proportional representation, single transferable vote system (PR-STV), which is almost unique to Ireland – within Europe, only Malta has a similar system. The dissimilarity in electoral systems is a key difference between the Irish and British political systems. According to Sinnott (2010: 124), the PR-STV system leads to much more proportional election outcomes at national level than ‘first past the post’ systems. In this way, the PR-STV system can be seen as ‘fairer’ than the British system. On the other hand, PR-STV is also seen as leading to a proliferation of political parties, and thus to political stalemate or instability. It has also been argued that the PR-STV system encourages politicians to spend too much time in constituency work, and not enough time to their national responsibilities. The difference between PR-STV and ‘first past the post’ may well have an effect on politeness norms in the national parliaments of Ireland and Britain. Coalition governments are much more likely to occur under PR-STV (Sinnott, 2010), which may well have an effect on how face-threatening language is used during QT.
As well as the differences in electoral systems between Ireland and Britain, Coakley identifies some of the distinctive aspects of Irish political culture as follows; separatism, nationalism, a culture of political violence, authoritarianism, conformism and what he calls ‘personalism’. The first three of these features may be accounted for with reference to Ireland’s troubled colonial history; indeed, there is an inherent contradiction at the heart of much of Irish politics which Coakley observes; “We may note the paradoxical link between political opposition to British interference in Ireland and strong, if not uncritical, admiration of the British way of political life” (Coakley, 2010: 59). Coakley suggests that authoritarianism and conformism are significant features in Ireland due to the rural, agrarian nature of Ireland, and the overwhelming importance of the Catholic Church for much of Ireland’s history. The final characteristic of Irish political life identified by Coakley, ‘personalism’, is arguably the most interesting, certainly in regard to this study. It essentially refers to a pattern of social relations where people are valued for who they are and whom they know, rather than being valued for the position they hold or the qualifications they may have. The central aspects of this personalism are a closely integrated pattern of social and political relationships, and often lead to brokerage politics – not always with positive consequences, of course. This, according to Coakley, is similar to other cultures (such as Southern Italy) which also have historically close familial ties, low levels of economic development, a strong religious culture, rural heritage and a history of external rule. Although Coakley and other researchers (Gallaher, 2010a, 2010b; Girvan, 1986; Dinan, 1986) have pointed to these distinctive features of Irish political culture, it should be remembered, that, on the whole, there are many similarities between the two settings; indeed, these are arguably much more significant than the distinctive differences between Irish political culture and British political culture.

1.2.2 Question Time (QT) in Ireland

In Dáil Eireann, one hour each day is set aside for a government minister to be questioned on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Ministers take it in turn to be questioned, and some questions are replied to by a minister of state, or junior minister. The rota of ministers repeats every five weeks. In addition to the Ministerial questioning, the Taoiseach is questioned for 45 minutes each Tuesday and Thursday. Therefore, there is four and a half hours of parliamentary questions in Dáil Eireann each week. Questions must be put down four
working days before the relevant minister’s QT session. In addition, a minister must be prepared to answer ‘other questions’, which are not tabled four days in advance; these can be tabled up to the morning of a QT session. Sometimes a very urgent matter of public importance will suddenly arise. The Ceann Comhairle may accept questions about an urgent issue at very short notice. These questions are called ‘private notice questions’ and are taken at the end of QT. Questions for the Taoiseach do not have to be submitted in advance. In practice, a minister’s initial reply to questions is almost always read from a prepared script, often prepared by departmental civil servants. TDs can respond to the minister’s reply by asking supplementary questions, and a somewhat spontaneous exchange then occurs. There is a time limit of six minutes allotted to each question, which means that exchanges (after the initial scripted reply by the minister) tend to be relatively brisk, certainly in comparison to parliamentary debates, where turns are much longer, and almost always scripted (although not as brisk as answers in the British setting, which is discussed in the following section).

Gallagher (2010: 217) notes that QT in Dáil Éireann is “highly politicised”; questions are put to ministers and the Taoiseach not (necessarily) to gain information, but rather in an attempt to embarrass the government or the relevant minister. Gallagher notes that “ministers treat question time in the same spirit, aiming to give away as little as possible. The culture is one of concealment, not of openness” (2010: 217). A senior civil servant appearing before a tribunal of inquiry during the 1990s explained to the tribunal that ministers have a deliberate policy (when answering questions during QT) of answering questions, but not giving extra information. It should also be noted that there are some differences between QT and scheduled debates which are of relevance to this study. A key difference is that during debates, the minister is entitled to have civil servants pass him or her relevant documents during the exchange. During QT, the minister must speak *extempore* after his initial (scripted) response, without the benefit of input from civil servants. This, of course, makes QT a much more spontaneous and natural exchange than debates. In addition, the time allotted to each question during QT is limited to six minutes; this enables a wide variety of participants to speak during QT, compared with Dáil debates. Although QT in Dáil Éireann is similar to (indeed, is descended from) QT in Westminster, there are some significant differences between QT in these settings.
1.2.3 Differences between QT in Ireland and Britain

QT in Ireland and in Britain functions as a tool of parliamentary accountability. This is made explicit by the House of Commons Information Office; “Parliamentary questions are tools that can be used by Members of Parliament to seek information or press for action. They oblige Ministers to explain and defend their work, policy decisions and actions of their Departments” (2008: 2). QT is effective in highlighting, probing and evaluating government policies, and ministerial decisions and performance. It should be noted, however, that it is not designed to monitor (scrupulously and regularly) government policies – that is the function of the committee system in the Oireachtas and the House of Commons. QT, then, it could be argued, has largely a performative function – the actual performance of questioning (and answering) is the key to its function. This, of course, makes it a unique discourse event, which has linguistic and performance characteristics quite distinct to this particular event, and this makes politeness norms in this setting particularly interesting for the linguist, as can be seen from the number of studies in recent years on politeness during QT (Bull and Wells, 2011; Ambuyo, et al., 2011; Bull and Fetzer, 2010, de Ayala, 2001).

“In choosing a corpus to compare with one’s main foreground corpus it is vital, first of all, to compare like with like and, second, to be aware of and in control of the differences that inevitably exist between them, in relation to the aim of comparison” (Partington, 2003: 21). QT in Britain is similar in many respects to QT in Ireland. In Britain, QT has been recognised since 1869, and Prime Minister’s QT since 1961. QT takes place on Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, for either 40 minutes or 60 minutes. Prime Minister’s QT takes place on Wednesdays, for 30 minutes. Questions are tabled three working days in advance of QT. As with the Irish setting, supplementary questions may be asked by the original questioner, which leads to a more spontaneous exchange. After the scheduled questions have been asked, MPs have the opportunity to ask the minister ‘topical questions’; these are open, unscheduled questions, which have not been tabled in advance. There is usually 10 minutes allocated to topical questions at the end of each QT in Westminster (House of Commons Information Office, 2008: 8).

Clearly, there are strong similarities between QT in Westminster and QT in Dáil Eireann. This is undoubtedly due to the fact that the Irish parliament developed from the British parliament, and broadly follows British parliamentary procedure. There are, however, some
significant differences between the two discourse events which need to be borne in mind when building comparative corpora for linguistic research. Firstly, speech turns in the British setting are kept notably shorter than in the Irish setting. Whereas 6 minutes are allocated to each tabled question in Dáil Eireann, the time scheduled for each question in the House of Commons is just over 2 minutes (25 questions per one hour session). There is a strictly observed convention in the House of Commons that speech turns should be no longer than 2 to 3 sentences in length (both questions and replies). MPs are explicitly told that, in preparing questions, they “must not offer or seek expressions of opinion; must not convey information nor advance a proposition, an argument or debate” (House of Commons Information Office, 2008: 3). These guidelines are not made explicit to Dáil Eireann deputies, and questions (and replies) are notably longer in the Irish setting. This is evident from a glance at the transcripts from both settings.

In order to prove the hypothesis that speech turns are much briefer in the British setting, the researcher compared a QT session in Westminster with a QT session in Dáil Eireann. On Tuesday, February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, 2010, QT in the House of Commons was with the Chancellor of the Exchequer. There were 15 oral questions tabled for this QT session. These were followed by a total of 33 supplementary questions, or an average of just over 2 supplementary questions per tabled question. There were a total of 21 topical questions asked during this QT session. The researcher has removed the tabled questions in compiling this corpus (see section 1.3 of this thesis), which means that the corpus data from this date includes 54 questions in total. The following day, on February 3\textsuperscript{rd}, 2010, the Minister for Finance in Dáil Eireann faced questions – a directly analogous QT event. During this event, there were 5 tabled questions, and 4 other questions. Following on from these, 29 supplementary questions were asked – an average of just over 3 supplementary questions per tabled question. The number of questions asked, therefore, during the Irish QT, was significantly less than in the British setting. In addition, the researcher also looked at speech lengths during the two QT sessions discussed here. During the British QT on February 2\textsuperscript{nd}, the average length of speech turn was 5 lines of text. During the Irish QT on February 3rd, the average length of speech turn was 12 lines of text. Clearly, there is a significant difference in length of speech turn between the two settings. This is something the Corpus Linguist should be aware of; it may distort frequency findings, and it reinforces the need for the corpus linguist comparing these two discourse events to use words-per-million comparisons when looking at frequency figures during QT.
There is one other significant difference between the discourse events of QT in Dáil Eireann and QT in the House of Commons which discourse analysts should be aware of. Fenton-Smith (2008), in his comparative study of QT in Britain and Australia, points out the significance of questions which are posed by members of the government’s own party, or supporters of the government. He notes that these ‘friendly’ questions may well be entirely set up in advance. Clearly, this is of particular importance to a study such as this one, which is focused on politeness and face-threatening acts during QT. It should be noted that (partly due to the lengthy turns and fewer questions found in the Irish setting) very few questions in the Irish setting originate from the government benches – there are, in fact, no more than a handful in the six months of Dáil Eireann QT compiled here. This is in direct contrast with the British setting. The researcher examined again the QT sessions of February 2nd/3rd, in order to confirm this hypothesis. In the Irish QT, on February 3rd, all questions asked (tabled questions, supplementary questions and other questions) were asked by opposition deputies. In the British QT, on February 2nd, of the total of 69 questions (tabled questions, supplementary questions, and topical questions), 18 were asked by Labour deputies, presumably friendly questions to the (Labour) government of the day. This is a significant difference between the Irish and the British setting, and it is certainly something that research into politeness in both settings should bear in mind. This finding has been noted by the researcher, and is taken into account when discussing findings from the corpus analysis.

In both QTCs, certain thematic similarities can be found; financial and economic affairs were significant topics for discussion in both settings. Other topics which were discussed in both settings during the period in question included alleged misuse of Irish and British passports by Israel, responses to cold weather and related subjects, and responses to the large earthquake in Haiti. In the British data, topics related to Afghanistan and Iraq also featured prominently; in the Irish data local controversies relating to alleged misuse of the government jet, as well as the resignation of the Minister for Defence, Willie O’Dea, feature prominently. Because these corpora were compiled from QT sessions, there is a regular rotation of speakers throughout the corpus; this is further emphasised in the Irish data by the fact that there were two cabinet reshuffles during the six months analysed. In the Irish setting, the Fianna Fáil/Green Party government is most often represented by Brian Cowen (Taoiseach) and Mary Coughlan (Tánaiste). All ministers are either from Fianna Fáil or the Green Party. The opposition is led by Enda Kenny (Fine Gael), Eamon Gilmore (Labour Party) and Caoimhín Ó’Caoláin (Sinn Fein). In Britain, the Prime Minister was Gordon Brown (Labour
Party), and the opposition were led by David Cameron (Conservative Party) and Nick Clegg (Liberal Democratic Party). A list of frequent speakers in the QTCs can be found in appendix B of this thesis. Because Taoiseach’s QT and Prime Minister’s QT have been included in the QTC corpora, these speakers appear more frequently in the data than other speakers (See section 3.3 of this thesis for a review of related literature on linguistics, politeness and QT).

1.3 The QTC corpora

“Corpus building is of necessity a marriage of perfection and pragmatism” (McEnery et al., 2006: 73). The Question Time corpus (QTC) for Ireland was compiled from the Official Report transcripts for QT for 6 months, from January to June 2010. The researcher downloaded the transcripts from the internet, where they are available free to view, then copied and pasted these transcripts into a Microsoft Word document. At that stage, all speakers were tagged, and all extraneous material from the Official Report was removed. This material included anything that was not actually spoken during QT, such as time symbols (the Official Report notes the time on the hour every hour), question numbers, internet links to external pages, and extra material included in the Official Report which was not actually spoken in the parliamentary chamber (for instance, charts and statistics which are disseminated by a minister). The researcher also did not include the original tabled oral questions, since these are not actually spoken in the chamber; they are merely read into the record. It is also important to note here that in Dáil Éireann all questions related to Gaeltacht affairs and the Irish language are traditionally asked and answered in the Irish language. These have also been omitted from the QTC for Ireland. However, when a Dáil deputy breaks into Irish during an English speaking turn, this has been included in the data; such code-switching may have an important politeness function, and are examined briefly in the corpus analysis contained in this research.

Following on from this editing, cutting and pasting, the Microsoft Word document was then converted into Plain Text format, and from there stored onto disc. The QTC was compiled entirely by the researcher, during the latter half of 2010. It is believed that by compiling the QTC himself, the researcher has a greater familiarity with the material, and can find illustrative examples more easily. Alan Partington (2009) has mentioned that CADS researchers who have close engagement with the compiling of their corpus tend to have an
advantage over corpus researchers who are using pre-existing corpora, and he suggests that the building of specialised corpora by a researcher is often a central feature of CADS research. In addition, this familiarity with the original texts can help the researcher in his use of co-text strategies. A similar methodology was followed when compiling the comparative corpus, based on QT in the House of Commons; again, the original tabled questions (which are read aloud in the House) were excluded from the corpus, in order to compile a corpus of spoken data only. However, the British corpus is 3 months in length; it was compiled from January to March 2010. It is believed that, because the British corpus is primarily used for comparative data, it is not necessary for it to be of the same length as the Irish corpus. In addition, a general election was called in Britain during April 2010, meaning that an exactly analogous six-month corpus could not be compiled for the British data.

1.3.1 Corpus size and representativeness

“The question of corpus size is a difficult one. There is not a specific number of words that answers this question. It is not a case of one size fits all” (Reppen, 2010: 31). The question of corpus size is closely linked with the question of representativeness, and with the specific aims of one’s research; “The size of the corpus needed depends upon the purpose for which it is intended as well as a number of practical considerations” (McEnery et al., 2006: 71). A corpus should be as representative as possible of the discourse event it is attempting to capture. Because the two corpora compiled for this research are of a highly specialised and somewhat unique discourse event, the problem of representativeness is greatly diminished; “the more highly specialised the language to be sampled in the corpus, the fewer will be the problems in defining the texts to be sampled” (Atkins, et al., 1992: 8). Biber (1993: 244) points to the size of a corpus as being significant when one speaks of a corpus being representative of a language or a discourse event. The QTC corpora compiled by the researcher are quite large in size (almost one million words, in the case of the Irish QTC), which argues strongly for their representativeness. The Irish QTC is six months in length, comprising 56 Question Times, which includes 37 Taoiseach’s Questions. The British corpus is three months in length, comprising 44 QTs, including 10 Prime Minister’s Questions. The Irish data is 936,865 words in length, and consists of approximately 81 hours of speaking time. The British data is 429,252 words in length, and consists of approximately 36 hours of speaking time. A complete index of the QTs used for building the corpora (including dates, individual word counts and primary speakers) is included in Appendix B of this thesis.
“Corpus size is determined by capturing enough of the language for accurate representation” (Reppen, 2010: 32). Two relevant examples from past corpus studies into Irish English indicate that the QTC corpus is certainly large enough. Vaughan (2009) examined humour in English language teacher meetings in Ireland – her corpus was 40,000 words in size. Farr (2005a) examined teacher training feedback sessions in Ireland, and her corpus was 81,000 words in size. Both of these corpora were recorded, transcribed and compiled entirely by the authors themselves, which accounts for their relatively small size in comparison with the QTC, which relies on existing transcripts. Both Farr and Vaughan argue that the specific nature of the questions being examined in their research, together with the very specific professional and cultural context being examined, mean that the small size of the corpus is justified and justifiable. It is believed that the same assumptions hold true for this research; given the unique nature of QT interactions, the fact that the corpora have been built by the researcher himself, and the relatively large size of the Irish QTC in particular, it is assumed the QTC corpora on which this research is based can be considered representative of QT interactions.
Chapter 2 – Theoretical background and framework

Politeness is not something we are born with, but something we have to learn and be socialised into (Watts, 2003: 9).

[Corpus Linguistics] is empirical, analysing actual patterns of use of a language in natural texts. It utilises a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a corpus as the basis for analysis. It makes extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques. It depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques. (Biber et al., 1998:4)

This chapter introduces relevant issues in the areas of both politeness and Corpus Linguistics, which inform the analytical chapters of this thesis. It also introduces the concept of Communities of Practice (CoP) which is part of the theoretical framework underpinning this research, and which is referred to in chapter 7 of this thesis. All of these areas are of course extremely broad in scope, with huge amounts of material being written on all three – indeed, there are specific journals dedicated to both politeness and corpus linguistics. For example the Journal of Politeness Research is specifically related to the area of politeness, while journals such as Corpora and the International Journal of Corpus Linguistics are international journals which are dedicated to corpus-based research. This literature review offers a brief overview of politeness, and discusses why Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is the central theoretical framework used in this study. Particular attention is paid to the concepts of positive and negative face, and face-threatening acts (FTAs), which are utilised in chapter 7 of this thesis when extracts from Dáil Eireann and Westminster are examined in detail. As well as Politeness Theory and Speech Act Theory, two recent frameworks for examining politeness are discussed in chapters 5, 6 and 7, and these are discussed in some detail in this chapter: Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ and
the impoliteness research of Jonathan Culpeper. A discussion of politeness in Irish English, as well as a more detailed discussion of politeness in political discourse, with a particular focus on politeness during Question Time (QT) can be found in chapter 3 of this thesis, following on from discussions on Irish English and political discourse in that chapter.

This chapter also argues for the feasibility of using a corpus linguistics framework to study some aspects of linguistic behaviour in Dáil Eireann, and examines some of the strengths and weaknesses of this approach. It discusses whether a small-scale corpus-based study is a suitable vehicle for linguistic analysis of the language used in the Irish parliament. This chapter also examines the relationship between corpus linguistics and discourse analysis. Finally, this chapter discusses corpus linguistics and politeness studies. Some difficulties with approaching politeness (and pragmatics generally) through a corpus linguistics framework are addressed, and some solutions to these potential problems are also discussed. The theoretical framework outlined in this chapter is supplemented by the following chapter, which outlines the context of this study (by focusing on Irish English, and also on parliamentary language). Chapter 3 also draws on material from this chapter in section 3.3, which focuses on (im)politeness and parliamentary language, with a particular focus on QT.

2.1 Politeness theory

2.1.1 Introduction and background to politeness theory

There have been numerous attempts to define linguistic politeness. Lakoff (1975) suggests that politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction. Leech later (1980: 19) calls it “strategic conflict avoidance”. Fraser and Nolan (1981) claim it is focused on the notion of conversational contract, which maintains that every individual, on entering a social interaction, must recognise a set of rules and obligations which indicate how s/he is meant to behave. Hill et al. (1986) define politeness as “one of the constraints on human interaction, whose purpose is to consider others’ feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and establish rapport”. Another well-known definition emphasises the notion of smoothness; “politeness is developed by societies in order to reduce friction in personal interaction” (Lakoff, 1975: 64). More recently, Watts (2004: xii) suggests it is “a set of strategies to achieve social goals with a minimum of social friction”.

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Notions of politeness and face were formulated most notably by Goffman (1967), Lakoff (1973), Grice (1975), and Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987). The concept of ‘face’, as defined by Goffman, is central to politeness research. Goffman (1967:5) states, “the term face may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact”. If unfolding events transpire to create a face that is better than that expected it will result in feeling good, if they create a face worse than expected then the person will feel bad or hurt. Therefore, face is located within the flow of interactional events. Most crucially Goffman exemplifies the concept of ‘face-work’, which is needed in order to maintain equilibrium when threats are imminent or have occurred. In Goffman’s model there are three types of face-work; ‘Avoidance’, includes strategies such as operating through intermediaries, withdrawing, steering clear of topics, modesty, signals of respect, discretion, ambiguity, humour, providing explanation and excuse. The second kind of face-work employed is part of the ‘corrective process’, which is needed when participants fail to avoid the threat. Goffman cites this process as a ritualistic one, which is bound by social and cultural norms. In his model there are four characteristic moves in corrective interchanges: challenge (calling attention to the threat), offering (an apology etc.), accepting (the offering), and gratitude (to those who have forgiven). Goffman’s third type of face-work is what he called ‘making points’, that is, the aggressive use of facework. This is discussed primarily in Goffman’s 1967 essay ‘Where the Action Is’. The focus of this essay is incidents where interactants deliberately antagonise each other, in order to force the other party to back down.

Fundamental to modern-day politeness theory is the work of H.P. Grice, who formulated what he called a ‘co-operative principle’ for communication (1969, 1975). This principle consists of four maxims to which interactants in a conversation should adhere. These maxims are;

The Maxims

**Quantity**
Make your contribution as informative as is required
Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

**Quality**
Do not say what you believe to be false
Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence
Grice pioneered the inferential approach to conversation, which basically states that the interpretation of utterances is a collaborative enterprise between speaker and hearer. Sperber and Wilson (1995) have qualified the Gricean framework somewhat, stating that the principle of relevance is the overriding principle. Nevertheless, these ‘Gricean maxims’ are referred to throughout this research, and are fundamental to modern-day work on politeness studies. Grice’s theory of implicature is significant for understanding the work of Brown and Levinson. Essentially, the idea of implicature suggests that even when the Gricean maxims are seemingly being ‘flouted’, they are being followed at some deeper level, which is understood by the interactants in an exchange.

2.1.2 Speech Act Theory

_Speech Act Theory_, devised by Austin (1962) and further refined by Searle (1969, 1975) is closely related to politeness theory, and developed more-or-less simultaneously with the work of Goffmann. Austin (1962) proposed a theory of speech acts in his book entitled _How to Do Things with Words_. The ideas presented in this publication were subsequently developed by Searle (1969, 1975). Austin draws a basic distinction between ‘constatives’, declarative statements whose truth or falsity can be judged (e.g., ‘the dog is alive’), and ‘performatives’, utterances which simultaneously state and do an action. In these cases “the uttering of the sentence is, or is a part of, the doing of an action, which again would not _normally_ be described as, or as ‘just’, saying something” (Austin 1962: 5). Austin provides the following examples; ‘I give and bequeath my watch to my brother’ (in a will), and also, ‘I bet you sixpence it will rain tomorrow’. For utterances to be considered performative they must meet certain conditions, known as ‘felicity conditions’. This treats each utterance as a series of ‘acts’, each comprised of the intention of the speaker (the ‘illocutionary force’) and the effect on the hearer (the ‘perlocutionary force’). The effect on the hearer may not always match the intent of the speaker and the intended force may differ from its apparent form (or ‘locution’).
Having made this constative/performative distinction, Austin rationalises why it cannot be maintained - because both “involve truth and falsity; both are felicitous or infelicitous in relation to the conditions in which they occur; both are realized through a variety of forms that can be rewritten in terms of a performative formula” (Schiffrin 1994:53). However, performative verbs retain a central role in Austin’s framework, and perhaps even more significant is his functional differentiation of speech acts. He postulates hundreds of possible functions of speech acts, for example, orders, requests, criticisms, apologies etc. Searle (1975) later regroups these into fewer basic categories. Such forces are a constant factor in the linguistic interactions which take place in all national parliaments, because of the concern with the (third-party) audience. “We must be able to say not only how polite an utterance is, but why a particular device of indirectness contributes to a particular illocutionary goal” (Leech, cited in Coulthard, 1985: 53).

The idea of ostensible mitigation (Isaacs and Clark, 1990; also Link and Kreuz, 2005) may be significant when studying politeness in political discourse – this is a (relatively) recent framework which builds on Speech Act Theory. Ostensible speech acts (OSAs) occur when a speaker appears to perform a particular speech act (e.g., an apology or a request), but the speaker is not being serious and the addressee knows this. OSAs consist of five defining features:

(a) pretence,
(b) mutual recognition,
(c) collusion,
(d) ambivalence
(e) off-record purpose.

Isaacs and Clark (1990) also found that OSAs are often accompanied by certain characteristics that are less likely to be associated with sincere speech acts. In terms of politeness, the most significant of these characteristics is the use of hedges. Searle (1969) suggested that in order for a speech act to be successfully performed, three types of conditions must be met. These include a sincerity condition, an essential condition, and one or more preparatory conditions. Isaacs and Clark (1990) considered such phrases as “I guess” and “if you want” as hedges in ostensible invitations. This concept of ‘ostensible’ speech acts was further developed in 2005 in a paper by Link and Kreuz, entitled ‘The Comprehension of
Ostensible Speech Acts’. This paper supported the findings of Isaacs and Clark, which defined the features of ostensible speech acts, mentioned above. Link and Kreuz further delineated speech acts into sincere, ambiguous and ostensible speech acts, and noted that the appearance of the defining features of OSAs helped speakers to distinguish between these three categories of speech acts.

A number of studies related to politeness in parliamentary discourse use Speech Act Theory to underpin their studies (often in conjunction with other theories). For instance, Cornelia Ilie (2010) has written on ‘Speech Acts and Rhetorical Questions in Parliamentary Question Time’, while Sandra Harris (2003) has examined the use of ‘request tokens’ during QT, utilising the terminology of Speech Act Theory. In recent years, much of the research on political language has focused on apologies and insults. For example, in 2006, Harris et al. published a paper on ‘The Pragmatics of Political Apologies’, which noted that “there has been relatively little interest in political apologies in sociolinguistics and pragmatics” (2006: 716). They note also that there has been almost no linguistic research done on ‘public’ apologies, in institutional or professional contexts, and that research on apologies is much influenced by politeness theory. In a similar vein, Kampf (2008) has written a significant paper on ‘The Pragmatics of Forgiveness; Judgements of Apologies in the Israeli Political Arena’. All of these papers use Speech Act Theory as an underlying framework for their analysis. Although the primary framework utilised in this research is Brown and Levinson’s notion of positive and negative face (discussed in the following section), Speech Act Theory is also referred to throughout the analysis in this research.

2.1.3 Brown and Levinson

The most influential theory of linguistic politeness was published in 1978 by Brown and Levinson, primarily building on Goffman’s notion of face (1967), as well as being influenced by the work of Austin, Searle and Grice (discussed in the previous section). Harris (2001: 452) has noted that this research “has acquired canonical status and exerted immense influence”. Brown and Levinson claim politeness as a linguistic universal. They propose that every individual has two types of face, positive and negative. Positive face can be defined as the desire to be approved of in social interaction, while negative face can be defined as the desire for freedom from imposition. In all interactions ‘facework’ is needed, in order to reduce ‘face-threat’ (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987). All actions, according to this theory,
are to some degree face-threatening, and Brown and Levinson suggest five ‘politeness strategies’ available to interlocutors in a conversation;

a) don’t do the face-threatening act
b) redress the face-threatening act by attending to the hearer’s negative face needs
c) redress the face-threatening act by attending to the hearer’s positive face needs
d) perform the face-threatening act in an ‘off-record’ manner
e) do the face-threatening act baldly and on-record

Brown and Levinson also noted three socio-cultural variables which must be considered when considering whether or not to perform a face-threatening act;

a) the power the addressee has over the speaker
b) the social distance between the interlocutors
c) the degree to which the action required is seen as an imposition

Brown and Levinson’s work has been much discussed and often criticised over the years. “A number of crucial criticisms of Brown and Levinson’s approach have emerged since the beginning of the 1990s, opening up broader perspectives from which to approach the phenomenon of linguistic politeness” (Watts, 2003: 10). One of the most controversial debates has centred on the question of cultural relativity – their work has been described as ‘Eurocentric’, and may not be applicable to societies with a more collectivist ethic – such as Asian societies (Watts, 2003: 101). Eelen (2001) and Watts (2003) argue that there needs to be a shift in politeness theory away from the Gricean (and Brown and Levinson) models towards a view of politeness as a cultural construct. A further criticism of Brown and Levinson’s work (and also of Lakoff’s later research) is that it approaches politeness in informal settings only.

Like Brown and Levinson’s own work, much research on politeness has been focused around informal settings, with an emphasis on the linguistic behaviour of speakers as individual agents . . . Lakoff (1989) suggests that politeness is, in fact, associated primarily with ordinary conversation, which is functionally centred on interpersonal relationships rather than exchange of information. For Lakoff, politeness is maximally relevant to defining relationships and only minimally, if at all, to exchanging information

(Harris, 2001: 452).
Harris goes on to suggest that “theories of linguistic politeness must be extended to a consideration of the different discourse types associated with certain professional and institutional contexts, and that examining such contexts forces us to see politeness from a different perspective” (Harris, 2001: 453). It is hoped that the research in this thesis can help to rectify this gap in the literature.

2.1.4 Post Brown and Levinson

House and Kasper (1981) provide a taxonomy of politeness structures, which built on Brown and Levinson’s work. These include the following, which are of relevance to a pragmatic study of politeness;

a) politeness markers, which are essentially discourse markers to indicate politeness. As well as lexical items such as ‘please’, they also include here tag questions with will/would (‘close the door, would you?’), and phrases such as ‘if you don’t mind’

b) hedges, which minimise imposition on the hearer. Examples include phrases such as ‘kind of’, ‘somehow’ and so on

c) understaters and downtoners, which also minimise imposition on the hearer. Examples of understaters include ‘a bit’ ‘just’ and other phrases.

The next significant work in politeness studies was that of Geoffrey Leech in 1983. Leech’s framework was essentially a cost-benefit framework, where politeness means minimising the cost and maximising the benefit (to both the speaker and listener) in a conversational exchange. Leech proposed six maxims

a) the maxim of tact. One should minimise cost to the other

b) the maxim of generosity. One should minimise benefit to self

c) the maxim of approbation. One should maximise praise of the other

d) the maxim of modesty. One should minimise praise of self

e) the maxim of agreement. One should minimise disagreement between self and the other

f) the maxim of sympathy. One should maximise sympathy between self and the other

Brown and Yule (1983) describe the major functions of language in two ways; transactional and interactional. Language which is used primarily to convey ‘factual or propositional
information’ is called transactional language – this is language which is primarily ‘message 
oriented’. On the other hand, language which is used to establish and maintain social 
relationships is seen as interactional language. Lakoff (1989) produced a significant paper on 
‘the limits of politeness’, which divided linguistic behaviour into three types; polite, non-
polite and rude. In the same article, Lakoff divides discourse into two generalised types, the 
informative and the interactive, and she claims that politeness is only related to interactional 
discourse. More recently, Sperber and Wilson (1995) have formulated what they call 
‘relevance theory’. They propose over-riding Grice’s maxims with one single maxim, an 
axiom of communication. Essentially, they point out that any utterance is a stimulus which 
alters the environment of the listener. They reject the idea that any human communication 
can be ‘perfect’; all communication must be graded on a scale of relative success.

A more recent development in politeness studies has come from Spencer-Oatey, (2002, 2005, 
2007), who has written on ‘rapport management’. This somewhat builds on Brown and 
Levinson’s work, but she distinguishes three types of ‘face’; ‘quality face’, ‘relational face’ 
and ‘social identity face’. More directly relevant to this study than the work of Spencer-
Oatey, however, is the work of Richard Watts. Watts (2003) makes a distinction between 
‘politic behaviour’ and ‘politeness’. He defines politic behaviour as ‘linguistic behaviour 
which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction” 
(2003: 19), whereas he sees politeness as “linguistic behaviour perceived to go beyond what 
is acceptable, i.e. salient behaviour” (ibid). This is a helpful distinction as it clearly 
highlights the relative nature of politeness. Watts notes that “thus what counts as polite 
behaviour depends entirely on those features of the interaction which are socially marked by 
the speech community as being more than merely politic” (1992:50). Watts’ account of 
politeness is also helpful in that it allows a way of distinguishing between politeness as a 
strategy, and politeness as a set of linguistic conventions. This also helps to clarify (as noted 
in Culpeper, 2011: 216) that certain social interaction types can sanction or neutralise face-
threatening or face-damaging acts, and can involve legitimated potentially impolite 
behaviour. This can help to frame politeness in terms of a communities of practice approach 
(discussed below), since this can allow the researcher to identify and distinguish between 
politeness (and impoliteness) which is marked by the community of practice, and speech acts 
which are not sanctioned, or are seen as violating the norms of the community.
2.1.5 Impoliteness

A recent development in politeness studies, and one which is of potential interest to this research, is the growth of interest in the area of impoliteness. Jonathan Culpeper has written extensively on impoliteness (1996; 2005; 2008; 2010), culminating in his 2011 book, *Impoliteness*. Culpeper has pointed out that defining impoliteness is quite difficult, and an understanding of the context is vital; what may be considered ‘impolite’ in one context is quite acceptable in another context – the example he gives is shouting and swearing, which may be acceptable at a football match, although not quite so acceptable on a quiet suburban street. Although he has refined and qualified this definition in numerous places since, Culpeper’s definition of impoliteness from 2005 is a relevant one; “[Impoliteness is] when the speaker communicates face-attack intentionally or when the hearer perceives and/or constructs behaviour as intentionally face-threatening” (2005: 40). This definition is echoed and further simplified by later researchers, who also note the importance of context; “impoliteness is behaviour that is face-aggravating in a particular context”. (Locher and Bousfield 2008: 3). A lengthier and more nuanced description of impoliteness can be found in Culpeper’s 2011 book, *Impoliteness*;

Impoliteness is a negative attitude towards specific behaviours occurring in specific contexts. It is sustained by expectations, desires and/or beliefs about social organisation, including, in particular, how one person’s group or a group’s identities are mediated by others in interaction. Situated behaviours are viewed negatively – considered ‘impolite’ – when they conflict with how one expects them to be, how one wants them to be and/or how one thinks they ought to be. Such behaviours always have or are presumed to have emotional consequences for at least one participant; that is, they cause or are presumed to cause offence.

(Culpeper, 2011: 254)

Culpeper’s research on impoliteness (2008; 2009; 2010) has noted that for an action to be considered impolite, it must involve at least one of three following aspects;

a) it must be language or behaviours which are negatively evaluated in a particular context

b) these behaviours are negatively evaluated because they attack somebody’s identity or rights

c) they cause specific emotional reactions
The first of these points illustrates the importance of context when evaluating whether or not an utterance can be considered impolite or not (discussed in the following section). Culpeper points out that, for Brown and Levinson, the use of politeness markers, mitigation, etc. when performing a FTA shows that one has the other’s interests at heart, and he notes that Brown and Levinson do not discuss the aggressive use of facework (2011: 114). Culpeper also notes that a frame-based approach to politeness can be useful when discussing impoliteness - frames are co-constituted by linguistic expressions and contexts. It is through “regularity of co-occurrence that we acquire knowledge of which expressions to use in which situations” (2011: 34). Culpeper (2011: 252) has divided impoliteness into three broad categories; affective impoliteness, coercive impoliteness and entertaining impoliteness. He describes affective impoliteness as the expression of emotion (typically anger) in situations where this is not expected or allowed. Coercive impoliteness is described as impoliteness which seeks to realign values between the producer (of impoliteness) and the target. Entertaining impoliteness involves entertainment at the expense of the target of the impoliteness (for example, in reality tv shows), and is thus somewhat exploitative. Of these three categories, it could be argued that QT (if indeed it is a form of impoliteness, as discussed below) falls somewhere between the second and third categories. If one bears in mind the importance of the audience during QT (and if one assumes that exchanges during QT are often aimed at the audience, primarily), then one could argue that QT is a form of entertaining impoliteness. If one (perhaps) takes a less cynical perspective on QT, then it may be seen as a form of coercive impoliteness, as the interactants seek to find common ground between two competing world views. Culpeper suggests that attitudinal factors, linguistic-pragmatic factors and contextual factors all need to be taken into account before one can categorise speech as ‘impolite’ or not (2011: 255).

2.1.6 ‘Reasonable hostility’ and the significance of context

All language usage may be interpreted in terms of whether or not the perceived fabric of interpersonal relationships is maintained. Conflict might be sought in certain types of social activity, e.g., political debates, discussion of controversial issues, quarrelling over personal rights and possessions, verbal duelling of various types, etc. The nature of the relationships engendered by the social activity may be opponental and antagonistic. Accordingly speech-event types will
be required which give expression to confrontation and competition rather than collaboration and co-operation. Thus socially appropriate language usage can easily entail the very opposite of linguistic politeness.

(Watts 1992:48)

As well as focusing on the interactive nature of language, it is important also to look at context when engaging in discourse analysis. This has been pointed out by a number of authors; “Discourse analysis studies the relationship between discourse events and socio-political and cultural factors” (Crystal, 2003: 141), and “The discourse analyst has to take account of the context in which a piece of text occurs” (Brown & Yule, 1983: 27). The importance of context is significant to discourse analysts, who notice patterns of language and the circumstances with which these patterns are typically associated (Trappes-Lomax, 2004: 133). The link between discourse and context is a significant feature of this research, which focuses on discourse in one institutional context, the national parliament of Ireland. “The analysis of discourse is, necessarily, the analysis of language in use. As such, it cannot be restricted to the description of linguistic forms independent of the purposes or functions which these forms are designed to serve in human affairs” (Brown & Yule, 1983: 1). Coulthard tells us that an essential feature of competence is occurrence, whether and to what extent something is done (1985: 33).

The importance of context is particularly important when discussing political language, since citizens appear to have expectations about appropriate and inappropriate language in relation to this context; a well-known example in the Irish context occurred in late 2009, when a government junior minister (Paul Gogarty of the Green Party) used the word ‘fuck’ in Dáil Éireann. Specifically, he said ‘fuck you, Deputy Stagg’ to an opposition deputy, leading to international attention, and news stories all over the world. This again reinforces the point that the general public have expectations about appropriate language use in the national parliament. Wilson has made the link between pragmatics and political language explicit, when he tells us that “Since it is quite obvious that political language is designed to achieve specific political goals [. . .] it is a prime example of what we will call ‘pragmatic behaviour’; linguistic behaviour, that is, which is sensitive to the context of production” (Wilson, 1990: 19).
To understand the deeper meaning and significance of what is going on in parliamentary confrontational dialogue, it is therefore necessary to take into account the MPs’ mutual knowledge of who they are, whom they represent, what they stand for, what kind of activity they are engaged in . . . as well as what political views they support. This knowledge is usually implicit or inferable by co-participants.

(Ilie, 2010: 889)

The importance of context raises the question as to whether impoliteness research is relevant to research into QT. Bull and Wells (2011: 15), note that “Prime Minister’s Questions may be regarded as another exemplar of situations described by Culpeper in which impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but is central to the interaction that takes place”. Similarly, and of particular interest for this study, Taylor (2011: 10) notes that “If we look at previous studies it is clear that the theoretical framework of (im)politeness has been used in combination with corpus linguistics for a range of purposes and at a variety of stages in the research process”. However, Culpeper notes that “if one is immersed in an event where impoliteness is normal, it can only be weakly impolite at best in terms of that event” (Culpeper, 2011: 198). He notes specifically parliamentary debates as areas where language relating to impoliteness or face-threat is problematic. Although Culpeper does note that face is sensitive to attack in any circumstance, he points out that “to talk of threatening face or ‘face threat’ in reference to impoliteness phenomena, as some works on politeness, facework and even impoliteness do, is problematic” (Culpeper, 2011: 118). In part, as he notes, this is a terminological issue;

by demonstrating concern for the face-threatening potential of an act, one shows that one has the other’s interests at heart. Politeness work, as conceived by B&L, is about acknowledging the face-threatening potential of an act through redressive actions. Impoliteness is rather different; it is constituted by words and actions which themselves are taken as damaging face

(Culpeper, 2011: 118).

For this reason, Culpeper prefers the term ‘face-attack’ to that of ‘face-threat’.

Karen Tracy also uses the term ‘face-attack’ in preference to ‘face-threat’. In a paper written in 1998, Tracy and Tracy examine telephone calls to emergency lines where the call-takers became angry and attacked the face of the callers. In this paper, they define face-attack as “communicative acts perceived by members of a social community (and often intended by speakers) to be purposefully offensive” (1998; 227) Of more direct relevance to this study is another paper by Tracy (2008), where she argues for the term ‘reasonable hostility’ to be used
when discussing behaviour in parliamentary-type settings, rather than the terminology of positive and negative face, which she argues is unsuitable for describing the type of behaviour necessary in these settings. “Reasonable hostility involves emotionally marked criticisms of the past or future behaviours of public persons” (2008: 170). She points out that face-attack should be seen as reasonable when it occurs at the site of governance, since democratic forms of government are essentially about the clash of ideas, and expressing these peacefully. Tracy identifies four features that identify ‘reasonable hostility’ in political discourse;

- it is sensitive to the peculiarities of a given situation, and to the roles and identities of participants
- it generally occurs in response to another face-attack (or a perceived face-attack)
- it includes speech tokens that pay attention to the listener’s face wants (e.g. appropriate address forms)
- it can change and evolve over time

Both Culpeper and Tracy, then, appear to suggest that Brown and Levinson’s terminology of ‘face-threatening acts’ is not unproblematic for contexts where a certain amount of conflict is expected to take place.

### 2.2 Communities of Practice

‘Communities of practice’ is a theoretical concept first named by the French cognitive anthropologists Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger in the early 1990s. It was first popular as a theory of learning, and later became popular in the field of knowledge management.

A CofP is an aggregate of people who, united by a common enterprise, develop and share ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, and values - in short, practices. [...] The development of shared practices emerges as the participants make meaning of their joint enterprise, and of themselves in relation to this enterprise. Individuals make sense of themselves and others through their forms of participation in and contributions to the community

(Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 1999:186)
Lave and Wenger first used the term communities of practice (henceforth, CoP) to describe learning through practice and participation, which they named ‘situated learning’. The structure of the community was created over time through a process of ‘legitimate peripheral participation’. (Lave and Wenger, 1991: 29). They found that when newcomers join an established group or community, they spend some time initially observing and perhaps performing simple tasks in basic roles as they learn how the group works and how they can participate. The term ‘community of practice’ is that group which Lave and Wenger referred to, who share a common interest and a desire to learn from and contribute to the community with their variety of experiences.


- **Mutual Engagement**: Firstly, through participation in the community, members establish norms and build collaborative relationships. These relationships are the ties that bind the members of the community together as a social entity.
- **Joint Enterprise**: Secondly, through their interactions, they create a shared understanding of what binds them together. The joint enterprise is (re)negotiated by its members and is sometimes referred to as the 'domain' of the community.
- **Shared Repertoire**: Finally, as part of its practice, the community produces a set of communal resources; this is used in the pursuit of their joint enterprise and can include both literal and symbolic meanings.

Wenger’s more recent work has focused on learning as social participation – the individual as an active participant in the practices of social communities, and in the construction of his/her identity through these communities (Wenger et. al.; 2002). In this context, a community of practice is a group of individuals participating in communal activity, and experiencing/continuously creating their shared identity through engaging in and contributing to the practices of their communities.

Wenger has further redefined the structural characteristics of a community of practice into three specific concepts; a domain of knowledge, a notion of community and a practice (Wenger et. al., 2002; 27). A domain of knowledge creates common ground, inspires members to participate, guides their learning and gives meaning to their actions. The notion
of a community creates the social fabric for that learning. A strong community fosters interactions and encourages a willingness to share ideas. While the domain provides the general area of interest for the community, the practice is the specific focus around which the community develops, shares and maintains its core of knowledge.

2.2.1 Parliament as a community of practice

The expectations of British MPs define and constrain what is regarded as acceptable linguistic behaviour in the House along with specified parliamentary rules relating to the asking of questions of the Prime Minister. Such expectations are informed by informal and established interactional conventions in a significant way. It is these expectations which enable Members of the House as a community of practice to interpret intentional face-threatening acts as an important component of an adversarial and confrontational political process in such a way that they do not lead to either a breakdown in communication or in interpersonal relationships (Harris, 2003: 469).

Sandra Harris, in two significant and influential papers, has argued for utilising politeness theory in conjunction with a CoP approach when examining discourse in institutional settings. The first of these papers, focusing generally on politeness in institutional discourse, notes that politeness theory is a potentially useful way of approaching institutional discourse which can enable us to begin to define more explicitly the nature of institutional norms and to interpret institutional behaviour in power-laden institutional settings. What Brown and Levinson categorise as face-threatening acts can also often be interpreted as challenges to particular sets of institutional norms, i.e. rights and obligations of participants (Harris, 2000: 48).

Harris expanded further on this in a 2003 paper which specifically examined politeness in the House of Commons. Here, she notes that “The crucial dimensions of a community of practice identified and developed further by Wenger, i.e. mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise, a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time are clearly applicable to the House of Commons” (2003: 454). Further, Harris notes that “Judging what is polite against a set of expectations within a specific community of practice thus has distinct advantages” (ibid). Harris identifies three distinct advantages to examining House of Commons exchanges through a CoP approach (2003: 454);
• this takes into account the historical continuity of QT, and shows QT as a discourse event which has evolved over time and continues to evolve.
• it sees the participants in QT as ‘legitimate participants’ within a CoP, which foregrounds expectations of participants both in terms of the linguistic behaviour of those participants and how the participants interpret their behaviour.
• seeing the House of Commons as a CoP enables us to account for both the predictability and spontaneity which occurs when the same participants are repeatedly and systematically involved in linguistic exchanges. Utilising a CoP approach helps account for how linguistic behaviour is constrained and defined both by the roles of the participants and by the discourse practices of the community.

Harris suggests that QT can also be seen as a type of discourse within the larger CoP of politics generally – she suggests that this can help to account for the role of the audience, which should always be borne in mind when examining political discourse. This point is also made by Ruth Wodak (2009: 14). While discussing QT itself, Harris notes that;

> The British House of Commons, while probably not unique is very clearly based on adversarial discourse practices. Systematic impoliteness, in the form of utterances which are intentionally designed to be face threatening, is not only sanctioned but rewarded. Members of Parliament as a community of practice clearly perceive that the main role of the opposition is to oppose (Harris 2003:466).

Harris’ argument is that since this behaviour does not lead to a breakdown in parliamentary debate, it is ‘sanctioned impoliteness’. de Ayala (2001:147) echoes this point (although she does not use the specific term ‘community of practice’) when she notes that QT can be called a ‘face threatening genre’.

As well as Harris and de Ayala, both of whom are of particular interest to this study because of their focus on politeness during QT (both of whom are discussed in further detail in chapter 3 of this thesis), other researchers focusing on parliamentary discourse have also utilised a CoP approach to examining parliamentary discourse. For example, Christie (2001) has used a CoP approach to examine gender in parliamentary discourse, while focusing on transgressions and apologies in the House of Commons. In an unpublished PhD study, entitled ‘Politeness in Parliamentary Discourse : A Comparative Pragmatic Study of British and Moroccan MPs’ Speech Acts at Question Time’, Hassan Moumni (2005) utilised a CoP
approach in conjunction with Speech Act theory and Politeness Theory, much as this study does. Ruth Wodak (2009) has also discussed the potential significance of using a CoP approach to examine parliamentary discourse, and has directly identified why a CoP approach can be useful when examining politeness during QT.

Due to national cultural traditions and norms of political parties, we can moreover distinguish specific communities of practice with their own forms of address, their particular dress code, their jargon, etc. (see Wenger et al., 2002). Hence, as members of a specific political culture we all have learnt what to expect from an interview, we have internalized cognitive schemas which predict the routines of such conversations (Cicourel, 2006), and are able to detect deviations or exceptions from the norm.

(Wodak, 2009: 4)

2.3 The politeness framework used in this study

This research uses Brown and Levinson’s terminology of positive and negative face as the primary politeness framework for this research. This is still the most widely used framework for linguists dealing with politeness studies, notwithstanding recent criticisms. For instance, significant works by Fenton-Smith (2008) and Harris (2001) on politeness in Minister’s QT (in Australia and Great Britain respectively) also use as their primary research framework the Brown and Levinson terminology. An Alan Partington paper (2008) on impoliteness and teasing in the White House also refers frequently to ‘facework’, while Partington’s 2003 book The Linguistics of Political Argument, which is based on an examination of White House press briefings during the Bill Clinton presidency, also regularly refers to Brown and Levinson’s terminology. Many of the most recent papers published on politeness and QT have all utilised Brown and Levinson’s terminology of ‘face-threatening acts’. For instance, the two papers produced by Peter Bull relating to politeness in QT (Bull and Wells, 2011; Bull and Fetzer, 2010) both examine QT in terms of FTAs. Recent papers by Taylor (2011) and Ambuyo et al. (2011) also utilise Brown and Levinson’s terminology. (Earlier significant papers by de Ayala (2001) and Harris (2001, 2003) also use terminology relating to FTAs. Therefore it is believed that this framework is suitable for linguistic analysis of politeness features in QT in the national parliament of Ireland. This is also discussed in section 3.3.1 of this thesis, which examines research into politeness and QT.
This research, then, primarily uses Politeness Theory and Speech Act Theory as the theoretical frameworks underpinning this research. In addition, given that apparently impolite behaviour is seemingly sanctioned and rewarded during QT, a CoP approach can help to identify deviations from this norm, and can help to identify violations or sanctionings by the community itself of the community’s own practices. It is this approach which has been followed in chapters 5, 6 and 7 of this research. The work of Karen Tracy and Jonathan Culpeper is also referred to at various points throughout this thesis; it is believed that this multi-faceted approach to politeness during QT in Ireland can help to conceptualise and frame that discourse event, and account for the complexity of language use in that setting.

2.4 Corpus Linguistics

Conrad (2000: 548) describes corpus linguistics as “the empirical study of language relying on computer-assisted techniques to analyse large, principled databases of naturally occurring language” – although Paul Baker (2006: 2) has pointed out that corpus-based methods have been used from as early as the 19th century. Of course, up until the 1970s, corpora had to be painstakingly collected and analysed by hand. There has been a rapid growth in the number of corpus studies in recent years, and corpus linguistics is now recognised as a significant field in its own right. Corpus linguistics has made an immense contribution in recent years to dictionary building, and there have also been a number of corpus-based grammar references compiled in recent years (Biber et al., 1999; McCarthy and Carter, 2006). Corpus Linguistics has made a significant contribution to research in areas such as language teaching and learning, dialectology, lexicography, literary stylistics, forensic stylistics, sociolinguistics and numerous other areas. There are a number of journals dedicated entirely to corpus research, as mentioned in the opening section of this chapter. This present research makes a modest contribution to corpus studies by utilising corpus linguistics to study some pragmatic features of language use in an interactive, institutional setting where participants use a regional variety of English. This chapter discusses some of the advantages and limitations to using corpus linguistics, as well as some of the particular challenges and possibilities of utilising corpus linguistics to study pragmatics and discourse analysis.
An important distinction has been made between a ‘corpus-driven’ approach and a ‘corpus-based’ approach (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Fiona Farr describes the difference between the two;

A corpus-driven approach implies no predispositions, hypotheses, or prejudices before searching the data, approaching it without any frameworks, categories or taxonomies, but allowing the corpus to dictate the formation of same [. . .] A corpus-based approach, on the other hand, ‘treats the corpus as an adjunct to the development of theoretical positions’ (Butler 2002:2), ‘the philosophy and ideas are taken for granted beforehand, and the corpus is simply used to reinforce those ideas’ (McCarthy 1998:22). This is the stance taken by those who use corpora to test theoretical frameworks which had been formulated without data (Harris 1995:120), and those who utilise theoretical frameworks to aid in the interpretation of the corpus data.

(Farr; 2005a: 132)

This distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven research is important to note, but McEnery et al. (2006: 11) have pointed out that “the sharp distinction between the corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches to language study is in reality fuzzy”. Tognini-Bonelli (2001), in particular, has a discussion on the methodological status of CL, as well as the distinction between ‘corpus-based’ and ‘corpus-driven’ approaches. This present study, utilising as it does a small, purpose-built specialised corpus, while combining corpus tools with more traditional applied linguistics methods (close reading of selected texts) fits into neither corpus-based nor corpus driven approaches; rather, it combines the two approaches. Corpus linguistics should not be seen as a replacement for traditional linguistic research, rather it should be seen as a complementary approach. McEnery et al. note that “the usefulness of corpora in language studies depends upon the research question being investigated” (2006: 121). They point out that careful choice of research question is key to a successful corpus-based investigation. In fact, having clarity about one’s research questions is essential to a successful corpus-based study. “One must be clear about one’s research question (or questions) when planning to build a DIY corpus. This helps you to determine what material you will need to collect” (McEnery et al. 2006: 71). This has also been noted by Reppen; “having a clearly articulated research question is an essential first step in corpus construction, since this will guide the design of the corpus” (2010: 31). McCarthy et al. argue that corpus linguistics can be seen as qualitative, in some ways;
broadly, corpus linguistics may be performed in two ways: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach usually looks for the largest corpus possible [...] from as wide a range of sources as possible. These data are then analyzed computationally and the output comprises sets of figures that tell the discourse analyst about the frequency of occurrence of words, phrases, collocations or structures. But for the discourse analyst, statistical facts raise the question “Why?”, and the answers can only be found by looking at the contexts of the texts in the corpus. Discourse analysts, therefore, work with corpora in a qualitative way.

(McCarthy et al., 2002: 70)

Due to advances in computing in the early 1990s, Leech (1991) observed that there was now a distinctive methodology to Corpus work; a corpus was approached in a different way to a traditional text. In addition to the large volume of material now available for analysis, the means of selecting and analysing the texts had also advanced dramatically. It is important to note, for example, that a corpus text is read vertically, scanning for patterns, while a traditional text is read horizontally. Corpus linguists often focus on patterns, recurrences, and statistical frequencies. Generally, there are three main stages when using this tool: extraction of data from texts, processing the output (reshaping according to your needs) and interpretation of output - asking the right questions (O'Keeffe and Farr, 2003). Corpus software has a number of advantages for users: it produces word lists and counts occurrences of individual search items, it allows for the presentation and (re)organisation of data in a way that facilitates the identification of patterns, it automatically produces cluster and collocation lists, and most software has a keyword tool, which allows a comparison of lexis between corpora to identify relatively significant items. In this way it becomes easier to comment on the collocation, colligation, semantic preference, and semantic prosody of lexico-grammatical items. Chapters 5 and 6 of this study utilise this approach, by examining the frequency, collocation and colligation of some lexical tokens which appear in the QTC. These chapters are very much mainstream corpus studies, as they examine the frequency and patterns of usage for ‘yes’, ‘no’, ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in the QTC.

2.4.1 Advantages of and limitations to Corpus Linguistics

“...
analyses of large groups of texts. There are certain types of language data which can only be gathered accurately from a corpus, including frequency. “Corpus linguistics will tell us how words are actually being used, how they co-occur with other words, and form units of meaning with them. It will tell us that units of meaning have their own unpredictable local grammar, which has so far been overlooked” (Teubert and Krishnamurthy, 2007: 8).

Natural observation of data is, at best, unreliable. Our instincts may tell us that people speak differently in Dáil Eireann and the world at large, and that politicians nowadays do not speak to each other as politely as they once did; without the data which can only come from a corpus, this is impossible to prove or disprove. Leech (2007: 315) points out that a corpus is an essential source for some types of research, where intuition is inadequate. He points out that data is the basis for most other sciences, yet some cognitive linguists rely entirely on intuition. Leech sees intuition as suited for interpreting linguistic data, but not for generating it. “Intuition can generate data not found in corpora, but corpora can equally reveal data not retrieved by intuition. Intuition is unsuitable for sociolinguistics, pragmatics and text linguistics” (Leech, 2007: 324). As McEnery and Wilson somewhat drolly point out, “If the corpus linguist can often seem the slave of the available data, so the non-corpus linguist can be seen to be at the whim of his or her imagination” (2001: 15). Leech argues that a corpus is a “scientific” methodology – its results are open to objective verification (2007), and that corpus linguistics takes us beyond native-speaker intuitions. We need to be wary of these intuitions, because “each of us has only a partial knowledge of the language, we have prejudices and preferences, our memory is weak, our imagination is powerful” (Krishnamurthy, 2000: cited in McEnery et al., 2006: 147).

“One criticism of corpus-based approaches is that they are too broad – they do not facilitate close readings of texts” (Baker, 2006: 7). Paul Baker also points out that some corpus linguists (for example, dictionary compilers) may over-rely on newspapers and synchronic data, rather than examining the changing meanings and usages of words over time (ibid) – although this has been rectified somewhat in recent years by the growth in popularity of diachronic corpus studies, such as recent studies by Jonathan Culpeper (2012) and Karin Aijmer (2011). Baker acknowledges these issues, but suggests that they shouldn’t prevent researchers from using corpora – rather, these issues may suggest supplementing corpus-based research with other methodologies. Karin Aijmer has also pointed to another potential problem with corpus linguistics, when she notes that the relationship between literal meaning.
and pragmatic function is complex, “and is best explained in a model where linguistic elements can have several different functions simultaneously and have more-or-less referential meaning” (1996: 11).

There are particular concerns to approaching pragmatics via corpus linguistics, as shall be discussed in section 2.5 of this thesis. There are also a number of general limitations to using corpus linguistics, as pointed out by McEnery et al. (2006: 121). They point out that a corpus can yield findings, but cannot provide explanations for those findings. Explanations must be developed by using other methodologies, including intuition. This research recognises that significant limitation through the careful use of co-text strategies. It is also important to note that a corpus cannot provide negative evidence; it cannot tell us what is not in the corpus (Baker, 2006: 19). Another significant danger when engaging in discourse analysis is not unique to a corpus-based approach, but it is arguably heightened by the methodology. This danger has been succinctly put by Brown and Yule;

Discourse analysis of spoken language is particularly prone to over-analysis. A text frequently has a much wider variety of interpretations imposed upon it by analysts studying it at their leisure, than would ever have been possible for the participants in the communicative interaction which gives rise to the ‘text’ . . .It is important to remember, when we discuss spoken ‘texts’ the transitoriness of the original

(Brown & Yule, 1983: 12).

By mixing etic and emic perspectives, as this study proposes to do, this danger is minimised. Finally, it is also important to note that a corpus-based investigation can only tell us about what is found in that particular corpus, and that a corpus, no matter how large, cannot be exhaustive. This raises the key question of representativeness, which has been discussed in section 1.3 of this thesis.

2.4.2 Utilising a small-scale, specialised corpus

smaller, more specialised corpora have a distinct advantage: they allow a much closer link between the corpus and the contexts in which the texts in the corpus were produced. Where very large corpora, through their de-contextualisation, give insights into lexico-grammatical patterns in the language as a whole, smaller specialised corpora give insights into patterns of language use in particular settings. With a small corpus, the corpus compiler is often also the analyst, and
therefore usually has a high degree of familiarity with the context. This means that the quantitative findings revealed by corpus analysis can be balanced and complemented with qualitative findings [...] as specialised corpora are carefully targeted, they are more likely to reliably represent a particular register or genre than general corpora (Koester, 2010: 69).

According to Biber et al., a corpus-based study can be particularly useful for studying register variation – “corpus techniques make it much easier to carry out comprehensive register studies” (1998: 137). A register is a language variety defined by its situational characteristics. Registers are defined according to their situations of use, which contrasts with dialects, which are defined by their association with different speaker groups. However, it is not enough to look at one corpus in isolation; “we need a baseline for comparison to know whether the use of a linguistic feature in a register is rare or common. A particular frequency is neither common nor rare in itself . . . we can only interpret average frequencies for a register by comparison to other registers” (Biber et al., 1998: 137). Clancy (2010: 81) distinguishes between language Variety (geographically-based, for example Irish English) and language variety (situationally-based on the discourse activity the individual is involved in, for example academic English). He argues that a small, specialised corpus can reveal much about a language variety. This has also been noted by Teubert and Krishnamurthy; “corpus linguistics demonstrates how registers of all kinds of language varieties differ from each other. It helps us to understand how social reality is constructed in the discourse” (2007: 8). This partly explains the choice of methodology in the corpus sections of this research, which is based on a comparative approach between two separate but similar settings, Dáil Eireann and Westminster.

“There has recently been much interest in the creation and exploitation of specialised corpora in academic or professional settings [. . .] specialised corpora provide valuable resources for investigations in the relevant domains and genres” (McEnery et al., 2006: 60). Alan Partington points out that we are currently in the ‘third age’ of corpus linguistics – what he calls ‘the age of specialisation’, meaning that corpus linguists today increasingly work with small-scale, specialised corpus collections. He claims that this development is narrowing the gap between corpus linguists and other kinds of linguist. Partington defines ‘specialised’ as meaning ‘for special purposes’ and/or ‘containing a specialised sub-variety of the language’ (2003: 256). Partington’s own research into language in White House press briefings (2003;
is an example of a specialised corpus being used to study political language. It has been noted that corpus linguistics can be a particularly useful method of examining institutional language, given its ability to analyse large amounts of text instantaneously (McCarthy, 2001). A small, specialised corpus can be extremely useful for studying institutional language. Partington also points out that “CADS [corpus-assisted discourse studies] is also typically characterised by the compilation of ad hoc specialised corpora, since very frequently there exists no previously available collection of the discourse type in question” (2009: 200). Again, this approach has been followed in this work, with both the Dáil Eireann corpus and the comparative corpus from Westminster data being compiled specifically for this research by the researcher.

2.5 Corpus Linguistics, pragmatics and politeness studies

As corpus linguists trying to analyse meaning, we are in a much less privileged situation than the communicative partners that produced the text: not only are we not the intended recipients but merely a kind of eavesdropper cut off from the wealth of background knowledge ratified participants share – nor do we have access to the participants themselves, which would allow us to ‘negotiate meaning’ by requesting elaboration, clarification etc. Moreover, we are cut off from the almost infinite wealth of situational, nonverbal and social context that conversationalists in their specific contexts of situation are connected to; [ because] corpora are, hence, relatively decontextualised while pragmatic phenomena essentially depend on context, corpora have long been seen by some researchers as unfit for use in pragmatic research.

(Ruhlemann, 2010: 290)

This study is an analysis of some pragmatic politeness markers through a corpus linguistics framework. It has to be asked if this is a feasible possibility, given that pragmatics is largely concerned with spoken language and is almost always context-dependent (as noted in section 2.1.2). Essentially, pragmatics is concerned with speaker meaning rather than sentence meaning. As Amador-Moreno (2010: 115) notes, “pragmatics deals with what is not explicitly stated in communication and with how we interpret language in determined situations”. Corpus linguistics, on the other hand, strips away the context of a speech act, and relies entirely on empirical data. A corpus is essentially a collection of sentences, stripped from their context. It is for this reason that most corpus studies (including this one) utilise a mixture of qualitative and quantitative methods, and also pay attention to co-text strategies.
Although Biber et al. (1998: 10) argue that corpus linguistics can illuminate and enlighten “almost any area of linguistics”, there are undoubtedly concerns about looking at politeness through a corpus linguistics framework. Much of politeness is paralinguistic in nature – tone, body language, facial expression, gesture etc. These, of course, cannot be captured in many corpora, without the addition of (potentially extremely time-consuming) annotation. In addition, irony and nuance cannot be captured in a corpus, which is a de-contextualised collection of texts. Ruhlemann (2010: 288) gives us an example sentence from the British national corpus (‘Lovely day, isn’t it?’), and points out that the semantic meaning of this sentence may well be the opposite of the literal meaning (it is entirely possible that the day in question was actually overcast and rainy, and the speaker was being ironic, sarcastic or facetious). We simply do not have the extra-linguistic information to allow us to interpret the sentence in its entirety. In terms of politeness studies, as noted in section 2.1 of this thesis, Grice’s co-operative principle (1975) is of great significance. As noted, it is assumed that all co-operative speakers observe the four maxims (of quality, manner, relation and quantity). However, these are often ‘flouted’, which means interlocutors must be aware of the notion of ‘implicature’ – that the Gricean maxims are being followed at some deeper level. A corpus cannot capture implicature, which is interpreted by the interlocutors in real-time, is unspoken, and is interpreted on the basis of the shared context of the speech act. Ruhlemann (2010: 289) notes that, due to these factors, “it becomes clear that the relationship between pragmatics and corpus linguistics is not unproblematic”.

Despite these concerns, both Ruhlemann (2010) and McEnery et al. (2006) note that pragmatics is an area in which corpus data is being used more frequently. They note that the corpus linguist involved in a pragmatic study should first recognise the limitations inherent in corpus linguistics – what Ruhlemann calls “the impoverishment of contextual features” (2010: 289). They argue that the corpus linguist can still provide interesting and enlightening insights into pragmatics through the use of a number of strategies. The first of these is the careful use of tagging, annotation and transcription. Corpora are generally annotated with additional linguistic information, most usually part of speech information. Corpora are also often annotated with information about the participants (age, gender, region, etc). This can help the discourse analyst by allowing language comparisons between different types of speakers (Baker, 2006: 2). The QTC compiled for this research have only very basic annotation; the speakers of each speech turn are tagged. There is undoubtedly further scope
with the QTC to be of further use to researchers if it is annotated further – this is discussed under ‘future research possibilities’ in the concluding chapter of this research.

The corpus linguist needs to be aware of the transcription process, and needs to be aware that the transcription is, in itself, a text, with its own inherent bias. This is addressed comprehensively in chapter 4 of this thesis. Secondly, it is important that a corpus is as representative as possible of the variety of language that the researcher is analysing; “a representative corpus can show what is central and typical in language . . . a representative corpus allows us to make reasonable generalisations about the population from which the corpus was sampled” (McEnery et al., 2006: 121). The representativeness of the corpus built for this research has been discussed in section 1.3.1; to re-iterate, by focusing specifically on one specialised discourse event (QT) in one particular context (the national parliament of Ireland), problems of representativeness are greatly minimised. Thirdly, Ruhlemann (2010: 290) notes that certain pragmatic features are amenable to corpus analysis, and may actually be more suited to corpus analysis than other, more traditional types of linguistic analysis. He notes that “in a corpus, only those phenomena can be studied fully whose lexical form(s) and pragmatic function(s) display a straightforward one-to-one relationship. This relationship is found, for example, in the word please, which typically functions as a politeness marker”. Corpus linguistics, Ruhlemann suggests, is suitable for studying conversational organisation (e.g. turn-taking), discourse markers, speech act expressions, and semantic prosody. This thesis, which analyses specific discourse markers (such as the aforementioned please and thank you), and one aspect of conversational organisation (the particles yes and no in response to questions), is focused on pragmatic features which are amenable to corpus analysis. “Because discourse markers are relatively fixed lexically and thus retrievable from a corpus, corpus linguistic research into discourse markers has been extremely productive and is likely to yield more insights into how speakers attend to the task of marking discourse to facilitate listener comprehension” (Ruhlemann, 2010: 296).

Finally, a number of corpus linguists engaged in the study of pragmatics (Partington, 2003, 2008, 2009; Culpeper, 2010; Ruhlemann, 2010) have noted that the use of co-text strategies is of vital importance in this field. In the case of this research, the author has available to him both the corpus and the entire text (the transcripts on which the corpus is based). This means that all speech acts analysed are available in both mechanical and non-mechanical form, so they are available for different types of analysis. This also allows the researcher to have at
least some context for the units of speech which are analysed in detail in this research. This is greatly aided by the building of the specialised corpus by the researcher himself. As noted in section 1.3, the researcher built the corpus single-handedly by cutting-and-pasting the transcripts into a Microsoft Word document before building the corpus. This enables the researcher to have a thorough personal ‘feel’ for the data in the corpus. It is believed, therefore, that through the careful choice of material to be analysed, the use of co-text strategies, the careful study of transcription policies in the production of the Official Report, and through the building of a representative, specialised corpus focusing on one speech event in Dáil Éireann, this study addresses the issue of corpus linguistics and pragmatics. It should also be noted that this study does not claim to be an exhaustive analysis of politeness in Dáil Éireann; such a study would be much beyond the scope of this work. This study hopes to analyse the use of certain pragmatic politeness features during QT, and offer some possible insights into how and why these features are used as they are in that particular setting. Chapter 7 of this research moves beyond the corpus, and adds a further framework to the corpus research, by examining some texts in close detail, and looking at some aspects of facework as they occur in those texts.

Perhaps the most significant rebuttal, however, to those who doubt the feasibility of analysing pragmatics through a corpus linguistics framework, is the number and variety of studies in recent years which have analysed pragmatic features through corpus linguistics (many of the following works are discussed in greater detail elsewhere in this thesis). McEnery, Baker and Cheepen (2002) explored lexical markers of politeness in telephone operator exchanges. In a similar vein, Weichmann (2004) has written a paper entitled ‘The Intonation of Please-Requests: a Corpus-Based Study’. Shie Sato (2007) has analysed please in American and New Zealand English through corpus linguistics. Karen Aijmer (2011, 2004, 2002) has produced a number of papers on various pragmatic features of language which are all corpus-based studies. Alan Partington (2003) utilises a corpus-based methodology in his book on White House press briefings, which includes a chapter on politeness features in this setting. In addition, Partington’s 2008 paper on teasing in this setting is based on the same corpus, and utilises a similar methodology. Teasing is, of course, a form of impoliteness, and this too has been examined via a corpus-based methodology, most recently and significantly by Culpeper (2011), in his book, Impoliteness.
2.5.1 Corpus-Based Discourse Analysis

It has been much less common to study discourse organisation from a corpus perspective [. . . ] the study of discourse organisation – linguistic structure ‘beyond the sentence’ – is usually based on detailed analysis of a single text, resulting in a qualitative linguistic description of the text organisation. In contrast, corpus studies are based on analysis of all texts in a corpus, utilising quantitative measures to identify the typical distributional patterns that occur across texts (Biber et al. 2007: 2)

Discourse analysts have been using corpora to examine the language of politicians since the 1990s, including Flowerdew (1997), Fairclough (2001), Partington (2003) and Baker (2006), while Baker (2006: 26) has noted that the discourse analyst can make particular use of specialised corpora in order to study a particular variety or genre of language. In addition, Karin Aijmer (2004: 4) has noted that corpora can provide a new and exciting tool for the linguist examining language use beyond the sentence level, with the linguist now able to look at the quantitative data related to the distribution or particular structures and meanings. She also suggests that specialised corpora are suitable for investigating the micro-features of texts, such as the use of discourse markers and hedges (ibid). This would seem to make corpus linguistics a key methodology in discourse analysis, yet corpus linguistics is arguably underused in discourse analysis. This has been described as “significant” by Partington; “[Corpus Linguistics] has had relatively little to say in describing features of discourse, particularly of interaction” (2003: 4). A similar point has been made elsewhere;

Discourse analysis is another area where the ‘standard’ corpora have been relatively little used. This is largely because discourse analysts are normally interested in looking at the discursive practices associated with particular social practices . . . nevertheless, there are important points of contact between corpus linguistics and discourse analysis (McEnery & Wilson, 2001:114).

Writing in the 1990s, McEnery and Wilson (1996), as well as Biber et al. (1998) noted the small amount of corpus-based research in discourse analysis. As late as 2006, Paul Baker noted that “while there are a small number of researchers who are already applying corpus methodologies in discourse analysis, this is still a cross-disciplinary field which is somewhat undersubscribed, and appears to be subject to some resistance” (2006: 6). Baker suggests that this resistance may in some cases be due to a dislike of (of unfamiliarity with) computers,
among some older linguists. This (relative) lack of contact between discourse analysis and corpus linguistics may also be because discourse analysis is generally seen as qualitative, whereas corpus linguistics is usually seen as quantitative (Trappes-Lomax, 2004: 140). However, He points out that one of the key goals of discourse analysis is to discover why some but not other linguistic forms are used on given occasions, and the other major goal of discourse analysis is to discover what the linguistic resources are for accomplishing “various social, affective, and cognitive actions and interactions” (2001: 429). In recent years, there has been much greater contact between discourse studies and corpus linguistics, and this has opened up a rich new field of potential studies, to which the research in this thesis makes a modest contribution.

Corpus analysis can be done in both qualitative and quantitative ways, as Biber et al. (1998: 4) point out; “Association patterns represent quantitative relations, measuring the extent to which features and variants are associated with contextual factors. However, functional (qualitative) interpretation is also an essential step in corpus-based analysis”. This has also been noted by McEnery and Wilson;

Both qualitative and quantitative analyses have something to contribute to corpus study. Qualitative analysis can provide greater richness and precision, whereas quantitative analysis can provide statistically reliable and generalizable results. Quantitative analysis enables one to get a precise picture of the frequency and rarity of particular phenomena and hence, arguably, of their relative normality or abnormality. However, the picture of the data which emerges from quantitative analysis is necessarily less rich than that obtained from qualitative analysis

(McEnery and Wilson, 2006: 63)

As can be seen from the discussion in the previous section on the limitations of corpus linguistics, a corpus based approach is essentially quantitative in nature, but Biber suggests complementing this approach with more traditional, qualitative analysis (1998: 8). Many authors (O’Keefe and Adolphs, 2008; Farr, 2005a; Stubbs, 2004; McCarthy, 2001) also point to the fact that corpus linguistics can add a quantitative framework to a qualitative study; “neither the quantitative data of a corpus alone nor the one-off analysis of conversational fragments is sufficient, and much extra insight can be gained by working from the former to the latter and vice-versa, keeping both in constant dialectal relationship” (McCarthy and Handford 2004:190). In fact, as Farr (2005a: 132) has pointed out, “a criticism that has been levied against discourse and pragmatic investigation is that, historically, it has been
conducted in a more qualitative than quantitative way”. Corpus linguistics may be useful in discourse analysis because “discourse analysts insist on the use of naturally occurring language data” (He, 2001: 429). Baker (2006:10) also notes that a major advantage of approaching discourse analysis via a corpus-based approach is that researcher bias is much reduced, although he notes that bias cannot be removed completely; “because corpus data does not interpret itself, it is up to the researcher to make sense of the patterns of language which are found within a corpus, postulating reasons for their existence or looking for further evidence to support hypotheses. Our findings are interpretations, which is why we can only talk about restricting bias, not removing it completely” (Baker, 2006: 18). Karin Aijmer has also noted that corpus linguistics can be utilised when examining lengthier stretches of speech than the mere examination of lexico-grammatical items; “the ritualisation of certain polite speech acts is almost taken for granted [. . .] thanking, apologising and requesting correspond to ‘everyday rituals’, strengthening the social bonds between the interactants” (Aijmer, 1996: 9). Aijmer points out that conversational routines add to the structural cohesion of discourse (ibid), and that corpus linguistics can help to reveal patterns in discourse.

Alan Partington wrote a significant paper in 2009 entitled ‘The Armchair and the Machine’, which helped to draw together the qualitative and quantitative dimensions of corpus linguistics. This paper outlined the following procedure as typical of corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) methodology;

'A basic, standard methodology in CADS may resemble the following:'

Step 1: Decide upon the research question;
Step 2: Choose, compile or edit an appropriate corpus;
Step 3: Choose, compile or edit an appropriate reference corpus / corpora;
Step 4: Make frequency lists and run a keywords comparison of the corpora;
Step 5: Determine the existence of sets of key items;
Step 6: Concordance interesting key items (with differing quantities of co-text);
Step 7: (Possibly) refine the research question and return to Step 2.

This basic procedure can of course vary according to individual research circumstances and requirements.

(Partington, 2009: 210)
The research methodology utilised in this study follows this pattern closely. “The principal endeavor of Corpus-Assisted Discourse Studies can be summarized quite simply. It is the investigation, and comparison of features of particular discourse types, integrating into the analysis where appropriate techniques and tools developed within corpus linguistics” (Partington, 2009: 192). This study follows this approach exactly.

By combining the so-called quantitative approach, that is, statistical overviews of large amounts of the discourse in question – more precisely, large numbers of tokens of the discourse type under study contained in a corpus – with the more qualitative approach typical of discourse analysis, that is, the close, detailed analysis of particular stretches of discourse - stretches whose particularly interesting nature may well have been identified by the initial overview - it may be possible to better understand the processes at play in the discourse type. It may be possible, in other words, to access such non-obvious meanings (Partington, 2009: 194).

Partington goes on to point out that traditional corpus linguistics has tended to privilege the quantitative approach, and that the corpus linguist “is not encouraged to familiarise him/herself with particular texts within the corpus in case the special features these texts may possess should distort his or her conceptions of the corpus as a whole” (Partington, 2009: 195). On the other hand, and in contrast, with CADS;

Here the aim of the exercise is to acquaint oneself as much as possible with the discourse type(s) in hand. Unusually for corpus linguistics, CADS researchers typically engage with their corpus in a variety of ways. As well as via wordlists and concordancing, intuitions for further research can also arise from reading or watching or listening to parts of the data-set, a process which can help provide a feel for how things are done linguistically in the discourse-type being studied (Partington, 2009: 197).

This echoes a point made earlier by Paul Baker;

Some form of prior interaction with the texts in a corpus, e.g. reading transcripts or listening to spoken files, will ensure that the discourse analyst does not commence from the position of the tabula rasa. One means of familiarisation would be to actually build a corpus from scratch, choosing what texts are to go in to it. The process of finding and selecting texts, obtaining permissions, transferring to electronic format, checking and annotating files will result in the
researcher gaining a much better ‘feel’ for their data and its idiosyncrasies. This process may also provide the researcher with initial hypotheses as certain patterns are noticed (Baker, 2006: 25)

This approach has been followed very closely in this research. The researcher has visited Dáil Éireann in order to watch the Official Report being produced, and has compiled and edited the corpus single-handedly. Although this was time-consuming and somewhat tedious work, this has certainly provided a feel for the material.

In addition to Alan Partington and Paul Baker, other researchers looking at political language and pragmatics have also used corpus linguistics. Cornelia Ilie has written a comparative study on insults in the British and Swedish parliaments (2004), and, more recently, on terms of address in the same setting (2010). Both of Ilie’s papers are based on a corpus built from transcripts from the House of Commons Hansard – a similar approach to the one in this thesis. Kampf (2008) has studied apologies (specifically the word ‘sorry’) in Israeli public discourse; his corpus is made up of a combination of newspaper articles and parliamentary transcripts. In the Irish context, although corpus-based studies of political language are limited, there have been many corpus-based pragmatic studies. Farr and O’Keefe (2002) have examined ‘would’ as a hedging device and as a way of being indirect. Clancy (2005) has analysed politeness strategies in Irish family discourse, and Martin (2005) has written on indirectness in Irish-English business negotiations. More recently, Chris Fitzgerald (2010) has completed an MA thesis on greetings in an Irish English setting, which also utilised corpus linguistics. All of these pragmatic studies have utilised corpus linguistics. It can be seen, clearly, from this list (which is by no means exhaustive, merely a list of work which is of particular significance to this thesis) that researchers in the last ten years or so have used corpus linguistics to analyse pragmatic features of language in numerous ways and forms. This research builds on past research by extending corpus-based studies of pragmatics to a hitherto under-explored setting, the national parliament of Ireland.

2.6 Conclusion and summary

This chapter has laid out the theoretical background and framework which underpin this study. The assumptions which underline this study, based on previous research in the fields of politeness and corpus linguistics, can be summarised as follows;
Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory (in particular the concepts of positive face, negative face and FTAs) is the primary politeness framework utilised in this study. Although limitations and criticisms of Brown and Levinson’s theory have been noted, it has also been noted that significant recent studies in this particular field continue to utilise this framework, and as such this research builds on and contributes to ongoing dialogue in this field.

This chapter has noted that much significant work in the area of impoliteness has been completed in recent years; in particular, the work of Jonathan Culpeper is of significance. Although Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is the primary theoretical framework underpinning this study, the work of Culpeper (and other impoliteness researchers) is also considered significant to this research, as is the work of Karen Tracy, whose terminology of ‘reasonable hostility’ is utilised in this research.

This research also utilises a Communities of Practice (CoP) approach. This has been utilised by other researchers into parliamentary discourse, and it is argued that this approach can be helpful (when used together with Brown and Levinson’s framework) by identifying when specific norms are violated (or sanctioned) by the particular speech community of politicians engaged in parliamentary discourse.

The advantages and limitations of corpus linguistics have been discussed in this chapter. Certain difficulties with examining politeness through a corpus-based approach are acknowledged and examined. It is suggested that the specific nature of QT, together with the focus on particular tokens which are closely related to politeness in the Irish context (as well as the number of recent studies which have examined politeness through a corpus framework) ensure that these difficulties do not undermine this research.

This study utilises a small-scale, specialised corpus, compiled by the researcher, and compares data with another small-scale specialised corpus, also compiled by the author. It is argued in this chapter that the process of compiling the corpus has enabled the researcher to have greater knowledge of the source material. It is also argued that the compilation of small-scale, specialised corpora is a burgeoning trend in corpus linguistics.
This research examines a specific discourse event by comparing it with a similar discourse event in another country. It combines a corpus-based approach with a more traditional close reading of selected texts. As such, this study is an example of how discourse analysis can be carried out by the corpus linguist, and combines corpus linguistics with traditional discourse analysis tools.
Chapter 3 – The context of the study; Irish English and Political Language

The distinctiveness of the HE vernacular has social implications, which can hardly be ignored by anyone, regardless of his/her amount of linguistic training (Filppula, 1999: 282).

Although on a cross-cultural level parliaments fulfill broadly similar functions, they are sensitive to the context of culture and history in the widest sense. This would involve a number of linguistic and non-linguistic variables such as: the general rules of politeness, tolerance of aggressive linguistic behaviour, [. . .] the social and institutional norms and, perhaps above all, the history of a given culture will determine to some extent the kind of language that can be used in the parliament (Bayley, 2004: 14, italics added)

The purpose of this chapter is to define and place into context the variety of language studied in this research. As such, this chapter can be divided into three broad sections, firstly dealing with Irish English (section 3.1), and secondly dealing with parliamentary discourse (section 3.2). The third section of this chapter draws together the theoretical framework outlined in chapter 2 with the context described in sections 3.1 and 3.2, with a discussion on related literature in the areas of politeness and parliamentary discourse, and politeness and Question Time (QT). Section 3.1 offers an overview of what scholars consider Irish English to be, including a brief history of Irish English, touching also on the questions of language contact and language shift. It then looks in more detail at the research surrounding pragmatics (in particular politeness) in Irish English, since these are particularly germane to this research. This chapter also aims to introduce relevant philosophical issues in the areas of parliamentary language, in section 3.2. Section 3.3 of this chapter combines the description of the context
introduced in sections 3.1 and 3.2 with the theoretical background introduced in chapter 2, by
first examining politeness in parliamentary language generally, and then by examining
literature related to politeness and QT. Finally, section 3.4 of this thesis outlines the rationale
for the choice of tokens examined in this study. This chapter shows that previous research
indicates that an analysis of QT in a parliamentary setting can provide a useful insight into
politeness theory, and that this research fills a gap in the existing literature in relation to
politeness theory and parliamentary language by examining them in a relatively unexamined
context, that of the national parliament of Ireland

3.1 Irish English

3.1.1 Background

“There is no doubt that the structure of discourse in the Republic of Ireland is quite different
from that in other Anglophone countries” (Hickey, 2007: 371). Irish English has been widely
studied in recent years (see Hickey, 2002 for a comprehensive bibliography). However, one
of the foremost authorities today on Irish English, Raymond Hickey, makes the observation
that Irish English is generally not treated as a subject worthy of academic interest, at least in
Ireland. “Compared to other Anglophone countries, Ireland shows little if any recognition of
its own varieties of English . . . A view is often found that Irish English is a substandard form
of language not to be taken seriously” (Hickey, 2007: 23). Hickey’s point is echoed by
Amador-Moreno, in a recent substantial addition to the literature on Irish English; An
Introduction to Irish English (2010). In the introduction to her comprehensive overview of
Irish English as it is today, Amador-Moreno points out that Irish people tend to feel they do
not speak ‘correct’ English – “this shows to what extent the neighboring island has affected
the use of language in Ireland, and also how prescriptivist attitudes were imposed on speakers
of (colonial) Englishes” (2010: 2). Nevertheless, Goodith White has pointed out that
“language users in the Republic have a strong allegiance to their own regional standard form
of English” (2006: 229). Irish speakers of English, therefore, may use Irish English as a form
of covert prestige; “this refers to speakers who choose not to adopt a standard dialect. We use
the term Covert Prestige because the prestige associated with this choice is that gained from
within group social identification”. (Crystal, 2003). Hickey’s implication is that the relative
lack of consideration for Irish English may be partly due to a post-colonial inferiority
complex, and partly due to an inherent suspicion of anything ‘English’. As shall be seen later when discussing whether such a language variety as Standard Irish English exists (section 3.1.7), Irish people appear to have a contradictory attitude towards the English language. While acknowledging the importance of the English language to Ireland’s considerable literary heritage, there appears to be an underlying suspicion of the English language in Ireland, due no doubt to its position as the mother tongue of the colonizing nation, England. This has been posited by Killian, among others; “English is both valued (for being a language that could provide economic freedom) and scorned (for being a colonial language), more frequently than not in the same breath” (1986: 271).

Raymond Hickey (2007: 25) sees the relative lack of interest in Irish English as related to the prestigious position which the Irish language holds in Ireland – he points out that all Irish universities have a department of Irish. Rather controversially, he states that “Irish departments are traditional and do not normally absorb linguistic ideas from outside Ireland. They are not generally open to new directions in language research, such as treating the development of Irish and English together” (Hickey, 2007: 25). Hickey posits that the standing of the English language in Irish universities is symptomatic of a wider lack of concern with Irish English in Irish society;

The lack of recognition [of Irish English] is not the result of conscious neglect but is an unintended legacy of the historical language shift mixed together with attitudes in Ireland resulting both from its post-colonial status and from native ideas about what is worthy of academic study which derives from wider notions of social class and ‘correct language’

(Hickey, 2007: 26).

White points out that there has been a deliberate attempt since the foundation of the Irish state (in 1921) to give the Irish language a heightened role in the new state, at the expense of English; this is reflected in the Irish constitution of 1937, which states that Irish “as the national language is the first official language of the state”, while English “is recognized as a second official language” (White, 2006: 219). In addition to this, Hickey also suggests that the rapid pace of social change in Ireland in recent years means that features traditionally associated with Irish English will gradually disappear over time. Hickey’s arguments here are contentious, to say the least – it is somewhat of a truism to note the rapidity of social change in Ireland in the last two decades, and it is fair to say that all language varieties are constantly
in a state of flux, making it inevitable that certain features of a language variety will disappear from time to time. Milroy and Milroy (1999) make the valid point that spoken language is perpetually in a state of change. Clearly, however, there is much scope for further study in the area of Irish English; this present work adds to the literature available in this area. In particular, this study, by focusing on Irish English in a formal, institutionalized setting, and by focusing on politeness and pragmatics in Irish English in an institutional context, rectifies somewhat a significant gap in studies of Irish English.

3.1.2 History of Irish English

“The history of the English language in Ireland is the story of the co-existence of Irish and English [. . .] despite their distant kinship, in the Irish context these two languages had a very close relationship” (Amador-Moreno, 2010: 16). Similarly, Kallen tells us that “the relationship between Irish and English is essential to understanding the background of Irish English, whether at the level of cross-linguistic transfer or that of language attitudes and values” (Kallen, 1997: 18). The entangled history of Ireland and England has led to the English language having a somewhat complex position in Ireland today (as noted in the previous section), and this history needs to be understood when embarking on a study of Irish English. It is conventionally argued that the English language was introduced into Ireland in the 12th century, at the time of the Norman invasion; at that time the Irish language (Gaelic) was the language of the Irish people, and the English language was slow to spread in Ireland, particularly in the countryside. However, Kallen (1997: 8) points out that the conventional date associated with the introduction of the English language to Ireland, 1169, is not entirely unproblematic, since this implies that before 1169 Ireland had been an isolated nation, uninfluenced by outside agents. This ignores the (relatively slight) influence of Roman civilisation, as well as the more significant influence of Latin on pre-Norman Irish. It also ignores the significant Scandinavian influence on Ireland and the Irish language. In addition, fixing the date of the introduction of English to Ireland at 1169 implies that the Anglo-Norman settlement of that era was a concerted attempt to overrun and subdue Ireland, which is not historically accurate; the invitation to the Anglo-Normans by Dermod MacMurrough in 1169 “is thus better understood as a development supported by years of international contact between Ireland and its neighbours, rather than as the dramatic introduction of a new, foreign force” (Kallen, 1997: 8).
The linguistic situation in Ireland following the Anglo-Norman ‘invasion’ of 1169 is somewhat murky, and some researchers (Kirk and Kallen, 2011; Kallen, 2012, 1997) have argued that a number of diglossic patterns may be seen from the 12th to the 16th centuries. Initially, it is suggested, French and Latin occupied the high prestige (‘H’) domains, while English occupied the low (‘L’) domain. This may well have been paralleled in traditional Gaelic society with another diglossic pattern, where Latin and literary Irish occupied the H position, while vernacular Irish occupied the L position. By the 15th and 16th centuries, however, English occupied the H position throughout Ireland. Some scholars (Bliss, 1977; Barry, 1982) argued that the English language (that is, Medieval Irish English) was effectively extinct in Ireland, but more recent studies (Kallen, 1997) have suggested that English was in continuous use in Ireland throughout the 15th and 16th centuries.

What is significant for understanding the diffusion of English is that, prior to the plantations of the 17th century, the distribution of language in Irish society was primarily dependant on the relationship between a distinct Anglo-Irish colony, a native Irish majority, and the continuing activity of interchange and boundary definition between these two groupings. After this time, plantation and population movement, together with the alteration of social and political institutions, not only diffused the English language geographically, but in social space as well (Kallen, 1997: 15)

Bilingualism, thus, had become common by the end of the 17th century. Irish speakers began to use English more and more, out of economic and social necessity. Ó’Muirithe (1977: 8) tells us that as late as the 18th century Irish was still spoken extensively in Dublin city. However, the Cromwellian settlements of the 1650s, the Penal Laws of the early 1700s, the Act of Union of 1800 and, perhaps most significantly, the devastating potato famine of the 1840s were all factors in the growth of English in Ireland and in the gradual decline of the Irish language (Hickey, 2002: 8; also Amador-Moreno, 2010: 25). The 19th century sees language shift in full flow, as more young people and better-off people began to associate Irish with poverty, while English began to be associated with urban life, and with economic benefits. This was further accelerated by the establishment of the National School system in 1831 (which used English almost exclusively), and of course by the famine of the 1840s, which disproportionately affected Irish speaking communities (Kallen, 1997: 17).

Irish still enjoyed a strong position as a vernacular in general on the island of Ireland at the end of the eighteenth century. However, by the beginning of the nineteenth century, the use of the Irish
language began to decline (although situations of bilingualism still survived in rural areas), and the language shift from Irish to English was set in motion. English henceforth became the language of prestige and power.

(O’Keefe and Amador-Moreno, 2009: 521)

Today, English is the dominant spoken language in Ireland, with Irish speaking communities confined to a few small communities on the North, West and South coasts of Ireland (Ó Riagáin, 2001) – Irish is now spoken as a first language by about 1% of the population of Ireland (Hickey, 2007) – this is essentially unchanged in the data revealed in the census of 2011. Filppula notes that the retreat of the Irish language to the Western seaboard is not merely a geographic coincidence, pointing to the physical proximity of the East coast of Ireland to England – he also notes differences between Irish English as spoken in the west of Ireland and Irish English as spoken in Dublin and the Eastern seaboard (Filppula, 2012; 1999).

3.1.3 Language shift and language contact in Ireland

Kallen (1997: 1) points out that Irish English is by far the oldest of the overseas Englishes to be studied in the context of English as a world language. However, he goes on to point out that;

The study of English in Ireland has been limited and, for the most part, fragmentary and disconnected. This lack of development stems from several sources, particularly the low prestige accorded many varieties of IrE [. . .], the greater attention given to Irish as a medium for the expression of Irish national culture, and the fluidity of the linguistic situation in the 19th and late 18th century Ireland

(Kallen, 1997: 1)

Kallen suggests that the relatively small amount of scholarly investigation into Irish English may be because of an uncertainty in how best to approach the language – as a post-creole variety, as a traditional rural variety of English, as a series of urban vernaculars which are connected to rural dialects, or as something else (1997: 3). These points have been echoed by Raymond Hickey, as noted earlier in this chapter. Kallen notes that much of the scholarly interest in Irish English is related to a fundamental question: the degree to which Irish English has been influenced by (and how Irish English demonstrates) the effects of contact
between the Irish language and English during the 800 years of language contact between Irish and English.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, there has been some scholarly interest in the development of and the characteristics of Irish English. “The English language in Ireland has an individuality of its own, and the rhythm of Irish speech a distinct character” (Thomas McDonough, 1920, cited in Crowley, 2000). Hickey (2002: 36) suggests that the first academic study of Irish English is the monograph of P.W. Joyce, *English as We Speak it in Ireland*, which appeared in 1910. Hickey points out that “this book is the only one prior to Hogan to deal in any comprehensive way with the English of the South of Ireland” (2002: 74), and Hickey points out that Joyce’s chapter on Grammar and Pronunciation is still relevant to modern-day scholars. Joyce’s work was followed in 1927 by J.J. Hogan’s *The English Language in Ireland*, which offers both an overview of the history of medieval Irish English and a phonology of modern Anglo-Irish. Notwithstanding a PhD thesis by Irwin in 1935, the next significant work in Irish English scholarship was that of Henry (1957), which focused on a study of a dialect of North Roscommon, and analysed this dialect from a substratal vantage point. Another significant article is that of Bliss (1984), which was essentially an overview of English in the South of Ireland, focusing on all areas of language, including pronunciation, vocabulary and sentence structure. From the 1990s onward, the study of Irish English has tended to be sub-divided into specialised areas; for example, Mark Filppula has written extensively on the grammatical features of Irish English (Filppula, 1999; 2012), Terence Dolan (2004) and Diarmuid O’Muirithe (2006; 2011) have focused on lexicography in Irish English, while in the area of pronunciation one of the most significant works is Hickey’s “A Sound Atlas of Irish English” (2004). There have also been overviews of Irish English written by Raymond Hickey (2007) and Carolina Amador-Moreno (2011). Irish English has also been well-served by corpus-based studies since the 1990s, with the development of the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (Farr and O’Keefe, 2004), and in particular the SPICE-Ireland corpus (part of the development of the International Corpus of English) is a valuable resource which allows for comparative studies to be made between Irish English and other varieties of English (Kallen and Kirk, 2008).

“Conventional wisdom since the earliest studies of Irish English has attributed much of what is distinctive about this variety to the influence of the Irish Language” (Kirk and Kallen, 2007: 270). A question that has engaged many scholars is the question of whether, how, and
to what extent Irish English has been influenced by the underlying influence of the Irish language. It is widely argued that many of the unique features of Irish English are a result of the influence of the Irish language on the English language as spoken by speakers in Ireland (Filppula, 1995; also Odlin, 1991, 1997). Amador-Moreno tells us that “The historical contact between the Irish and the English languages is still noticeable in present-day Irish English, and substratum influence from Irish throughout the history of English in Ireland has been studied by many scholars” (2010: 26). A number of the early studies of Irish English, such as Henry (1957) and Bliss (1972) assumed language contact as the sole source of non-standard features in Irish English. John Harris (1984) pushed back somewhat against this, pointing out that not all features which are distinctive in Irish English arise historically from Irish-language influence, and that only a few traits of Irish English can be unambiguously assigned to an origin in the Irish language. Raymond Hickey (2007: 133) makes the point that “it goes without saying that there is no proof in contact linguistics [but] if a structure in one language is suspected of having arisen through contact with another, then a case can be made for contact when there is a good structural match between both languages”. This point was made earlier by Kirk and Kallen (2004: 90); “We presume that where a structure is found only in a supposedly Celtic English, but not found in other types of English, and where that structure matches one found in a historically relevant Celtic language, there is a prima facie case for Celticity”. Kirk and Kallen clarify this in a later paper;

We point out that Celticity is not a uniform phenomenon. It may refer to processes in which the English of native Irish speakers is influenced by language transfer or by convergence with English language interlocutors (suggesting a transfer model); it may refer to the remote historical effects of language transfer among English-language native speakers (suggesting a substratum model); or it may refer not so much to structural aspects of Irish English, but rather to the indexical features found in metaphorical code-switching

(Kirk and Kallen, 2007: 272).

Kirk and Kallen suggest that “Celticity may well arise from conscious choice, from the desire of a speaker to point towards the Irish language as an act belonging to a particular speech community” (Kirk and Kallen, 2007: 272).

Raymond Hickey (2007: 127) summarises the possible sources of the unique features of Irish English, of which transfer from the Irish language is only one;
• Transfer from Irish
• Dialect forms of English continuing to exist in Ireland
• Archaic forms of English continuing to exist in Ireland
• Features deriving from the context in which English was learned
• Features with no recognisable source (independent developments)

When one speaks of language contact and language shift in Ireland, it is also important to bear in mind which variety of English the Irish people were exposed to when acquiring the English language. Hickey (2007: 124) points out that in the South of Ireland people were often exposed to a variety of English with its roots in South-West England, whereas in the North of Ireland people were more often exposed to English input from the North-West of England (e.g. from Lancashire). This may, of course, account for the considerable differences which one can see between Irish English (as spoken in the south of Ireland) and English as it is spoken in Ulster – although there are other historical factors at play in this situation also. Hickey (2007: 124) believes that considering the variety of English which influenced Irish English is relevant when studying the development of Irish English; for instance, he notes that in vernacular forms of Irish English the verbs have and do occur without inflectional –s in the third person singular present tense – a habit which is also common in vernacular speech in certain areas of south-west England, as in Dorset. It is also important to note that the relationship between English and Irish English is not entirely one way; Amador-Moreno (2010: 26) points out that the variety of English spoken in Ireland has influenced (primarily because of emigration from Ireland) the varieties of English spoken in the USA, Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the Caribbean. Todd (1999) has also written on how Irish English has moulded and influenced the English language worldwide.

The question, then, of language contact in Ireland and its influence on Irish English, continues to engage scholars up to the present day. Although not directly discussed in this analysis chapters of this study, it is hoped that by identifying differences in discourse patterns (in a formal, institutional setting) between Ireland and England, this current study can help to provide further food for thought for scholars working in the area of language shift and language contact. This discussion has also helped to conceptualise the context of this study, by looking at how Irish English has developed over the centuries, and how scholars have
attempted to define and explain some of the unique features of Irish English.

### 3.1.4 Terminology

The language spoken by Oireachtas members can be described as ‘Irish English’, which is a general term for the variety of English spoken on the island of Ireland. Todd and Hancock (1986) further sub-divide ‘Irish English’ into ‘Anglo-Irish’ (the variety of English spoken by English settlers in Ireland and the literature written by the descendants of these settlers), ‘Hiberno English’ (the variety of English spoken in Ireland by those whose ancestral mother tongue is Gaelic) and ‘Ulster Scots’ (a variety of Scottish English spoken in Northern Ireland). Hickey (2007: 3) points to some of the problems with using the term ‘Anglo-Irish’ – the term is used in literature, politics and numerous other areas, which in certain contexts it can be quite a loaded term. The term ‘Hiberno-English’, which gained popularity in the 1970s, is still used by a number of important authors in this field, such as Filppula (1995, 1999) and Dolan (2004). Hickey points to some problems with terminology;

The first, Anglo-Irish, is unsuitable because of its non-linguistic connotations and its imprecise reference . . . the second, Hiberno-English, suffers from two drawbacks. On the one hand, it is too technical: the use of the term demands that it be explained in studies intended for a general readership outside Ireland. On the other hand, the use of the term within Ireland may imply a somewhat popular, if not sentimental attitude towards English in Ireland which is often not regarded as a topic worthy of academic research.

(Hickey, 2007: 5)

Although Hickey’s points here are somewhat debatable, this study uses the over-arching term ‘Irish English’, as it is the least controversial term used in the field – Amador-Moreno (2010: 8) notes that “the more neutral term ‘Irish English’ is in general favored in recent research”. She points out that Irish English has the advantage of being easily understood outside of Ireland, and also that the term makes comparisons with other varieties (American English, Australian English, etc.) easier to understand for the general linguist (2010: 8).

In addition to the aforementioned research on Irish English, there has also been much scholarly attention paid to the variety of English used in the Northern part of Ireland, and Raymond Hickey points out that “any treatment of English in Ireland must take special account of the situation in Ulster” (2007: 85). One of the earliest scholars to examine
language use in Ulster, George Adams (1965), divided the North of Ireland into three main areas, linguistically speaking;

- Ulster Scots, which stems from 17th century Scottish settlers who arrived in Ulster during the Ulster plantation of 1609, after the Flight of the Earls in 1607
- Mid Ulster English, deriving from immigrants from the North of England who also arrived in Ulster in the 17th century
- South Ulster English, which are essentially transitional varieties between the North and South of Ireland.

In addition to these groups, there is also the English spoken by native Irish speakers in Donegal. George Adams wrote extensively on the influence of Irish on English in Ulster (1958; 1965; 1977; 1978), and this work has been built on by Karen Corrigan (1993; 2000). In recent years, the SPICE-Ireland project has opened up new possibilities for research into both Irish English and the English of Northern Ireland, as it focuses equally on Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, suggesting that “the North-South division of the [SPICE-Ireland] corpus built into it the immediate potential for an examination of the relationship between political structures and standard language within a single identifiable language area” (Kallen and Kirk, 2008: 4). Despite this recent and significant development, this study does not on Ulster Scots or indeed Northern Irish English generally, for two reasons. Firstly, Dáil Eireann does not represent the six counties of Northern Ireland, so there will be limited representation of Northern Irish English among the speakers in Dáil Eireann. Secondly, due to historical reasons (for example, the plantation of Ulster and the proximity of Northern Ireland to Scotland), English in the North of Ireland is remarkably different from English as it is spoken in the rest of Ireland (Filppula, 2012; 1999; Ó’Muirithe, 1977). A study of the language used by politicians in Ulster would be fascinating on a number of levels (this is discussed in the closing section of this thesis, section 8.3, which looks at future research possibilities); however, such analysis is beyond the scope of this particular work.

3.1.5 Pragmatics and Irish English

In addition to the apparent tendency in academia to underplay the significance of Irish English generally, it is widely recognized that there are some particular lacunae in this area
which deserve particular attention. Two of these lacunae include pragmatics in Irish English and formal Irish English, if such a variety can be said to exist. Amador-Moreno (2010: 115) has noted “Unlike other areas such as grammar or lexis, the pragmatics of Irish English has remained relatively understudied until recently”. This has also been noted by O’Keefe and Amador-Moreno (2009: 518); “The pragmatic aspects of this variety [Irish English], however, remain relatively less explored”. In 2005 Anne Barron and Klaus Schneider attempted to rectify the lack of material on pragmatics in Irish English by editing The Pragmatics of Irish English, which collected significant papers in this area. This collection included an important overview of work to date in this area (‘Irish English in the Context of Previous Research’, by the aforementioned Raymond Hickey) and a number of studies which are of significance for this PhD, relating as they do to politeness in Irish English. In addition to this, in 2012 a book entitled New Perspectives on Irish English, edited by Bettina Migge and Máire Ní Chiosáin included a number of papers which relate to pragmatics in Irish English; these included ‘A Corpus-based Pragmatic Analysis of the Use of ‘Now’ in Contemporary Irish English’, by Brian Clancy and Elaine Vaughan, and ‘The Use of Vocatives in Spoken Irish English’, by Fiona Farr and Bróna Murphy, both of which are referred to elsewhere in this thesis.

Amador-Moreno (2010: 135) identifies some of the features of pragmatics in Irish English as the avoidance of directness, the value of small talk, the use of vocatives and address forms, offering and responding to thanks, and making and reacting to compliments. Farr (2005) has noted some of the features of social interaction in Ireland, including the use of first-name vocatives. Farr and Murphy (2012) have also written in recent years on vocatives in Irish English. Kallen, as well as his significant work on politeness in Ireland (discussed in section 3.1.5), has also written on silence and mitigation in Irish English discourse (2005), and Amador-Moreno (2005) has written on Irish English discourse markers in Irish English literature. Other significant studies in recent years include two studies of greetings in Irish English, by Barron (2008) and Fitzgerald (2010), as well as O’Keefe and Adolphs (2008), who have written on response tokens in Irish English. Barron and Schneider, however, acknowledge that “Pragmatic research remains a desideratum in the study of Irish English . . . without contrastive research, hypotheses about the distinctiveness of Irish English, though important, remain only hypotheses” (Barron & Schneider, 2005: 11). This research, by utilizing a comparative approach between Dáil Éireann and the House of Commons in Westminster, makes a contribution to the ongoing dialogue in this area of pragmatics.
3.1.6 Politeness and Irish English

While emphasizing the importance of studies in pragmatics in Irish English, Barron also noted in 2005 that;

In contrast to the comparatively plentiful research on Irish English relative to standard British English on the phonological, syntactic and lexical levels of language, research on the level of polite language in (inter)action in Irish English . . . is only very recent and consequently rather limited . . . the unhappy consequence of this is that Irish English is still believed to be broadly similar to English English on the level of language use. Indeed, this belief may be particularly detrimental for communication given that different usage norms are frequently interpreted as instances of impoliteness by the interactants involved. They may, thus, lead to frequent breakdowns in communication, conflict and also the establishment of negative stereotypes.

(Barron, 2005a: 35)

Since 2005, several significant studies have been done in this area. For instance, Clancy (2005) has written on thanks and responses to thanks in Irish English. The giving and receiving of thanks is clearly relevant to politeness theory, because thanks minimise a favour and give options to the receiver of the favour (chapter 6 of this thesis deals more fully with giving and receiving of thanks). As such, thanks can minimise or reduce indebtedness. The giving and receiving of thanks are a major focus of this present research. In addition, Fiona Farr points out some of the unique factors in the Irish socio-cultural context which are significant in linguistic studies related to politeness;

historically and traditionally we do not have a formal social class system in the way that other cultures do . . . this has a double-sided implication. It supposedly implies that there is a reasonable degree of social equality but it has also engendered the attitude that people should not be overly assertive or 'get above themselves' and indeed we can be quite good at ego deflation . . . we often err on the side of caution and use many hedging and politeness strategies when communicating. In fact, I have even heard comments from non-nationals spending time here that they have difficulty in trying to decide when an Irish person is being sincere and truthful as opposed to just trying to maintain good relations.

Farr (2005b: 206)

Farr also points out that “the degree of active responsiveness” in Irish culture is very high; talk and social relations tend to be very interactive. This may be a result of strong levels of shared common knowledge, due to Ireland being a small, mono-cultural, somewhat isolated
island society. Farr also points out (2005b) that Irish casual conversation tends to be non-intimate, with irony and humour often being used to deflect conversation from becoming too intimate or personal – another politeness strategy which appears to be more common in Irish English than other varieties of English. This is also alluded to in a recent paper by Farr and Murphy (2012). “Irish English is often linked to a high level of informality” (Murphy and Farr, 2012: 221). Amador-Moreno (2010: 123) also makes the point that in Ireland there is a very high value placed on talk and social interaction, with a very high value placed on ‘small talk’ – often about the weather or enquiring about one’s family or health. This is significant for this study, of course; there is a relatively high degree of interactivity in the discourse event that is QT, and whether there are differences in interaction between the Irish and the British QTs is a fascinating question.

Arguably the most significant recent study of politeness in Ireland, succinctly called ‘Politeness in Ireland’, has been carried out by Jeffrey Kallen and is included in a work called Politeness in Europe (Hickey & Stewart, 2005). In this study, Kallen notes that in Ireland off-record and negative politeness strategies are more valued than in many other cultures. He posits that this is because of historical factors, principally the practice of “cooring” (from the Irish comhar, co-operation), the practice of mutual aid in farming, which was essential in rural life. This practice meant that positive face needs are of particular importance in Ireland. Kallen also notes the traditional importance of hospitality in Ireland, which means that Irish people tend to refrain from open hostility. Hickey echoes this analysis, pointing out that discourse in Ireland has its roots in the customs and practices of the rural background from which modern Ireland emerged (2007: 371). Hickey points out that this has led to a strong emphasis on consensual interactions and personal acquaintance. Kallen (2005) notes the following features which are significant when discussing politeness in Ireland;

a) Silence, within which he also includes deeply off-record statements.

b) Understatement, which Kallen notes is very common in Ireland. Understatement allows (or forces) the listener to respond to or interpret the statement of the speaker. In Gricean terms, the maxim of quantity is flouted, but the maxim of quality is followed.

c) Hedging (expressions such as “like”). Hickey (2007: 232) also notes the common use of hedges in Irish English, noting that hedges are often used to minimize threats to face

d) Minimisation (expressions such as “a bit” and “just” are common in Irish English,
Kallen notes).

All of the above strategies essentially minimise imposition on the listener, thus maximising negative politeness. Kallen also notes the following positive politeness strategies, which he identifies as common in Irish English;

a) Common ground topics, such as weather talk.

b) Shared knowledge phrases, which include expressions such as “as the fella says”, and “you know yourself”.

c) In-group identity markers, for example use of certain common Irish language expressions (“I’ve no great grá for her”). As noted earlier, this point may be of significance when studying the linguistic choices of Irish politicians.

d) Conventional optimism, which can be seen in phrases like “sure”, which invite or assume agreement.

Another feature of Irish politeness is what Kallen (2005: 56) calls “assertion by negative of opposite” - for example, “that meat doesn't look the best” (when complaining about poor-quality meat in a butcher's store). Hickey notes that a common strategy for minimizing disagreement in Irish English is to “explicitly locate the cause for disagreement at some external source” (2007: 372) – thus minimizing the responsibility of the interlocutors for the disagreement. Clancy (2005: 194) has noted that positive politeness strategies have an important role to play in Irish family discourse, with his research indicating that Irish family discourse features particularly strong linguistic behaviour related to intimacy and solidarity. Negative politeness, he notes, is less significant in Irish family discourse, with very little hedging noted in his study – Clancy posits this is explained by the ‘licensing’ of directness which is possible in family discourse (2005: 194). The studies by Kallen and Hickey referred to in this section are particularly relevant for chapter 7 of this research, which examines some FTAs and politeness strategies in Dáil Éireann. Kallen’s study, in particular, is referred to frequently in both chapter 7 and chapter 8 of this research.

3.1.7 Indirectness in Irish English

“Irish people are not particularly dominant in interpersonal relationships. They tend not to deal with issues head-on” (Barron, 2005a: 38). That Irish people are more indirect than speakers of other varieties of English is somewhat of a cliché, and one encounters
observations to that effect on a very regular basis in Ireland. To take just one example, the autobiography of former Irish rugby coach Eddie O’Sullivan includes a number of observations regarding this tendency among Irish people (O’Sullivan contrasts this unfavorably with what he perceives as American ‘directness’ – he spent a large portion of his career in America). For instance, O’Sullivan notes that “our culture in Ireland is to skirt around things. We communicate in nuance rather than word. We shy away from being direct for fear that the other person will take umbrage” (2009: 169), and also, “I think there’s something in the Irish DNA that makes us dislike people being direct with us. As a coach, I was direct with people, and, on occasion, I think this was construed as being overly aggressive” (2009: 195). The tendency of speakers of Irish English to be more indirect than speakers of other varieties of English has been noted by a number of academic researchers. Scharf & Mac Mathúna (1998) note that modals and tag clauses are common in Irish English, which increases the levels of indirectness. “The negative indirect request is a typical example of the manner in which politeness formulae are used. Rather than saying, ‘Could you confirm this in writing, please?’, the structure ‘You couldn’t confirm this in writing, could you?’ is commonplace” (Scharf & Mac Mathúna, 1998: 161). This point is repeated by Kallen, in his study of politeness in Ireland; “Interactions in Irish-English, at least within traditional Irish society, are charactisable . . . by the favouring of methods of expression that are more indirect than might commonly be expected elsewhere in the English-speaking world” (Kallen, 2005: 65). Raymond Hickey notes that Irish English conversation patterns show a lot of back-channeling, although he points out that this is awaiting quantitative confirmation. He also notes that “Contradiction is not generally welcome and must be couched in weak terms. Equally, direct criticism is avoided” (2007: 372).

Barron, in a significant paper on requests in Irish English (2005a), investigates the level of directness in Irish English and compares it to the level of directness in English English. In this paper, Barron notes that Irish English speakers tend to use what she calls “syntactic downgraders” (e.g. conditional clauses such as “if you could . . .”) far more than English English speakers. She noted no significant differences at the lexical level (the use of what she calls “lexical downgraders”, such as “I wonder”) between Irish English speakers and English English speakers. Irish English speakers tend to use external mitigation to a significant degree, she found. She posits that the higher degree of collectivism in Irish society (in contrast to English society) due to historical factors, is a significant factor in the high levels of indirectness in Irish culture. In another significant study, Farr & O'Keefe (2002) analysed
the use of “would” as a hedging device in Irish English (in particular the discourse marker “I’d say”). They note that “Irish speakers seem to be twice as tentative, or hedgy, as American speakers” (2002: 29). They use their data (a corpus collected from two institutionalized Irish settings, a radio phone-in show and a series of teacher training interactions) to extrapolate that;

Forwardness, which ranges from being direct to being self-promoting is not valued in Irish society. That Irish society does not place a high value on powerful or direct speech is borne out by [. . .] the use of 'would' as a means of downtoning assertiveness and directness in asymmetrical interactions [. . .] Irish people will rarely answer a polar question with a single word answer (yes or no), it is considered too direct and impolite

(Farr & O’Keefe, 2002: 42).

Martin posits that Irish indirectness is a survival technique which was developed in the face of oppression;

where it was important to learn to be evasive, to develop a mental dexterity and a sharpness of intellect which answered a question with a question, and was effective in deceit and manipulation. Linked with this is a tendency to find it difficult to be confronting of others, even if the complaint is justified. This results in a tendency to complain to one another about a third party rather than directly confronting the third party.

(Martin, 2005: 235)

Martin suggests that this colonial heritage may also be the reason for the Irish characteristics of understatement and lack of self-revelation; “the loquacity of the Irish conceals as much as it communicates” (Martin, 2005: 236). Martin echoes Farr's point that Irish society is neither formal nor elitist, and that Irish society does not particularly value assertiveness. Martin's study of business negotiations between Irish and German business men is significant in terms of pragmatics and politeness; she notes that Irish negotiators tend to avoid blunt demands and counter-demands, they tend to avoid confrontational strategies, and they tend to make use of hedging; “they are inclined to maneuver around an issue, not dealing with it head-on. At the same time, they reassert their willingness to cooperate” (Martin, 2005: 246). Martin notes that Irish negotiators use numerous hedges such as “just”, “you know” and “as I say”, and that Irish negotiators tend to be verbose and use lengthy preambles when dealing with sensitive areas (such as prices). Martin notes that Irish negotiators are particularly attentive to the negative face needs of their interlocutors, and regularly downtone their utterances by using
hedges, meta-language and idioms. This study is of particular relevance to the present study because the goals of the interlocutors are somewhat similar; both politicians and businessmen want to gain the maximum amount of information possible, while maintaining good relations with their interlocutor.

A very recent paper by Clancy and Vaughan (2012) has summarized research into indirectness in Irish English;

A theme running through many of these studies is indirectness as a key feature of the pragmatic system of Irish English, as “in Irish society, directness is very often avoided [. . .] ‘forwardness’, which ranges from being direct to being self-promoting, is not valued” (Farr & O’Keefe, 2002: 42; see also Kallen, 2005). Observations by Hickey regarding how “reassurance is a central component of Irish English pragmatics” (2005a: 145) and how Irish English speakers are adept at employing features of the vernacular mode “to impart a popular touch to their speech” (2005b: 27) reinforce the idea of solidarity and the reduction of social distance as critical to what could be broadly termed as the pragmatic profile of Irish English as a variety (Clancy and Vaughan, 2012: 226)

Given this cultural preference for indirectness, how politicians interact during QT, where normative behaviour expects a certain amount of direct, face-threatening behaviour, is a fascinating question.

3.1.8 Is there a Standard Irish English?

The differences between the vernacular Irish and British varieties have been amply documented and possible explanations for them [. . .] widely discussed in the literature. By contrast, there has so far been very little research into possible differences between the Irish and British English ‘standard’ varieties and their relationships with their respective nonstandard varieties (Filppula, 2012: 87)

The importance of studying Standard Irish English is not difficult to justify. There has been growing interest in recent years in the study of regional variations of languages – although this interest has not always extended to the pragmatic level of language use. As late as 2005, Schneider & Barron noted that;
Underlying much cross-cultural pragmatic research is a basic assumption that language communities of native speakers are a homogenous whole . . . Dialectology has focused overwhelmingly on the central levels of the language system, i.e. on pronunciation, vocabulary and grammar, whereas language use in terms of communicative functions, linguistic action and interactive behaviour has been almost completely ignored (Schneider & Barron, 2005: 3).

This thesis examines Irish English in an institutional context which has a high level of prestige – the national parliament of Ireland. As such, the question of which variety of Irish English is spoken in that parliament of Ireland is raised. It is proposed that the language spoken in Dáil Éireann can be considered standard Irish English, and also that the language spoken in Dáil Éireann can be considered a form of institutional talk.

Standard English is the term used for that variety of a language which is considered to be the norm. It is the variety held up as the optimum for educational purposes and used as a yardstick against which all the other varieties of a language are measured. Being a prestige variety, a standard language is spoken by a minority of people within a society, typically those occupying positions of power (Jenkins 2003: 29).

Hickey (2007: 27) notes that “explicit investigations of ‘standard Irish English’ have been few so far”. Indeed, some commentators have gone so far as to suggest there is no such thing; “There is as yet little sign of a regionally distinctive educated standard in Ireland” (Crystal, 1999: 336). As noted earlier (section 3.1.1) there is a distinct ambiguity about feelings towards the English language among many Irish people, due to the post-colonial mentality of the Irish. English is the language of the coloniser, and (as already noted) the second official language of the state. Mac Mathúna says this suspicion of Standard British English is particularly acute in the case of pronunciation; “Received Pronunciation (RP) is not the desired norm in Ireland, either North or South; nor is it taught in Irish schools. In a recently liberated country, such as the Republic of Ireland, the use of RP is still associated with the colonised nation and it is not the standard to which the majority of indigenous educated people aspire” (2004: 117). Harris (1991: 39) states flatly “There exists no fully independent Irish English vernacular”. He points to Irish English being a continuum of varieties, ranging from most to least standard-like. Despite the ambiguous status of English in Ireland, it also has to be conceded that Irish English has a significant role to play in defining and maintaining our national identity; it is, after all, the vernacular for almost all Irish citizens in the Republic.
of Ireland. It might also be noted here that, despite this professed ambiguity towards English, the fact that Ireland is a primarily English-speaking country can only be an advantage in the globalised world we now live in; indeed, all Irish governments regularly point to our English-speaking workforce as a major advantage when Ireland is seeking investment from multinational companies.

The post-colonial mentality, whereby the Irish state emphasised political and cultural differences from England, White suggests, is partially responsible for the perceived lack of a Standard Irish English. She then goes on to argue against this mentality, however, stating that;

> A standard variety of Irish English should be recognised as playing some role at least in articulating many of those parts of national identity which are held in common. Standard Irish English [...] is more suited to this role than more localised dialectal varieties of Irish English, since it has a prestige which regional dialects lack, and is a variety which is used by educated speakers across the Republic

(White, 2006: 220).

White goes on to argue that all former colonies of England have their own regional variety of English (which is internationally intelligible), but that these varieties also have unique features which help to express the local identity. This point is echoed by Kirk and Kallen (2004: 88), who point to the “dual nature of Irish Standard English”, indicating that this variety of Irish English shows “both the effects of the standardisation process common to all standard Englishes and the effects of Celticisation arising from a variety of circumstances”. Mac Mathúna argues that if a Standard Irish English does exist, it is similar to Standard British English in being primarily a social dialect; “We know that there exists a range of Irish English regional and local dialects, some of which are quite traditional, including some urban ones, and others which are less conservative and traditional. The middle-class speakers of each of these various dialects have a kind of standard speech which they can avail of as appropriate and felicitous” (2004: 116).

Despite these caveats, however, most researchers agree that a Standard Irish English can be identified. Cheshire and Milroy (1993; 31) indicate that they believe there is a Standard Irish English (as well as a standard Scottish English), and that these are distinct from Standard British English; they argues that the partial political independence of Ireland and Scotland
has given a social status to certain patterns of syntax which are not found in Standard British English (1993: 140). Mac Mathúna (2004: 126) tells us that there does exist a Standard Irish English, which differs significantly from regional varieties of Irish English.

Standard Irish English is essentially Standard English plus those features of lexis and grammar appearing across a range of spoken texts which may plausibly be assumed to be of Irish origin. It is not exactly the same as Standard British English or Received Pronunciation (RP), however, since the spoken texts are also unmistakably celticised

(Mac Mathúna, 2004: 115).

He goes on to point out (2004: 118) that distinctive features of urban Irish working class dialects do not appear in what he calls ‘middle-class’ speakers. He also points out that a range of language features (including phonology, syntax, lexis and pragmatics) determine what may be called Standard Irish English. Although a very recent paper by Filppula notes that “it is true that it would be far-fetched to speak of a separate Irish English grammar (or vocabulary for that matter), especially insofar as the ‘standard’ or educated varieties of Irish English are concerned. Indeed, there is no commonly accepted, codified or observed national-level Irish English standard” (2012: 86), Filppula then goes on to identify a ‘standard’ Irish English as being identified with what is known as ‘Dublin 4 English’ – the language used by the Irish educational and broadcast services – “Dublin 4 has a mainly professional and middle-class population, whose usage of English is in the Irish context regarded as the most prestigious variety serving as a model for educated Irish English usage in general” (Filppula, 2012: 86). Filppula goes on to note, however, that “the situation is very different when it comes to vernacular or ‘nonstandard’ Irish English varieties spoken by people with less formal education in both urban and rural areas and also by educated people in informal contexts” (ibid). Harris, although denying that a Standard Irish English exists, makes the point that “Irish English usage cannot be viewed as reflecting ‘careless’ or unsystematic deviation from standard linguistic norms. Close inspection of Irish English word and sentence structure reveals that it is governed by grammatical rules which differ systematically and in some cases quite fundamentally from equivalent rules in the standard language” (Harris, 1993: 177). It is believed, therefore, for the purpose of this research, that a Standard Irish English does exist (even if it is primarily a social dialect, as Filppula suggests), that this variety is distinct both from Standard British English and from regional Irish English varieties, and that this variety has distinct features which can be identified and analysed.
3.2 Parliamentary discourse

Paul Bayley points out that there is no such thing as a ‘language of politics’; it is a composite discourse type which includes a number of subsets and a very large number of forms; “for example, if it is true that one of the most important arenas for political socialisation is the family, even informal conversation around the meal table could be considered as a type of political discourse” (2004: 9). Political language is a vast area, and it is clear that all language is, in a sense, political. Ruth Wodak (2009: 4) draws a distinction between what she calls ‘frontstage’ and ‘backstage’ behaviour by politicians, ‘frontstage’ being behaviour such as parliamentary debates and news interviews, which are performed directly for an audience, and ‘backstage’ behaviour being behaviour which the public do not see, such as informal meetings in corridors. Wodak acknowledges this terminology as originating from Goffman. She also suggests using the term ‘political linguistics’ to describe a new academic field, for investigations into political language which fall somewhere between political science and linguistics. Wodak (2009: 12) also points out that linguists studying political discourse have tended to approach political discourse from 4 fields, in particular; ethnomethodology, conversation analysis (CA), sociolinguistic analysis, and (Critical) Discourse Analysis (CDA). Wodak’s own work, as well as the substantial output of Van Dijk, Chilton, Fairclough and others fits into the field of CDA, as discussed in chapter one of this thesis.

This research focuses on one small sub-set of language used by politicians, the language of parliamentary discourse. “Parliamentary talk is a sub-genre of political language and represents its most formal and institutionalised variety” (Bayley, 2004: 1) More specifically, Bayley tells us that “The activity of parliaments is, or can be seen as, linguistic activity . . . parliament is the site where government and opposition go ‘on the record’ . . . where politicians are judged by their peers, their party hierarchies and, perhaps to a lesser extent and indirectly by the media, by their electors” (2004: 8). Tannen, while telling us that “politics is partisan and oppositional by nature” (1998: 100) even points out that the very shape of a parliamentary chamber often emphasises this, with deputies facing each other on either side of a chamber. Some commentators have argued in recent years (Bayley, 2004; also Tannen, 1998) that parliamentary language has become more heightened in recent years, and that this may be related to the televising of parliamentary exchanges, which became commonplace in the 1990s. “In recent years, in both Washington and Westminster, a kind of agnostic inflation
has set in whereby opposition has become more extreme, and the adversarial nature of the system is being routinely abused” (Tannen, 1998: 101).

In recent years, a significant volume published in the area of parliamentary discourse was edited by Paul Bayley; *Cross-cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse* (2004) includes significant papers by Ilie on the use of insults in national parliaments and by Bevitori on interruptions in national parliaments. Ilie (2003: 72) points out that there are contradictory tendencies inherent in all parliamentary exchanges, because these exchanges consist of, on the one hand, a struggle for power and on the other hand they also consist of conventions which must be upheld. “Parliamentary debates presuppose, on the one hand, a spirit of adversariality, which is manifested in position-claiming and opponent-challenging acts, and on the other, a spirit of co-operativeness”. Van Dijk (2003) argues that parliamentary discourse does not have any exclusive linguistic features, although Bayley (2004) points out that the high probability of the occurrence of certain features (for example, terms of address) mean that most people would be able to identify a recording of a parliamentary exchange quite quickly;

It might be argued that particular combinations of certain features . . . such as some phonological features, interaction strategies, intervention length, terms of address, metadiscursive and argumentative lexis . . . and complex structures of subordination favouring conditionals and concessives, give parliamentary language its distinctive and recognisable flavour

(Bayley, 2004: 13).

One of the most deeply held beliefs of democrats is of the value of freedom of speech, parliamentary discourse and universal franchise, and Irish people are no different in this regard (Coakley, 2010). However, Bayley tells us that there have been few studies of the language used in national parliaments, “despite the fact that all parliamentary discourse becomes an official document and is freely available, either through print or, over the last few years, on the internet” (2004: 9). Bayley points out that little attention has been paid to the language of parliaments, and that people often treat the language of parliaments with disrespect or scepticism. Bayley has argued that “the arena for political debate has shifted in the last fifty years from Parliament to the mass media, which have arguably become the principle organ for the communication of political ideas” (2004: 11). He claims that
“parliamentary dialectic has only a limited persuasive function, perhaps a merely symbolic one” (*ibid*). He then goes on to reject this assertion, however, pointing out that even though the decision-making functions of parliament may have declined, parliamentary discourse has a number of other functions, which are not necessarily directly involved in legislation.

Bayley points out that parliaments vary according to the constitutional framework of the particular country and their particular function within the legislative framework – this is summarised elegantly in the introductory quote from Bayley, which can be found at the opening of this chapter. He notes that variables which can affect the language used in a given parliament are the form of political representation (proportional representation being more likely to host non-mainstream voices than first-past-the-post systems) and the role of the parliament in relation to the executive function of government. Gruber (cited in Obeng, 1997) points to the importance of an awareness of the particular society in which a politician operates. This tacit knowledge can allow a politician to be deliberately vague, knowing that the particular message being conveyed indirectly will be understood by the target audience. This means, Gruber claims, that most politically face-threatening acts are done ‘off-record’ (this is discussed in more depth in sections 2.1.4 and 3.2.3 of this thesis). Bayley notes that all parliamentary discourse, whatever the country, is ritualised and rule-bound;

> it is governed by tradition, rules and regulations and new Members are required to respect them. Naturally the rituals and rules observed change from nation to nation but they will all determine linguistic choices [. . .] procedures, moreover, may be formally respected and yet at the same time be flouted by MPs in order to reiterate a concept and to hold the floor

(Bayley, 2004: 19).

Bayley also makes the point that, although parliamentary discourse is fundamentally adversarial, adversarial communication norms are certainly not universal in parliamentary discourse – a considerable amount of routine parliamentary business is bipartisan, and MPs often co-operate with each other across party lines (2004: 21). Indeed, Committee work (which accounts for approximately 30% of the daily schedule in Dáil Eireann) is predicated on co-operation between political parties, even parties with sharply differing ideological positions.
3.2.1 Question Time (QT) in Parliaments

In Britain, QT has been recognised since 1869, and Prime Minister’s QT since 1961. Fenton-Smith (2008: 98) points out that QT, “the parliamentary procedure in which the highest leaders in the land may be subject to questioning without notice” is an activity which is common to a large proportion of parliaments world-wide. He notes that the majority of studies of ‘questioning’ in political discourse focus on the field of media settings and press conferences, and he points out that very few studies deal with ‘questioning’ interactions in parliamentary settings. One of the early studies dealing with questioning in a parliamentary setting was Wilson (1990). Paul Chilton (2004: 92) has written on the history and role of QT in the House of Commons in Westminster. The Irish practice is based very much on this form of questioning, with similar rules and expectations (see section 1.4 of this thesis for a detailed description of the Irish context). Since 2004, Fenton-Smith (2008) has written on political performance in adversarial QT, while Partington (2008) has written on teasing in White House Press Briefings. There have also been a number of significant papers written in recent years which focus specifically on politeness during QT – these are discussed in detail in the next section of this thesis.

Bayley notes that “asking questions of ministers for example is not a legislative activity but a calling to account of the government in the name of a party, constituency or other interests” (Bayley, 2004: 12). Fenton-Smith (2008) summarises the types of questions which occur during QT as follows;

a) government ministers answering ‘friendly’ questions, usually posed by members of its own party
b) opposition members asking questions as a way to get themselves noticed in the media or by the general public
c) opposition members trying to obtain information that was not previously on the public record
d) opposition members drawing attention to the poor performance of the government or ministers
e) members bringing particular issues to the attention of a minister
f) as a general ‘performance’, releasing tensions between parties and highlighting differences between political parties
Fenton-Smith goes on to point out that the internal structure of many of the ‘questions’ during QT is quite fixed, and can be seen as a mini-text in itself. He also points out that these texts are carefully structured, much more so than the answers, which are (at least somewhat) spontaneous. He notes the importance of analysing the generic structure of questions when analysing parliamentary discourse. According to Fenton-Smith, questions are made up of three distinct parts; a preface, question and rhetorical hook. The preface is the insertion of one or more statements prior to the question itself. This can contextualise the question, provide relevance for the question to follow, or constrain or pressure the recipient to answer in a particular way. Fenton-Smith also indicates that the preface can circumvent institutional constraints – it may often contain a hidden argument. A cursory look at Dáil Eireann transcripts indicate that the Ceann Comhairle regularly says, “Deputy, a question please”, “does the deputy have a question?”, and other phrases of this type. This indicates, of course, the structural rigidity of the QT format, as well as the normative expectations which govern linguistic behaviour in that discourse event. The second part of Fenton-Smith’s taxonomy, the question itself, is self-explanatory. However, he posits that the question is often accompanied by a rhetorical hook – a snappy concluding line that is “more of a media sound bite than a conventional demand for information” (Fenton-Smith, 2008: 106).

Beard (1999: 105) notes that the linguist should be aware of the difference between questions posed by the opposition and questions posed by supporters of the government, during QT; questions from their own side will usually be known in advance, and may even be planted, giving the chance to make a speech on a favoured topic rather than actually reply to a question as such. This is not a significant feature of QT in Ireland, as noted in section 1.4 of this thesis, and is an important difference between QT in Ireland and QT in Britain. Finally, Fenton-Smith (2008) notes a number of ways in which a politician may avoid answering a hostile question during QT. These include

a) Referring to the question as an outrageous slur/allegation
b) Reformulating the question
c) Accusing the questioner (or his/her party) of the same charge
d) Claiming to have acted on departmental advice
e) Claiming to be unable to answer the question due to inadequate information/time
f) Stating that the questioner is merely ‘playing games’
g) Stating how the government is dealing with the problem or issue
h) Stating that the question is directed to the wrong person
3.3 Politeness and parliamentary discourse

As noted in chapter 2 of this thesis, definitions of politeness assume that all social action is geared towards co-operation. This is not necessarily the case in parliamentary discourse, however, which can be seen as a form of ‘conflictual discourse’ (a neologism used by Watts, among others). Negative politeness (essentially the desire to remain autonomous and not be imposed upon by others), therefore, is a significant factor in political discourse. Partington (2003: 128) argues that both participants in a discussion (where the relationship is asymmetrical) are in a vulnerable position, with both at the risk of losing ‘face’. Because the flow of information is asymmetrical, one person is, directly or indirectly, the object of the talk – in this case, the government deputy who has control of the information required. On the other hand, the questioner has to expose something of their beliefs and arguments when putting forward a question, thus putting themselves in a vulnerable position also. This makes parliamentary discourse a fruitful area for CDA researchers, who are particularly concerned with the concept of power. Partington (2003: 157) points out that parliamentary exchanges belong to a very particular type of interaction, the scheduled argument. This has also been noted by researchers in the area of impoliteness, such as Archer (2011), Harris (2011) and Culpeper (2011, 2008, 1996). As such, it has been noted that parliamentary exchanges have much in common with courtroom exchanges and certain types of business meeting (often between labour and management), which can also be seen as formal settings.

Paul Chilton points out (2004, 40) that Brown and Levinson’s framework is relevant to those interested in studying political language; “The politician has to achieve a balance between positive-face strategies and negative face strategies”. Chilton notes the following as being strategies used by politicians which are addressed to positive face needs; forms of solidarity (such as appeals to patriotism or brotherhood), persuasion devices, coercion (for example, a politician in power setting an agenda and selecting topics for discussion). Chilton’s list of positive politeness strategies has been used in this research when drawing up a list of positive politeness strategies for the qualitative dimension of this thesis (see section 7.2). The following are, Chilton says, political strategies which address the listeners’ negative face; use of euphemism, evasion techniques, use of mitigation, obliqueness. Chilton points out that when a politician performs a face-threatening act (for example, issuing bad news about a situation), he/she verbalises this FTA in a strategic way, often using mitigation as a strategy –
this is a concrete example of Brown and Levinson’s theory in action in a political context (Chilton, 2004: 40). What Brown and Levinson identified as “positive politeness” is also significant to a pragmatic study of politeness in a parliamentary setting. Positive politeness “‘anoints’ the face of the addressee . . . by treating him as a member of an in-group, a friend, a person whose wants and personality traits are known and liked” (Brown & Levinson, 1987: 70). The three main strategies for ‘anointing’ are

1) claiming common ground with the hearer
2) conveying that you wish to co-operate with the hearer
3) fulfilling the hearer’s needs and desires.

Of course, in a political arena such as Dáil Éireann, the third of these is not always possible or desirable, so it is possible that the responder in this situation must spend more time on the first two strategies. Indeed, it could be argued that ideological differences between politicians mean that the first strategy should not be assumed in political situations, either. Other positive politeness mechanisms include seeking agreement where possible, avoiding open disagreement with one’s interlocutor, and taking time over refusing an offer (in order to soothe any potential offence to the offerer’s face). Actions which can damage a speaker’s positive face include confessions of guilt, apologising, emotional leakage and self-deprecation. Labov and Fanshel (1977: 96) discuss what they call a ‘rule of overdue obligations’, which states that “If A asserts that B has not performed obligations in role R, then A is heard as challenging B’s competence in R”. This is of great significance in political discourse analysis, which analyses a situation where one party is continually challenging the competence of another.

Sandra Harris (2003, 2001) has also pointed out the significance of Brown and Levinson to the researcher studying parliamentary discourse. She notes particularly the importance of negative politeness, pointing out that negative politeness is particularly relevant in institutional contexts – for example, in the frequent use of directives, which emphasise social distance and formality. Harris suggests that this distancing and de-personalising of relationships (for example, the insistence of all questions and replies during QT being addressed to the Speaker of the House) helps to avoid explicit confrontation and breakdown (2003: 33). Harris notes that, in institutional settings such as parliament, informative and interpersonal modes interpenetrate, and that Brown and Levinson’s formula for identifying the weightiness (W) of a FTA is particularly important in these institutional settings. Summarising Brown and Levinson, Harris points out that the weightiness of a request (W),
the relative power of the speakers (P) and the social distance between the speakers (D) all interfere with individual’s face wants (R) (2003: 36). Brown and Levinson predict that the greater the power hierarchy difference, the more redressive strategies will be used, especially with impositions. In institutional settings such as parliament, power derives from the institutional role, which means that redressive strategies may be used differently in varying institutional settings (Harris, 2003: 38). In addition to Harris’s findings on the relevance of Brown and Levinson to politeness in institutional settings, de Ayala has noted that, in addition to P, D and R (as defined by Brown and Levinson), QT is particularly affected by political affect, audience and parliamentary code (de Ayala, 2001: 146) – see the following section for more on politeness and QT.

In order to examine politeness in political discourse, it seems that an understanding of the norms which govern the particular political setting is key. Levinson (1992) has pointed out that knowing the constraints on allowable contributions in an institutional setting are part of a speaker’s communicative competence – the knowledge required to use language appropriately in a given situation. Harris (2003: 38) defined norms as “appropriate behaviour in a particular situation”. She goes on to point out that institutional norms are specific cultural and sense-making practices, and that politeness theory can help us define and interpret linguistic norms in institutions. Institutional norms, of course, play a key role within that institution, since discourse practices in institutions reflect and act to re-constitute wider social and political norms. Harris also points out that confrontational encounters (such as courtroom discourse or parliamentary discourse) can present an ideal site to examine face-redressive strategies (2003: 42). The centrality of norms has been further identified by recent researchers in the fields of impoliteness; for example, Lorenzo-Duz (2009) notes that intentions and norms are the key to understanding both politeness and impoliteness, and Culpeper, in his 2011 book *Impoliteness*, has noted that we often classify whether an utterance is rude or not by looking at the normative behaviour generally expected in a particular setting, and then evaluating whether these norms have been flouted or not. Tracy (2008) has argued for the term ‘reasonable hostility’ to be used when discussing behaviour in parliamentary-type settings, rather than the terminology of positive and negative face, which she argues is unsuitable for describing the type of behaviour necessary in these settings.
3.3.1 Politeness and QT

Although much research has been done on linguistic politeness, Lakoff (1989) suggests that politeness needs to be studied more in institutional and professional contexts, and that different discourse types generate different types of politeness, while Harris similarly says that “Much research on politeness has been around informal situations [but] politeness has been much less examined in relationship to institutional contexts” (2001: 452). Harris then goes on to suggest that QT is particularly interesting to the linguist examining politeness in a political context. “As an institutional setting, the British House of Commons, and particularly Prime Minister’s Question Time, provides a very fruitful and interesting context for exploring notions of polite and impolite behaviour, and extending politeness theory” (Harris, 2001: 453). Fenton-Smith (2008: 98) points out that QT in some form is a feature of virtually all parliaments in the Western world, and that prototypical forms of language and politeness appear in all QTs. Harris points out (2001: 330) that the expectations and established interactional conventions which occur during QT enable participants “to interpret intentional face-threatening acts as an important component of an adversarial and confrontational political process in such a way that they do not lead to either a breakdown in communication or in interpersonal relationships”. Similarly, Ilie notes that “many properties of parliamentary debates, apart from speech acts such as attacking and defending, are controlled by MPs’ interactional roles” (Ilie, 2010: 889). This can be both an advantage and a disadvantage to participants, of course; “The convention-based and rule-regulated parliamentary setting represents both a prerequisite and a challenge for MPs, who can be seen to comply with institutional norms while at the same time attempting to challenge them so as to reach well-defined purposes” (Ilie, 2010: 890).

As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, there has been burgeoning interest in recent years on politeness and QT, and a number of papers have been published examining politeness during QT. Examples include ‘Negative Politeness Forms and Impoliteness Functions in Institutional Discourse: A Corpus-Assisted Approach’ (Taylor, 2011) and ‘Face-threatening Acts and Standing Orders; ‘Politeness’ or ‘Politics’ in Question Time Discussions of the Kenyan Parliament’ (Ambuyo, et al., 2011). Arguably the most significant work to date on politeness in QT is by de Ayala (2001), in her paper ‘FTAs and Erskine May; Conflicting Needs? Politeness in Question Time’, and she makes a number of points which are particularly germane to this study. Firstly, she points out that FTAs are intrinsic to QT, and
that during QT, there is consensus to threaten the opponent’s public face. She points out that QT is the most adversarial of parliamentary genres, but there are a number of ways in which face threat is minimised during QT. She notes that FTAs are indirect in parliament, because they are addressed to the Speaker of the House, and that a strong distinction between public and private face of politicians is reinforced by strict use of terms of address in this setting (i.e. ‘I’ and ’you’ are not permitted). She points out that this leads to ‘parliamentary institutionalised hypocrisy’, where almost anything can be said, provided it is formulated with the appropriate degree of politeness (what participants call ‘parliamentary language’). This echoes the findings of Harris (2001), discussed in the previous section of this thesis. De Ayala’s conclusion was that QT has a high frequency of FTAs and politeness strategies, that QT has a special, unique form of politeness, independent of official rules, and that face-work in QT is mostly associated with attacking and threatening the opponents’ public face. The consensus is to threaten (public) face, but communication would be difficult without the appearance of face respect, which makes facework during QT a fascinating area of study.

De Ayala’s work has been built on in recent years by Peter Bull, in two significant papers; ‘Face, Facework and Political Discourse’ (Bull and Fetzer, 2010) and ‘Adversarial Discourse in Prime Minister’s Questions’ (Bull and Wells, 2011). Both of these papers are significant for this research. The 2010 paper examines three genres of political communication; interviews, Prime Minister’s QT and monologues. The finding of Bull and Fetzer in relation to Prime Minister’s QT was that “face aggravation is a salient feature of this type of discourse, although the Prime Minister must also defend both positive and negative face” (2010: 155). The 2011 paper is even more closely related to this research, given that it examines Prime Minister’s QT in order to identify different ways in which FTAs are performed during this setting. Bull and Wells identify six distinctive ways in which FTAs are performed by the opposition, as well five ways in which the Prime Minister responds to these FTAs (2011: 1).

The six distinctive ways of performing FTAs identified by Bull and Wells are

- FTA contained in question preface
- Asking a very detailed question
- Contentious statement contained in question
- Conflictual questions (where all possible answers have a negative outcome)
- Invitation to perform a face-damaging response
Asides

The five ways identified by Bull and Wells of responding to a FTA are;

- Talking up the government’s positive face
- Rebut the FTA
- Attacking the opposition
- Ignoring the FTA contained in the question
- Self-justification (offering reasons for government action)

The overall finding of Bull and Wells is that “face aggravation in PMQs is not just an acceptable form of parliamentary discourse, it is both sanctioned and rewarded, a means whereby MPs may enhance their own status through aggressive facework” (2011: 1). This categorisation has been utilised in chapter 7 of this thesis, when FTAs in the Irish and British parliaments are examined. Another recent paper which has been published relating to politeness and QT is the July 2011 paper from Ambuyo et al., entitled ‘Face Threatening Acts and Standing Orders: “Politeness” or “Politics” in the Question Time Discussions of the Kenyan Parliament’. As with de Ayala, Bull and Fetzer, and Bull and Wells, Ambuyo et al. note that politeness strategies are essential for the functioning of QT, and that politeness strategies which mitigate FTAs actually help the system to function, as well as on occasion being in a ritual form, and on other occasions are used as a political tool (Ambuyo, et al., 2011: 209).

3.4 The specific tokens examined in the study

The studies referred to in section 1 of this thesis by Barron (2005b), Kallen (2005), Farr (2005a) and Farr & O’Keefe (2002) all indicate that Irish English speakers use modal verbs in unique ways, and this is of significance to politeness researchers. Indeed, the initial intention was for this research to examine modal verb use during QT in Ireland and Britain, and a preliminary study was carried out which investigated these features. However (as will be made clear in chapter 4), modal verbs are not recorded faithfully in the Official Report in Dáil Eireann, and previous research has indicated that modal verbs are not recorded faithfully in the British Hansard also (Slembrouck, 1992; Mollin, 2007). The focus of this research then moved on to discourse markers. One of the features of Irish English which is of particular interest to the areas of politeness and pragmatics is the use of discourse markers. The use of discourse markers is one of the ways in which a language variety is identified as unique.
(Crystal, 2003). This is obviously true of Irish English; “The tone in Irish English is achieved by a series of adjectives, generic references, discourse markers and fillers of various kinds” (Hickey, 2007: 371). However, it will be seen in chapter 4 of this thesis that orality features such as exclamations, repetitions and interjections are not consistently recorded in the Official Report. Therefore, although a thorough study of the discourse markers listed above would undoubtedly reveal much about politeness in Dáil Éireann, such a study is not feasible from a corpus built from the Official Report. This study has first isolated two specific discourse markers (not unique to Ireland), ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. Because their syntactic position and function is heavily marked in English (Stubbs, 1983; Ruhlemann, 2010), these are more likely to be recorded faithfully by Dáil Éireann transcribers (see chapter 4 for further details). The fact that these discourse markers are not unique to Irish English also makes a comparative study possible. In addition, the researcher has confirmed in a preliminary study that these discourse markers appear to be recorded correctly in the Official Report.

The second pragmatic feature chosen for specific analysis during this thesis is responses to Yes/No questions. It is recognized, of course, that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are not politeness markers in the same way that ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ are (although they are, in a sense, related to politeness, particularly in the work of Brown and Levinson – see section 6.1 of this thesis). ‘Yes’ and ‘no’ have multiple functions in English. However, there is significant evidence that Irish English speakers use ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in unique ways, and these are closely related to politeness. The Irish language has no exact equivalents of the particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’, and according to Filppula (1999: 160) this has meant that Irish speakers of English tend to use these particles more sparingly than other speakers of English, and Irish speakers tend to add a short sentence of affirmation or denial when they do use these particles. The tendency of Irish English speakers to avoid the particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to polar questions is discussed in chapter 2 (‘Affirming, assenting and saluting’) of P.W. Joyce’s 1910 work, although the particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are not themselves discussed in detail in this chapter. A significant scholarly work on these particles in Irish English was completed by Greene (1972) and the Irish tendency to avoid these particles was also noted by Filppula (1999). “We should expect to find a tendency to omit ‘yes’ or ‘no’ [in Irish English] and, in lieu of these, repetition of the verbal or modal element including or course the subject” (Filppula, 1999: 162). Filppula also notes that this tendency is far more frequent in western areas of Ireland when compared with Dublin; he argues that this indicates the influence of the Irish language
is more pervasive in western, rural Ireland when compared with Dublin, which is both geographically and culturally closer to Britain. Raymond Hickey (2007) has also noted this in his recent overview of Irish English.

Diamant (2012: 248), in a very recent study of yes/no questions in Irish English, has confirmed the findings of earlier researchers that polar yes/no questions tend to be answered by repetition of elements of the question rather than with the particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the Irish setting. She also noted *passim* that elderly respondents in his study “hardly used ‘yes’ or ‘no’ in their responses” (2012: 262), while younger respondents used ‘yes’ and ‘no’ particles in responses somewhat more frequently. “Its obligatory use in Irish has led to a greater use of respondives in Irish English [rather than the particles ‘yes’ or ‘no’] when compared with other varieties of English . . . this was the case for all of the Irish English patterns found in the corpus; lexical, auxiliary and modal verbs” (Diamant, 2012: 261). This tendency has further been noted by Amador-Moreno (2010: 116). The findings of researchers into ‘yes’ and ‘no’ use in the Irish English context is summarized clearly by Kallen, in his paper *Politeness in Ireland*;

> Even the simple question-answer adjacency pair in Irish English affords an enhanced opportunity to engage in conversational reciprocity. Speakers of Irish English frequently answer questions with phrases or full clauses that repeat the verb of the question rather than using a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This pattern is generally taken to originate in substratal transfer from the Irish language, which has no word for ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but relies on repetition of the verb. This conversational pattern may thus originate in syntax rather than in politeness, but its effect is that Irish responses will not appear as bald as simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses

(Kallen, 2005:139).

Whether this tendency is seen to occur in the formal, institutionalised environment of Dáil Éireann is a central aspect of this study; given that the responses to questions can reveal information about both the positive and negative ‘face’ of the interlocutors, questioning strategies and their effectiveness are particularly important for this study. As with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, the researcher confirmed in a preliminary study that these features are recorded accurately in the Official Report. A more detailed description of previous research related to ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’, can be found in the chapters dealing specifically with these tokens, chapters 5 and 6 (sections 5.1 and 6.1).
3.5 Conclusion and Summary

This chapter, together with chapter 2, has laid out the theoretical background and framework which underpin this study. The assumptions which underlie this study, based on previous research in the fields of Irish English and political language, can be summarised as follows;

- The English spoken in Ireland has unique features in the areas of lexis, grammar, pronunciation and pragmatics. It is generally (although not universally) agreed that the unique features of Irish English are a result of language contact and language shift between Irish and English. Irish English differs from standard English in numerous ways, including pronunciation, grammar, vocabulary and discourse patterns.

- Pragmatics in Irish English has been generally under-studied, although this has been somewhat rectified in recent years. Some of the pragmatic norms of Irish English include consentuality, reassurance, minimizing contradiction, and indirectness; this may be due to the post-colonial nature of the Irish state, or it may be due to Ireland’s position as a small, island nation on the verge of a continent.

- It is widely accepted that Irish people are seen as more indirect than speakers of other varieties of English. It has been shown in numerous previous studies that Irish English uses a number of different politeness strategies, uses these frequently, and uses these strategies in different ways to speakers of other varieties of English. In particular, previous research has indicated a greater tendency towards positive politeness strategies in Irish English.

- It is argued that a variety of English which could be called Standard Irish English exists (primarily as a social dialect), that this variety is distinct both from Standard British English and from regional Irish English varieties, and that this variety is the language variety most likely to be used in the Irish parliament.

- Parliamentary discourse has arguably been under-studied generally, given the significance of national parliaments. This is certainly the case in the Irish context, where there have been very few studies of the linguistic activity which occurs in Dáil Éireann. This study rectifies that situation somewhat. The linguistic activity in a parliament reflects both the wider society which that parliament represents, and the specific political and historic environment which the parliament exists in.

- Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has been utilized by a number of researchers examining parliamentary discourse, and both positive and negative facework
strategies are used by politicians in parliament. In addition, an understanding of the norms which govern behavior in a particular institution are central to understanding and interpreting politeness and impoliteness in that institution.

- QT is particularly interesting to the linguist examining politeness in a political context, due to the highly interactive nature of discourse in that setting (compared with other forms of parliamentary discourse). FTAs appear to be central to the discourse event that is QT, according to a number of researchers.

- The review of the related literature has led to the decision to focus on specific tokens in this research; ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, as well as ‘yes’ and ‘no’. It is argued that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ have particular significance for politeness in Ireland, due to transference from the Irish language.
Chapter 4 – Transcription and the Official Report

Large databases of transcribed speech, downloadable from the Internet, are a corpus linguist's dream. They turn into a corpus linguist's nightmare, however, when the transcriptions are not linguistically accurate (Mollin, 2007).

The transcript plays a central role in research on spoken discourse, distilling and freezing in time the complex events and actions of interaction in categories of interest to the researcher . . . choices made concerning what type of information to preserve (or to neglect), what categories to use, and how to organise and display the information in a written and spatial medium can all affect the impressions the researcher derives from the data (Edwards, 1993).

4.1 Rationale

The question of the linguistic accuracy of parliamentary transcripts is a key question for linguists, in particular corpus linguists, who hope to build a corpus using this resource. It is central to this particular research, and it is fair to say that without an examination of the linguistic accuracy of the transcripts from which the corpus described in chapter 1 was compiled, any findings revealed would have to be treated with suspicion. The first detailed linguistic study on Question Time (QT) in Britain and politeness (Perez de Ayala, 2001) touches on this point briefly, and notes that “the Hansard version has been used in this research . . . it should be admitted that a spoken version of the texts would probably modify the results of the analysis slightly, though not in any decisive way” (2001: 152). Another significant recent study of politeness and QT in Britain was completed in 2011, by Peter Bull.
and Pam Wells (discussed in chapter 3). In contrast with de Ayala, they note the potential problems with using Hansard as a linguistic resource, and opt to utilise verbatim transcripts, making use of web-streaming of QT, a resource which was not available to de Ayala in 2001 – this resource has only been available since 2009. In the Irish context, the SPICE-Ireland corpus, which includes 22,390 words of parliamentary debate was also compiled from transcripts made for that project, rather than the Official Report. Other linguists examining parliamentary language (such as Taylor, 2011; Ilie, 2004, 2010; Dibattista, 2004) have built corpora from official transcripts and not noted any potential dangers with this approach. Bearing in mind the importance of accurate transcripts to the corpus linguist, however (as noted by McEnery and Wilson, 2001; also McEnery et al., 2006; also Reppen, 2010), this is somewhat unsatisfactory, and it is certain that a comprehensive preliminary study ought to be carried out by a researcher relying on official parliamentary transcripts before embarking on corpus building.

This chapter answers the initial research question which guides this research, “How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary discourse?” It also answers the secondary research questions, “Are the official Irish parliamentary transcripts a suitable resource for the corpus linguist? Are biases evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors, as has been found to be the case with the British Hansard? How does this affect the final product?” The research contained in this chapter closely follows the methodological approach outlined by Karyolemou and Papageorgiou (2009), Mollin (2007) and Slembruck (1992), by comparing the official parliamentary records with a line-by-line transcript constructed by the researcher, and by noting differences between the two texts. It also adds an extra dimension to previous research by supplementing this study with an observation of the process of producing the Official Report in Ireland, and by interviewing key personnel in the production of the Official Report. The chapter opens with a description of the background to the issues of transcription and the production of the Official Report. The methodology behind the study is then outlined, before findings are discussed. It is seen that there are significant differences between the Official Report in Ireland and what is actually said in the parliamentary chamber. It is also seen that the tokens to be analysed in the corpus aspect of this research appear to be recorded accurately in the Official Report.
4.2 Background and literature review

It is important for the linguist who wishes to use the parliamentary transcripts to be aware of how linguistically accurate (or otherwise) these transcripts are. The linguist has to bear in mind that the Official Report is not written with linguists in mind, a fact noted by Mollin in her analysis of linguistic accuracy in the British Hansard; “speech here is intended to be written down and to be recorded for history” (2007: 195). This point is later repeated and expanded upon; “While linguists would want to achieve absolute accuracy regarding what is said in which manner, the Hansard staff wish to transmit to readers today and in the future what was said in the Parliament in a 'correct' manner” (Mollin, 2007: 208). The official Hansard website describes the Hansard report as “substantially the verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument” (House of Commons Official Report, 2011). The official website of the Debates Office in Ireland makes a similar point; “It [the Official Report] is substantially but not strictly verbatim because it is accepted that the spoken word must be lightly edited for a readership rather than a listenership” (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010). This was confirmed also to be the case in Ireland during the course of an interview carried out by the researcher with an assistant editor of the Official Report; “for me, the main purpose of the Official Report lies in its importance as a historical record of parliamentary debate” (appendix A, page xvii). This interview also revealed that many of the reporters in Dáil Éireann do not come from a background in linguistics or applied languages; “staff are drawn from a wide range of academic disciplines – humanities, sciences, etc. . . . some are historians, some English graduates, some teachers, some ex-journalists, the list is endless” (appendix A, page xvi). The assistant editor interviewed also noted that, “it is imperative that anyone working as a reporter or editor understands the context in which parliamentary debate occurs. This requires them to have an interest in and knowledge of current affairs and wider international developments in order that they can identify terminology and understand references” (ibid).

It has been found in numerous studies (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009; Mollin, 2007; Slembrouck, 1992) that parliamentary transcripts are (in some areas) an unsuitable resource for linguistic analysis, yet parliamentary transcripts have been used in some significant studies in recent years (Bayley, 2004; Ilie, 2004; Bayley, Bevitori & Soni, 2004). Mollin (2007) notes that former British colonies (such as Ireland) tend to follow the editing
techniques and principles laid down by Hansard, and she suggests that any linguist wishing to use parliamentary transcripts as a resource carry out a preliminary study before embarking upon a large scale research project – she also notes that a thorough study of the process of transcription in former colonies of Britain is a project worthy of study in its own right; “Researchers wishing to use these Hansards as a source of data ought to study the accuracy of the reporting in a preliminary study” (2007: 209). It is with Mollin’s advice in mind that this preliminary study was undertaken.

4.2.1 The Irish context; The Debates Office and the Official Report.

Almost all democratic parliaments in the Western world make available for public record some kind of record of the proceedings in the parliamentary chamber; “It is a principle of parliamentary democracy that proceedings should be held in public and that a record should be published” (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010). In England, this parliamentary transcript is known as the Hansard, whereas in Ireland it is known as the Official Report; “The Official Report is the authoritative record of public proceedings in the Houses of the Oireachtas and parliamentary committees. It is a complete and impartial record of the contributions of speakers” (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010). The production of the Official Report has been strongly influenced by the production of the Hansard in Britain, which is, of course, a much older activity. This was confirmed to the researcher in an interview with an assistant editor in Dáil Éireann; “[Dáil house rules] have been built up over time, and would have been influenced by the UK Hansard system. There are major similarities in terms of how different legislatures treat procedural matters but variations in individual house styles” (appendix A, page xvi). In addition to this historical influence, there is also an organisation known as the British Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association (BIPRA). This organisation hosts parliamentary reporters from Dáil Éireann, the House of Commons, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales Assemblies, as well as governmental bodies from the Isle of Man, Alderney, Jersey and the London Assembly. This organisation hosts an annual congress, where matters of house style and technological developments are discussed (Bipra, 2011).

The existence of this organisation clearly points to potential similarities between reporting techniques in Dáil Éireann and the House of Commons – Mollin (2007) and Slembrouck (1992) note that there are likely to be similar issues (related to linguistic accuracy) between the House of Commons Hansard and Commonwealth (and former Commonwealth) countries, such as Ireland.
In Ireland, the Debates Office is responsible for producing the Official Report. The official Dáil website gives some background information about the Debates Office.

The Debates Office is headed by the Editor of Debates and three deputy editors, with responsibility for the Dáil, the Seanad and the committees. There are also seven assistant editors and a team of parliamentary reporters and administrative staff. The staff are graduates in a wide range of disciplines and many hold postgraduate qualifications. They are required to have excellent language skills and a sound knowledge of public affairs, both national and international.

(Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010).

The website also gives the following information about how the Official Report is produced;

Proceedings are logged by Parliamentary Reporters sitting in the Chamber and digitally recorded by sound technicians. Using the sound files on their PCs, the reporters produce the first draft of the Official Report. This is checked by an assistant editor, then the material is collated by a deputy editor who sends it for publication . . . The draft of the Official Report is available electronically within three hours to Members and staff in Leinster House and to Departments which have access to the Lotus Notes database. Segments of the Dáil and Seanad debates are published on the Oireachtas Internet site as they become available throughout the sitting day. Parliamentary Questions tabled by Deputies for written reply are added at the end of each day's proceedings

(Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010).

During interviews carried out with a deputy editor, the researcher discovered more about the Debates Office and the Official Report (complete transcripts of these interviews can be found in appendix A of this thesis). There is currently a staff of 57 working in Dáil Eireann in the Debates Office; this comprises 40 reporters, 10 deputy and assistant editors, and the remainder being administrative staff. During a typical Dáil debate, there are 12 reporters working in ten-minute takes, overseen by an editor. Reporters take a longhand log of speakers and interruptions in the Dáil chamber; they do not actually transcribe during their ten-minute take. Immediately after their ten-minute take is completed, they leave the Dáil chamber, open up the sound recording of the ten-minute take (the Dáil is fitted with an impressive series of ambience microphones), and transcribe the recording into a word document. When this is finished, the document is immediately sent to the editor, who accesses and edits the file. It is then published on the Oireachtas intranet (within 2 hours of the recording), before being published in full on the Oireachtas web-site, within 24 hours of the debate taking place. This process was observed by the researcher in 2008 – it proved a fascinating insight into the complexity of the process underlying the production of the Official Report.
4.2.2 Transcription.

Transcription is “the process of capturing the flow of discourse events in a written and spatial medium” (Edwards, 2001: 322). Transcription is of vital importance to linguists. “It is simply impossible to hold in mind the transient, highly multidimensional, and often overlapping events of an interaction as they unfold in real time. For this reason, transcripts are invaluable. They provide a distillation of the fleeting events of an interaction, frozen in time, freed from extraneous detail, and expressed in categories of interest to the researcher” (Edwards, 2001: 321). It has been noted, however, by a number of authors that transcription has not received sufficient attention from linguists who use transcripts for linguistic research.

Transcription design has received relatively little attention . . . to the degree that transcription conventions influence perceptions of the data, it seems important to consider them explicitly, and to systematically enumerate their underlying assumptions and implications for research. Such information is of use not only in arriving at the methods best suited for a particular purpose, but also in compensating for unwanted biases when using data transcribed by others.

(Edwards, 1993: 4)

This point has been repeated by Bucholtz; “Despite its centrality to the methods of discourse analysis, transcription has received disproportionately little attention in its own right” (1998: 1439). Similar points are made by other authors; “Transcriptions are translations, and like all translations they cannot exactly reproduce the original” (Roberts-Powers, 2005: 3). Green et al. point out that although a transcript is an analytic tool, “a transcript (itself) is a text that re'-presents an event; it is not the event itself” (1997: 172). They point out that the purpose and outcome of a transcript must always be borne in mind when analysing the transcript. Similarly, Partington (2003: 2) mentions the quality and level of transcription as being significant, particularly in the context of parliamentary discourse. The intention with transcription, as Partington points out, is to make the written texts as easy as possible to read; “the degree of detail in transcription is analogous to map-making, a question of choice in regard to the need of the user” (2003: 2).

“As useful as they are, transcripts are not unbiased representations of the data. Far from being exhaustive and objective, they are inherently selective and interpretive” (Edwards, 2001: 321). Ochs, in a seminal paper (1979), points out that discourse analysts should always have a heightened awareness of the transcription process, both because of the fact that transcriptions are almost always part of the discourse analyst's data, and also because “transcription is a
selective process reflecting theoretical goals and definitions” (1979: 43). This raises the issue of the (both deliberate and unconscious) ideological processes inherent in the production of a transcript. This point is expanded upon by Edwards; “The transcript is an invaluable asset in discourse analyses, but it is never theory-neutral” (Edwards, 2001: 344). This echoes the point of an earlier researcher;

If talk is a social act, then so is transcription. As transcribers fix the fleeting moments of words as marks on a page, they call up the social roles and relations constituted in language and rely on their own social evaluations of speech in deciding how to write it . . . in other words, all transcription is representation, and there is no natural or objective way in which talk can be written


Roberts, incidentally, points out that awareness of transcription ideologies is particularly important to the corpus linguist. In the context of parliamentary language, these ideological issues have been pointed to as significant by Mollin (1997), who argues that the Hansard transcriptions in Britain reflect a desire to impose what she calls standard, formal English on a reality which is much more complex.

Mollin notes that the Hansard transcripts which appear on the internet are “thrice removed” from the original; reporters note in shorthand what is said by MPs, before self-checking their notes for errors. These notes are then checked by editing staff, before appearing on the internet – usually the day after the debate has taken place (Mollin, 2007: 189). As noted in the previous section, there is a similar procedure followed in Dáil Eireann in the production of the Official Report. This was explored further in an interview carried out with an assistant editor in Dáil Eireann, for the purposes of this research;

Researcher; Essentially, then, there are two stages to the process in Ireland; editing by the Reporter and editing by the Assistant Editor?

Assistant Editor; Yes, that’s right. In essence, the Reporter also has an editorial function. They’re not expected to simply type in what is said, they also edit what is said and make sure the procedure is right. We expect them to follow the Editor’s Book. For good Reporters, the Assistant Editor should have little or anything left to do. What the Editor does, when the material comes through, is make sure the takes run together cohesively, that there is no overlap between takes, that the names are correct and the procedure is right. A good Reporter will have done a thorough job, we’ll check it for consistency, we’ll check it for context, if something jumps out at you and we feel that it may not be exactly right, those may have been the words the Deputy uttered but the
Deborah Cameron, in her influential 1995 book *Verbal Hygiene* wrote about the impulse to ‘clean up’ and ‘regulate’ language, which implies that editors and transcribers, when making choices about language, have a view that when making choices, one (and only one) choice is ‘correct’. This is highly significant, of course, in the managing of oral texts, particularly in the movement from oral to written text (Cameron, 1995; also Cook, 1990). Ochs similarly (1999) has written on the difficulties and dangers of relying on transcription when attempting to reproduce speech as text. In a 2009 study based on transcription in the Cypriot parliament, Karyolemou and Papageorgiou (2009) discovered that management and editing takes place at all stages of the transcription process in the Cypriot setting. The process of transcription in Cyprus appears to be almost identical to the one used in the Irish parliament, and the Cypriot researchers interviewed both stenographers and editors. Although it was expected that no editing or management would occur at the stenography stage of the process, this was found not to be the case; indeed, one of the stenographers was quoted as saying, “We don’t correct anything ’cause correcting is difficult work. Philologists know better … *but we do correct those little things, only those very obvious things*” (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009, italics added). Mollin (2007) also notes that comparing parliamentary debates from Britain with those from other countries “may be difficult” without an awareness of the editing principles in both countries. In the job profile document made available to this researcher by the Debates Office in Dáil Éireann (a document which is given to all new staff in the Debates Office, and which is also used in recruitment campaigns), the following is included;

> Speaker: The Chair has personal experience of drug abuse. *[sic]*

> Speaker: The Chair as a medical practitioner has had personal experience of the effects of drug abuse. *[Official Report]*
Members present in the Chamber for this debate understood perfectly what the speaker meant; that meaning might not suggest itself to readers of the historical record. The Official Report is compiled for a readership rather than a listenership. The skill of parliamentary reporting is to convert the spoken word into an accurate and readable record of parliamentary proceedings.

(Appendix A, page xxiv).

This example is certainly interesting and illustrative; it indicates that on occasion words and expressions are actually added to the Official Report, despite these words not being spoken during the actual exchange in the chamber.

An examination of the related literature, then, both in the areas of transcription and in the production of the Official Report, together with the interviews carried out for this research, indicate that an examination of the accuracy of the official parliamentary transcripts is of importance to the corpus linguist who is about to engage in a corpus-based examination which relies on the official transcripts for their corpus.

4.3 Methodology

It is the question of linguistic accuracy which is approached by Mollin in her seminal 2007 paper. Mollin chose 4 hours of parliamentary debate from the House of Commons in June 2006 and transcribed these 4 hours orthographically and in common with standard linguistic transcription norms. This was then compared line-by-line to the official Hansard record. Both transcripts were then changed to corpus files, and the resulting corpora were compared to each other (2007: 191). Unfortunately, this procedure proved impossible to replicate, given that it involves gaining official approval to record in the parliamentary chamber. Should a full study be done on transcription issues in the Irish parliament, it is recommended that this procedure be followed. The work of the SPICE-Ireland project in this area should also be noted at this point. This large-scale project included a category of parliamentary debates, which were created specifically for that project (i.e. they were not compiled from the Official Report). This consisted of a 22,390 word corpus, compiled from Dáil Éireann debates and the Northern Ireland Forum for Peace and Reconciliation (this is also discussed in section 3.1.4 of this thesis). The handbook accompanying this corpus includes a discussion on the transcription techniques utilised in the construction of the SPICE-Ireland corpus, including how such categories as ‘overlapping speech’ and ‘incomplete words’ were dealt with while compiling that corpus (Kallen and Kirk, 2008: 10). The research in this thesis focuses on QT, as opposed to Dáil debates, meaning the SPICE-Ireland material is of limited use for this
particular study, and the particular research questions focused on in this study, but the SPICE-Ireland transcripts are an interesting example of what has already been done in this field, in the Irish context.

The purpose of this preliminary study is simply to gauge the accuracy and reliability of the Official Report (from a linguistic point-of-view), so a simpler and smaller scale methodology was employed. A well-known Dáil debate, which received extensive radio and television coverage, was chosen - the first full day in the chair of a new speaker (Ceann Comhairle), Deputy John O’Donoghue. This received extensive coverage because the new Ceann Comhairle found it difficult to control Deputies, and visibly and vocally lost his temper at various points during the debate. It was felt that this would be an interesting test-case in examining how precisely the Official Report actually reproduces the language used in the Dáil chamber. The author of this study found the relevant television and radio reports on the internet (see appendix A for details), and transcribed 4 excerpts from the debate verbatim. These verbatim transcripts were then compared to the Official Report. At a later date, after the results of this study were analysed and the specific features of politeness to be focused on in this study were chosen, the researcher analysed another exchange in Dáil Eireann, which included some of the specific politeness features (‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’) to be analysed in this research.

Edwards (1993: 27) notes that transcription of words from fluent speech is “difficult and error-prone”, and also that “transcription is a notoriously time-consuming process” (Edwards, 2001: 336). As an illustration of how difficult and time-consuming it can be to transcribe an exchange verbatim, it should be noted that the total time frame of the 4 initial exchanges transcribed for this preliminary study by the author was less than 4 minutes long. The supplementary exchange from 2011 was approximately 3 minutes long. This means, of course, that results should be treated with caution. Nevertheless, it is believed that for the purposes of this preliminary study, such a methodology was sufficient. It is also noted that results obtained from this study replicated almost exactly results found in comparable studies in other parliamentary settings, notably Britain and Cyprus. Mollin (2007) speculates that parliaments in former British colonies (such as Ireland) likely have similar transcription and editing procedures to Britain, and suggests that small-scale pilot studies in these parliamentary settings ought to bear this hypothesis out. This present study appears to support
her thesis. It is recognised that the scale of this study is of a much smaller scale than the
original research undertaken by Mollin, and as such, findings should be treated with caution.
However, it is argued that the follow-up interviews carried out for this research, plus the
observation of the entire process carried out by the researcher (discussed below) add a further
dimension to the transcription study itself, and the resulting findings, although tentative, have
validity, at least for the purposes of the research engaged in for this thesis.

After completing this preliminary study, an interview was carried out with an assistant editor
of the Parliamentary Report. It was decided to use a semi-structured interview, because this
allows the researcher to ‘follow the standard questions with one or more individually tailored
questions to get clarification or probe a person’s reasoning’ (Leedy and Ormond, 2001: 196).
The researcher first e-mailed a list of questions to the assistant editor, who answered these
questions by return e-mail. The researcher then travelled to Dáil Eireann to conduct a follow
up interview, to clarify certain issues. A copy of the e-mail exchange and follow-up interview
can be found in appendix A. The assistant editor also gave the researcher two further
documents, which can be also found in appendix A. The staff (both editors and reporters) in
the Debates Office of Dáil Eireann use an Editors’ Book to achieve consistency in the
production of the Parliamentary Report; this is only available to staff of the Debates Office.
In addition, the researcher was afforded the privilege of seeing the entire transcription
procedure from within the parliamentary chamber; this was helpful to the researcher in terms
of gaining further perspective for this preliminary study. By observing the process of
transcription, as well as interviewing an assistant editor, it was felt that a degree of
methodological triangulation was achieved, adding further validity to research findings.
Cohen and Manion point out the advantages of using triangulation; ‘exclusive reliance on one
method may bias or distort the researcher’s picture . . . if, for example, the outcomes of a
questionnaire survey correspond to those of an observational study, the more the researcher
will be confident of his findings’ (1989: 270). Leedy and Ormond also point out that using
triangulation increases the internal validity of research (2001: 103), as does Creswell (2002:
208).

4.4 Data and analysis

This analysis focuses on three features of interest to the larger PhD study, which intends to
focus on politeness in Irish parliamentary discourse. It focuses on orality features, pronoun
usage and formal language use (including modality) – all of these are significant features of politeness, and all three have been identified in previous studies as problematic in this context. As noted in the previous chapter, many of these features are also of interest to linguists examining Irish English, since Irish English uses a number of these features in distinctive ways. Having examined these three features in some detail, the analysis then focuses on what may be suitable for corpus-based research in the area of politeness and parliamentary discourse. Finally, in order to confirm the accuracy of the transcripts in recording the specific items analysed in this thesis, a sample text from the Official Report which includes these items (‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’) is compared with an audio recording of the same exchange. This reveals that these items are indeed suitable for linguistic analysis through a corpus linguistics medium.

4.4.1 Orality features

The first and most immediately obvious point of difference between the linguistic transcript compiled by the author and the Official Report is the lack of orality features in the Official Report. In her study of the Hansard transcripts in Britain, Mollin notes that the official transcript eliminates false starts, reformulations, repetitions and fillers; in other words, performance characteristics of spoken language are omitted (2007: 193). This finding echoes Slembrouck’s (1992) findings in a similar paper; Slembrouck notes that “Hansard is essentially written language and . . . the original spoken discourse is converted into a text which has the obvious properties of written language (1992: 108). Mollin also notes the following as being under-represented (or even omitted entirely) in the official Hansard transcript; cries of ‘Order’ from the Speaker of the House, references to turn-taking (from the Speaker) and terms of address to the Speaker of the House (2007: 196). The lack of orality features was also noted in the Cypriot study by Karyolemou and Papageorgiou (2009). These findings are repeated in this preliminary study of the Official Report in Ireland. There are numerous repetitions, false starts, hesitations, interruptions and bell-ringing in the unofficial transcript which do not appear in the Official Report – although it is interesting and significant to note that there appears to be inconsistent noting of interruptions and repetitions, occasionally being mentioned and occasionally being ignored in the official record. For example, in exchange E, Deputy Richard Boyd-Barrett opens his speech turn by saying:

“at last, at last”.

This appears in the Official Report as;
“At last”.

The repetition is not included in the Official Report. On the other hand, in exchange A, there is an interruption from the rear of the House at the end of the exchange, when Deputy Chales Flanagan calls out;

“zero tolerance”.

This is noted in the Official Report, despite being extremely difficult to catch. Indeed, this interruption was inaudible to this researcher when compiling the transcripts on which this study is based. The Official Report also misses other paralinguistic features such as pauses, tone of voice (highly amusing and significant in these exchanges, given the argumentative nature of the proceedings and the fact that at least one participant visibly lost his temper during the exchange). It should be noted here that this lack of orality features in parliamentary transcripts in all of the countries where a study has been undertaken is a significant finding, and a major concern for linguists. It raises the question of how valid a linguistic study of parliamentary language can be if it is based exclusively on parliamentary transcripts.

4.4.2 Pronoun use

The second significant point of difference between the linguistic transcript and the Official Report is in the area of pronoun use. Again, this was anticipated from analysis of previous studies, in particular Mollin's findings about pronoun usage. Few differences were noted in the British study for third person (singular and plural) and first person plural pronouns. However, there were substantial changes noted in first person singular and second person singular pronouns.

In the case of second person pronouns first, it is conspicuous how rare these pronouns are in general. This is because members of the House of Commons may not address each other directly, but exclusively through the Speaker. Only the Speaker will thus be addressed as you, while all other members in the House are referred to in the third person. Strictly speaking, second person pronouns should thus occur even less frequently than they apparently do

(Mollin, 2007: 203).

Mollin also points out that generic you, where no one person in particular is addressed, is apparently not acceptable to Hansard transcribers, and is usually omitted. It is substituted either by one, impersonal constructions, or constructions with a third person pronoun. Mollin
also notes that the use of *I* in Hansard is very infrequent (compared with her own transcript), although she notes that this is largely due to the official record removing hedging phrases (such as 'I think', ‘I mean’) and other orality features from the text (2007: 204).

Mollin’s findings were replicated almost exactly in this study. The official Irish parliamentary web-site notes that, “in accordance with the conventions of formal debating, speakers address their remarks to the Chair” (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2010) – in particular, the pronoun ‘you’ should not be used in parliamentary exchanges. This is, of course, significant for studies in the area of politeness, since terms or address are often used to convey positive or negative politeness, and have major implications for the face of both addressee or addressee. It is interesting to note, however, that in the brief exchanges analysed in this preliminary study, the pronoun ‘you’ appears numerous times (not entirely unexpected, given the heated nature of exchanges). Results can be seen from the following table.

*(Table 4.1) Usage of “you” in the Official Report and Preliminary study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Exchange</th>
<th>“you” in Official Report</th>
<th>“you” in Preliminary study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Full transcripts of all exchanges can be found in appendix A). The Official Report appears to have an inconsistent policy of representing the pronoun ‘you’. In exchange A, the exchange;

“*quiet now, you are new in the job”*/”you will not say ‘quiet’ to me, sir”

is reported verbatim, as is another use of ‘you’;

“I’m sure you, a Ceann Comhairle . . .”.

The other two times ‘you’ occurs in this exchange are both sentence fragments which are in one case self-corrected and in the other case interrupted; these are both ignored in the Official Report – arguably, these could be seen as orality features. Interestingly, despite visibly losing his temper, the Ceann Comhairle retains the presence of mind (and the
linguistic knowledge of the conventions of the house) to generally remember to address Deputy Enda Kenny as ‘the deputy’, rather than ‘you’. Exchange B in the same debate shows the apparent inconsistency of the Official Report. As noted, the pronoun ‘you’ appears twelve times in this exchange according to the linguistic analysis, yet in the Official Report it appears a mere two times – both uses in the first sentence from Enda Kenny;

“you now have no power down there and you want to use your power up here”.

The Ceann Comhairle’s ten uses of the pronoun ‘you’ within a 25 second period are not featured – they are either ignored entirely (there are a number of repetitions and self-corrections by Mr O’Donoghue during this exchange) or they are replaced by ‘The deputy’, with, significantly, the appropriate verb being changed also (most frequently ‘are’ is changed to ‘is’). For instance, the linguistic analysis shows the Ceann Comhairle as saying;

“You are not entitled, you are not entitled, you are not entitled to drag the chair onto the house in matters of public controversy and you are not entitled to breach standing orders”.

The Official Report shows this as;

“The Deputy is not entitled to drag the Chair onto the floor of the House in matters of public controversy and he is not entitled to breach Standing Orders”.

In addition, the Ceann Comhairle follows this by saying clearly, loudly and distinctly (he almost shouts this sentence at the unfortunate Deputy Kenny);

“You may not mention whatever happened previously either”.

It is inconceivable that the transcriber did not hear this accurately, yet this is represented in the Official Report as;

“The Deputy may not mention whatever happened previously either”.

Exchange C shows this pattern to an even greater extent; there is not a single use of ‘you’ in the Official Report, despite it being used 12 times (all 12 times by the Ceann Comhairle) in the exchange. Again, the pronoun is replaced in the Official Report by ‘the deputy’, as when;

“I’m asking you, I’m asking you please to sit down. If you do not sit down, I will have to ask you to leave the house for the rest of the day”

is reproduced in the Official Report as
“I ask Deputy Morgan to please sit. If he does not sit I will have to ask him to leave the House for the rest of the day”.

Finally, exchange D gives further evidence that there is a somewhat systematic policy among Dáil transcribers and editors to avoid using ‘you’ in the Official Report. This is shown most evidently where the Ceann Comhairle says;

“you will withdraw that. You will withdraw that, you will withdraw that statement Deputy Ring”,

which appears in the Official Report as

“Deputy Ring will withdraw that statement”.

These examples clearly show that there is some sort of transcription policy in the production of the Official Report, yet this policy appears to be inconsistent. Why is it that in the first exchange presented here the pronoun ‘you’ is reproduced more-or-less accurately, while in the second exchange (in the same debate, which took place less than two minutes later) the conventions of the House appear to have been inserted into the Official Report, despite the fact that these conventions were flouted numerous times by the speaker of the House? A more detailed analysis of the usage of ‘you’ in the Official Report may offer some insight into these apparent lacunae. It appears that usage of ‘you’ by deputies on the floor of the House is represented reasonably accurately in the Official Report, while usage of the same pronoun by the speaker of the House appears to be ‘cleaned up’ for the Report. In exchange A, the pronoun ‘you’ appears 3 times in the Official Report. Two of these uses are by a Deputy speaking from the floor and one usage is by the Ceann Comhairle. Perhaps significantly, the somewhat impolite interjection by the Deputy (“Quiet now, you are new in the job”) is repeated verbatim in the Official Report. In exchange B, the Ceann Comhairle uses the pronoun ‘you’ 9 times, yet he is not shown as having used it in the Official Report. The two usages of ‘you’ which appear in the Official Report are both by the Deputy speaking from the floor of the chamber. This pattern appears to be repeated in exchanges C and D. As previously noted, the 12 uses of ‘you’ in exchange C (none of which appear in the Official Report) are all by the Ceann Comhairle. In exchange D, the pronoun ‘you’ appears six times in the Official Report – five of these six uses are by the Deputy speaking from the floor – and some of these uses of ‘you’ are actually inaudible to the naked ear listening to the linguistic
record. The Ceann Comhairle is shown in the Official Report as having used the second person singular pronoun just once;

“you must withdraw that statement you have made”.

In actuality, he used the pronoun no less than twelve times.

It appears, then, that transcription policy in relation to pronoun usage (at least with the first person singular and second person singular pronouns) is similar in the Irish parliament to the British setting. It also appears as if there may be somewhat different transcription and editing policies in use for recording the words of the Ceann Comhairle and the words of speakers on the floor of Dáil Eireann. It is clear, then, that a study of politeness features in the Irish parliamentary setting which is focused on pronoun use is utilising unreliable data. This calls into question the reliability of at least one recent study which utilised a corpus to examine terms of address in Westminster. Taylor’s 2011 paper ‘Negative politeness forms and impoliteness functions in institutional discourse; a corpus-assisted approach’ examines in part terms of address such as ‘the right honorable member’ as they occur in Westminster. There is no mention of transcription issues in her paper, which seems to indicate that results of this study should be treated with some skepticism.

4.4.3 Use of formal language

A third point of difference between the official record and the linguistic analysis again reflects findings in studies of a similar nature carried out in similar settings. Mollin notes a number of changes in MPs lexical and grammatical choices which are somewhat more disturbing to the corpus linguist. Essentially, the transcribers seem to show a tendency to formalise language by, for instance, replacing phrasal verbs with one-word, often Latinate verbs; for instance, 'make sure' (in the original spoken text) is replaced by 'ensure' in Hansard, while 'look at' is almost always replaced by 'consider' or 'examine' (2007: 198). Of particular interest to this study is the finding that modals are also changed by Hansard transcribers, again seemingly in an attempt to make parliamentary discourse appear more formal. Mollin found that, in the four hours of debate she analysed, the modal expression 'have to' was spoken eighty-two times; in the official transcript, 'have to' was replaced with 'must' almost thirty times (2007: 199).
It is clearly Hansard's policy to make the printed proceedings of the House more 'written' and formal in style. Apart from removing clear performance phenomena that are characteristic of spoken language, there also appears to be a certain house style detailing which words to avoid and which structures to use. Hansard is a stronghold of conservative and formal British writing style, following rules such as 'a single verb is better than a multi-part verb' or 'must is more correct than have to' (Mollin, 2007: 208).

It was noted in the conclusion of the Cypriot study (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009) that editors intervened in order to accomplish “clarity, structural completeness, accuracy and correctness”, and it was noted that the end result of this editing was to move the style of the completed product significantly closer to formal, written Greek. The Official Report in Ireland also appears to show more formal language use than the actual language use which occurred in the chamber. For instance, in the first exchange analysed here, the Official Report shows the Ceann Comhairle as saying;

“you will not say 'quiet' to me, sir”,

whereas Mr O’Donoghue actually said;

“you won’t say quiet to me, sir”.

Replacing contractions with a full verb is clearly an attempt to bring the language used in Dáil Éireann more in line with formal English usage. Similarly, in exchange B, the Ceann Comhairle is reported to have said;

“The Deputy should be seated while the Chair is standing”.

The Ceann Comhairle actually said;

“Be seated! Be seated please while the chair is standing”.

The first imperative is ignored entirely by the Official Report, and the words “The Deputy should” are inserted despite the fact that they were not used in this exchange. This again indicates an attempt to reflect a more formal usage of language in the chamber than the language which was actually used in real time. In what may be a similar attempt to downplay the use of informal imperatives, the words;
“I will remind the deputy”

are presented in the Official Report as;

“I remind the deputy”,

again adding to the impression from the Official Report that the language used in Dáil Eireann is more formal and polite than it actually is. In exchange D, the imperative;

“you will withdraw that statement”

is replaced in the Official Report with;

“you must withdraw that statement you have made”,

And;

“I won’t withdraw it”

is replaced by;

“I will not withdraw it”.

Again, this shows a contracted verb being replaced with a full verb, and, even more significantly, it could be argued that replacing ‘will’ with ‘must’ is an apparent attempt to soften a very direct imperative. Perkins (1983: 43) notes that where ‘will’ is used in commands, it is seen as less polite than ‘must’. Perkins cites a 1974 study by Mohan which compared sentence pairs such as ‘you will open the door’ and ‘you must open the door’. Mohan’s results, which are confirmed by Perkins, showed that ‘will’ is seen as impolite and face-threatening in these sentences, because the ‘will’ sentence is seen as a direct assertion, whereas the ‘must’ sentence implies a greater degree of volition on the part of the addressee (Perkins, 1983: 44). This can be seen in the change made to the Official Report here; the sentence ‘you will withdraw that statement’ is more face-threatening than ‘you must withdraw that statement’. It should be noted here, however, that Irish English uses modal verbs in slightly different ways to British English, particularly in the area of politeness, and there is a tendency in Irish English to prefer ‘will’ to ‘shall’ in many cases. (Farr, 2006). This may well account for ‘will’ being used in Dáil Eireann in ways which are not accounted for by Perkins. Almost all of these attempts to formalise the language exchanges in Dáil Eireann involve the manipulation of modal verbs, thus echoing Mollin’s (2007) and Slembruck’s
(1992) findings that modality is not accurately represented in the British Hansard. Along with the omission of the many repetitions and self-corrections which occur in these exchanges, a general impression is created of a heightened formality in language use. Again, this has significant repercussions for a study of linguistic politeness in a parliamentary setting. It seems clear from this preliminary study that a corpus-based analysis of modal verbs in Dáil Eireann, based on the Official Report, is simply not feasible, and results would not have validity.

One further issue may be noted under the heading of formal language. Despite the relative briefness of the exchanges analyzed here, a few features of Irish English can nevertheless be noted in the exchanges. These, however, do not appear in the Official Report – further supporting the hypothesis that Official Report attempts to replicate standard formal English as much as possible. In exchange A, for instance, Deputy Kenny says;

“Well, I’m sure you want to know as well what Healy-Rae got as well yourself”.

This contains two common features of Irish English, the initial use of ‘well’ as a discourse marker and the reflexive pronoun ‘yourself’ which appears at the end of the sentence (Hickey, 2007: 375). This sentence appears in the Official Report as;

“I am sure you, a Ceann Comhairle, will also want to know what Deputy Healy-Rae got”.

Although the pronoun ‘you’ is recorded faithfully in this exchange (further evidence of inconsistency in the Official Report), the two features of Irish English do not appear in the Official Report. Obviously, it would be impossible to draw conclusions on how faithfully or otherwise ‘Irishisms’ are recorded in the Official Report based on such a small sample (it should also be noted here that although sentence-initial ‘well’ is a feature of Irish English, it is not specific to Irish English, and is a feature of many varieties of English). However, it was seen in chapter 3 that ‘Irishisms’ often have a politeness function for Irish English speakers, since they often function as an in-group membership marker, indicating solidarity with the other speaker. As that can be said from this small-scale study in relation to this feature is that it certainly bears further investigation.
4.4.4 Lexical issues

The study on transcription in the Cypriot parliament (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009) showed that the key changes which occurred during the transcription process in that context were

1) style adjustment, particularly to filter out spoken-ness (such as False starts, hesitations, self-repairs, repetitions, incomplete sentences, overlapping utterances, interruptions and background voices), and

2) dialect standardisation. In this context, dialect standardisation means moving towards ‘Standard Greek’ rather than the variety of Greek used in Cyprus, which is seen as a peripheral, local variety of Greek.

This clearly replicates the findings of Mollin (2007) and Slembrouck (1992). A key finding from the Cypriot study was that editing and changes almost always took place at the level of morphology (noun and verb morphology being regularly standardized) and syntax. Interestingly however (and significantly for this Irish study) there was very little lexical interference noted. This was also hypothesised by Mollin in her 2007 study – she noted that what she calls ‘content words’ are not changed. She points emphatically to the dangers of linguists relying on transcripts made by non-linguists for the purposes of linguistic analysis, but whereas she criticises the methodology of Bayley and other corpus linguists who have relied on the British Hansard as a source for their corpora, she also notes that “the foci of research of some of these [corpus-based studies] were probably not affected by the changes, such as the analyses of choice of content words” (Mollin, 2007: 189). This finding was confirmed by an interview with an editor of the Cypriot transcriptions, who noted, “We do correct syntax, grammar and spelling errors … but we tried to intervene as little as possible and correct only in order to guarantee the clarity and consistency of the final text” (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009).

This finding was also confirmed by this preliminary study. There are virtually no lexical changes to be seen in the Official Report when it is compared with the linguistic transcript, with the exception of subject-verb agreement, verb contractions being replaced by the full verb, and modal and auxiliary verbs being changed. These, it may be argued, could be viewed as syntactical changes rather than lexical changes. There was one omission of an informal word (the word ‘row’, meaning an argument or disagreement), but it was seen that this was
possibly (indeed probably) an accidental omission, given that the word was virtually inaudible and was cut short by an interruption from another speaker. The Official Report is noticeably shorter than the linguistic transcript, but this can be accounted for by the numerous orality features which are omitted from the Official Report.

4.4.5 ‘Please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’

In order to confirm that the linguistic items chosen for corpus analysis in this research are recorded accurately in the Official Report, one further Dáil exchange was analysed immediately before the researcher commenced corpus-based research. On April 14th, 2011, there was a heated exchange in Dáil Eireann between Richard Boyd Barrett, a newly elected TD, and the new Ceann Comhairle, Seán Barrett. This exchange (exchange E) can be found in Appendix A. This exchange was analysed in a similar manner to the 4 original exchanges analysed in this research. This particular exchange was chosen because the politeness marker ‘please’ was used a number of times in the heated verbal clash, and the particle ‘no’ was also used on 3 occasions. It is interesting to note that ‘please’ and ‘no’ are recorded correctly in the Official Report during this exchange. This clash also featured frequent changes in pronoun usage between the Official Report and the verbatim transcript, confirming earlier findings (‘you’ is replaced by ‘the deputy’ on six occasions in this exchange and by ‘he’ on three further occasions), as well as the omission of numerous repetitions and orality features. To confirm the hypothesis that ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are recorded faithfully in the Official Report, results from this extra exchange were added to the initial exchanges analysed for this research, and the four features examined in this thesis (‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’) are compared with the Official Report, in order to examine if they are recorded faithfully. Results are as follows;

(Table 4.2) ‘Please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the Official Report and Preliminary study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Official Report</th>
<th>Preliminary study</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thank you/I thank</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>yes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It appears that these features are recorded faithfully in the Official Report – although the small scale of this preliminary study must again be borne in mind. This supplementary analysis (exchange E) is illustrative and helpful, not alone because it confirms the consistency of transcription policy between 2008 (the year the original exchanges were recorded) and 2011, but also because it indicates that there appears to be an accurate record kept of the particular politeness features focused on in this research.

4.5 Conclusions and implications for this research

This research appears to bear out the hypothesis of previous researchers in the field of parliamentary discourse; linguists should be extremely careful when using parliamentary transcripts for the purpose of linguistic investigation. “It is always risky to rely on non-linguist transcribers for corpus compilation, but transcribers with a policy of making systematic changes to the spoken language as it was originally produced are a linguist's nightmare” (Mollin, 2007: 208). This preliminary study has indicated results which confirm almost exactly the findings of previous research in this field. Orality features, syntactical and grammatical features are all changed extensively in the Official Report. Lexical changes do not appear to be made. Changes appear to reflect a desire to omit the performance characteristics of spoken language, as well as a desire for the Official Report to consist of formal, written, ‘standard’ English. This was as anticipated, but of more concern for this study is the apparent inconsistency in the Official Report, in particular in the area of pronoun use. “Transcription methods consist of two distinct things: deciding which aspects of speech and its context are to be transposed into writing and choosing the conventions of writing that will convey them. Good methods are based on clear principles” (Roberts-Powers, 2005: 10). The conclusion of the Cypriot study carried out by Karyolemou and Papageorgiou (2009) appears to make a similar point; they conclude that the transcription process in the parliament of Cyprus is not a reflected process based on a well formulated and clearly stated policy but on “implicit assumptions” and “laypeople conceptions” where “idiosyncratic judgements” play an important role. There is clearly a management process behind the production of the Official Report in Ireland (this was confirmed in the interviews carried out by the researcher), but whether this management process is an organized, systematic activity is a key question of interest to linguists, as is the question of whether this management process reproduces widely accepted ideologies of language correctness or readjusts social expectations of language (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009). There is some evidence in this preliminary study that
features of Irish English are omitted from the Official Report, which again would confirm the findings of the Cypriot study.

Paralinguistic clues (such as tone, stance, and facial expression) are not available to a discourse analyst using a corpus-based approach. These are significant features of politeness (Brown and Levinson, 1978, 1987; Watts, 2003); however, this research proposes to look at linguistic politeness from a pragmatic point of view, so it is believed that this paralinguistic information is not needed. Of course, such paralinguistic clues are not generally available to the corpus linguist (depending on the annotation of the particular corpus), and this is a limitation to some corpus-based research (this was discussed in chapter 2, along with some ways of overcoming this limitation). As such, the lack of orality features in the Official Report, which this preliminary study has indicated, is not believed to have a major effect on this research. The grammatical and syntactical changes which this preliminary study has shown are of some concern, however. It is clear that modality is an important feature of politeness (Palmer, 1990). This preliminary study indicates that a study of modality in the parliamentary context should not rely on the Official Report as a source of data – a manual transcription of parliamentary exchanges by the researcher in question would be more suitable. This finding reflects and supports the hypothesis of previous researchers in the field (Karyolemou and Papageorgiou, 2009; Mollin, 2007; Slembruck, 1992). As with these previous studies in the area, however, the finding that lexical changes do not appear to be made in the Official Report indicates that these parliamentary transcripts can be a suitable source of data for the corpus linguist investigating lexical choices. This finding has led to a decision to focus on two specific lexical items in this PhD research;

1. the pragmatic markers ‘please’ and ‘thank you’
2. the use of the discourse particles ‘yes’ and ‘no’

It has also been clarified in this chapter that these tokens appear to be recorded faithfully in the Official Report – or at least, there is no evidence from this study of inaccurate recording of these tokens.

This preliminary study has clearly shown a need for detailed analysis of transcription techniques in formal settings in Ireland to be undertaken before researchers rely on this data for linguistic research. It is clear that there is much scope for further research into this topic. Areas which may be explored further include a study of transcription techniques in other formal Irish settings (such as courtrooms or tribunals of inquiry) in order to ascertain if there
is a uniquely Irish transcription and management methodology or indeed ideology. In addition, a full-scale close phonetic study of Dáil Eireann language (possibly a comparative study with the Official Report) may reveal interesting information about language ideology in the transcription process in Irish settings. It should be noted that since November 2011, all Minister’s Question Times in Ireland are now broadcast on cable television, on what is known as ‘Houses of the Oireachtas Channel’. Although this came too late for use in this research, this will undoubtedly prove of great benefit to future researchers in this area – it should be noted here again that the most recent study of QT and politeness in Britain (Bull and Wells, 2011) utilized web-streaming of QT in Westminster to create verbatim transcripts for their research. This is discussed more fully in the concluding chapter of this thesis. All that can be said with certainty from this small-scale preliminary study is that (in common with the findings of other researchers in comparable settings in other countries) an analysis of orality features, grammatical features or syntactical features based on the Official Report in Ireland would almost certainly prove to be unreliable. Although there are some minor concerns about the Official Report in the area of lexical features (again replicating results from international studies), it is believed that lexical data obtained from the Official Report may be considered valid data.
Chapter 5 – ‘Please’ and ‘Thank You’ in the QTC

<Will the right hon. and learned Lady please tell the House why manufacturing has declined faster under this Labour Government than under any other Administration ever?>

<Miss McIntosh> I thank the Minister for that reply, but it is a load of twaddle.

(Examples of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ from the House of Commons QTC)

5.1 Introduction and background

Chapters 2 and 3 of this thesis have outlined the background to this research, and it was seen that an investigation of certain politeness features in the formal, institutional setting of Dáil Eireann is of interest to the linguist who is investigating both Irish English and parliamentary discourse. Chapter 2 argued that certain politeness features are amenable to corpus analysis, once careful consideration is made of the items to be analysed, and once the limitations of the corpus are recognised. Chapter 3 outlined the rationale for choosing the particular tokens examined in this research. Chapter 4 has indicated that some grammatical items related to politeness (specifically terms of address and modal verbs) cannot be considered for a corpus-based investigation of Dáil Eireann language, due to inaccurate and inconsistent transcription procedures in the production of the Official Report. This has led to the starting position of detailed corpus analysis; the discourse markers ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ are examined in this chapter, and in the next chapter the sentence fragments ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to questions are analysed. This chapter deals with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in turn, followed by a discussion of overall findings, and a discussion of what these findings may indicate about politeness during Question Time in Dáil Eireann, and what these findings may indicate about Irish English in the formal, institutional setting that is Dáil Eireann. These corpus findings are supplemented in chapter 7 of this thesis by an examination of selected texts which feature ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’, in order to reveal some aspects of facework used during QT. Chapter 7 adds a qualitative dimension to the analysis contained in this chapter.

“The word ‘please’ may be the most widely used lexical device for expressing some sense of politeness in English” (Sato, 2008: 1249). Numerous commentators have noted that ‘please’ is syntactically unique in English. It is uniquely linked with a politeness function, and it has
been called both an adverb and a discourse marker. It is syntactically unique because it cannot be modified by an adverb (one cannot say ‘very please’ or ‘most please’), and it is uniquely flexible in terms of distribution within a sentence – it may occur in frontal, medial or final positions in a sentence – for example, “(please) can you (please) give me the book, (please)?” ‘Please’ can also stand alone, as a substitute for a sentence (for example, “should I close the window? Please.”), although it could be argued this is an ellipsis. Finally, ‘please’ can occur with various types of sentence (Stubbs, 1983; Wichmann, 2004; Sato, 2008):

- **Declarative.** ‘I’d like some coffee, please’
- **Interrogative.** ‘Can I have a coffee, please?’
- **Imperative.** ‘Give me a coffee, please’
- **Moodless clauses.** ‘More coffee, please’

Trosborg notes that ‘please’ has a double function in English; on the one hand, it is used as a mitigating device to indicate politeness, while on the other hand it also functions as “an illocutionary force indicator clearly signalling the requestive force of the locution” (1995: 258). Trosborg also points out that ‘please’ does not usually co-occur with other devices which have a hedging function in English – it would be unusual to say something like “I thought maybe you could give me a hand please”. In contrast, a direct formulation (“could you give me a hand, please?”) is more likely to be heard. In addition, ‘please’ is not used with hints (one does not say “it’s cold in here, please”); this again illustrates that ‘please’ both emphasises the requestive force of an utterance, while at the same time mitigates the requestive force (Trosborg, 1995: 258). It is important to note that ‘please’ always has a pragmatic function, and is always used interactively; “[please] is essentially interactive; the essential function is to get someone to do something . . . it is, therefore, largely restricted to spoken language” (Stubbs, 1983: 72). ‘Please’ is always used in requests; even in situations where it could be argued that it has an acceptance function (for example, ‘More tea? Yes, please”), these uses can be seen as embedded requests, according to at least one researcher (Sato, 2008: 1252). In the Irish context, Binchy (2005) has examined how ‘please’ is used as a politeness marker in service encounters in Ireland, utilising the Limerick Corpus of Irish English (L-CIE) for his research. Finally, a paper by Karin Aijmer (2009) viewed ‘please’ from a translation perspective, and compared the illocutionary force of ‘please’ with its Swedish equivalent, concluding that “the functions of ‘please’ depend both on the social situation and on the patterns where it occurs (e.g. position in the utterance and the grammatical context)” (Aijmer, 2009: 63).
A number of analysts have noted a link between ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, given that both are seen as somewhat formulaic politeness markers related to the speech act of requests (Stubbs, 1983; Snow et al., 1990; Chen, 1993; Watts, 2003). Much research has been done on Speech Act Theory as it relates to the giving and receiving of thanks in various languages (for example, Terkourafi, 2011; Koutlaki, 2002). It may also be noted here that Klaus P. Schneider (2005) has written an interesting paper, entitled ‘Responding to Thanks in Ireland, England and the USA’, which noted uniquely Irish responses when responding to thanks. It was also seen in section 3.1.5 of this thesis that Brian Clancy (2005) has written an interesting paper on giving and receiving thanks in the Irish context. ‘Please’ and ‘thank you’ are also often paired together in discourse exchanges. There are, however, a number of significant structural differences between the two tokens. ‘Please’ is seen as either an adverb or a discourse marker, whereas ‘thank you’ is a verb + object (with an implied subject). Whereas ‘please’ is linguistically unique, due to its syntactical flexibility (Stubbs, 1983; 71), ‘thank you’ is more conventional in structure, and may also occur with the subject ‘I’ in formal situations. Analysis of ‘thank you’ in this research, therefore, differs slightly from the analysis of ‘please’ undertaken here. The analysis here will look first at ‘thank you’, the most conventional way of giving thanks in everyday speech. It will then look in detail at ‘I thank’, the most common formulation used in the parliamentary setting. All examples taken from both QTCs are highlighted in a different font, and are centre-aligned, in order to aid readability.

5.2 ‘Please’ in the QTC

5.2.1 Word list findings for ‘please’

‘Please’ is found 222 times in the QTC for Ireland. It is at number 505 on the word list. The Irish word for ‘please’ is *le do thoil*. *Le do thoil* appears three times in the QTC for Ireland, and all uses are by the Ceann Comhairle. In contrast, ‘please’ is found only 36 times in the QTC for Britain. It is at number 1244 on the British word list. When these findings are converted into words-per-million, as is best practice in comparative corpus studies (McEnery *et al.*, 2006), the results look like this;
Clearly, there is a large difference in frequency of usage of ‘please’ between the Irish corpus and the British corpus. On a very superficial reading, this may indicate that Irish politicians are more polite (linguistically speaking) than their British counterparts, but a more detailed analysis of the word list findings indicates a more complex reality. The person who uses ‘please’ most frequently in Dáil Éireann is the Ceann Comhairle, the speaker of the house. Of the 222 uses of ‘please’ found in the six month period analysed, the Ceann Comhairle uses ‘please’ on 203 of those occasions. In contrast, of the 36 uses of ‘please’ in the House of Commons, the Speaker of the House uses ‘please’ only 3 times. Of the 222 uses of ‘please’ in the QTC for Ireland, 203 uses were by the Ceann Comhairle. Of the remaining 19 uses, 18 are by opposition deputies, and there is only one usage of ‘please’ by a government minister (it is used in the phrase ‘please God’ by Eamon Ó’Cuiv). Of the 18 uses by opposition deputies, two of these uses are in quotations from reports. One TD, Caomhín Ó’Caoláin of Sinn Fein is responsible for 4 of the 18 uses by opposition deputies. In the QTC for Britain, as noted earlier, ‘please’ is used 36 times. The Speaker of the House is responsible for 3 of these uses. Two further uses are in quotations from letters. There are two uses of ‘please’ by government ministers in Britain, in contrast to the situation in Ireland. The remaining 29 uses of ‘please’ in the House of Commons are by opposition MPs. This number is considerably larger than the 18 uses by opposition deputies in Ireland. When results are normalised to words per million, we can see this clearly;
Close analysis, then, reveals that initial word count findings are somewhat misleading. Although it is correct to say that ‘please’ is used more frequently in the Irish setting than the British setting, it is clear that this is because the Ceann Comhairle in Dáil Éireann prefers to use ‘please’ as a way of keeping order, rather than using the word ‘order’, as the Speaker in the House of Commons does (A word list analysis of the word ‘order’ seems to prove this point. ‘Order’ is used 514 times in the Irish data; it appears at number 206 in the word list. In the British data, it appears 366 times, and it appears significantly higher on the word list, at number 131. 221 uses of ‘order’ in the House of Commons are by the Speaker of the House, used as a stand-alone item, whereas there is only one example of the Ceann Comhairle using ‘order’ in this way). When usage by the Ceann Comhairle is omitted, we can see that ‘please’ is actually used more (over 200% more) in the House of Commons than in Dáil Éireann.

5.2.2 ‘Please’ in interrogatives

There is a striking difference between frequency of usage in interrogatives in the two settings, with British deputies far more likely to use ‘please’ in interrogatives. Results (in words per million) are as follows;
Seven of the 8 uses in questions in the Irish setting show a very similar structure. These 7 all contain ‘please’ in medial position, following a modal verb and preceding a main verb; Sato (2004: 1264) makes a number of points about ‘please’ in medial position which are of significance when one looks at the data uncovered here. She points out that, when used with a modal verb, ‘please’ in medial position appears more formal; this structure “implements the speaker’s strong discontent towards the current direction of the talk, often signalling a prior opposition from the other participant”. She suggests that the structure of modal verb followed by ‘please’ often indicates urgency, frustration or irritation on the part of the speaker, and may indicate that the speaker feels that his/her face needs are not being met. All 7 uses of medial position ‘please’ in the Irish data strongly support this analysis;

<Will the Taoiseach please ensure that a funding stream is re-opened>

<Will the Taoiseach please note my request for every assistance in>

<will he please undertake to come back to each of the party>

<Will the Minister of State please make inquiries in this regard? I>

<Will the Minister please note again that I strongly oppose these charges>

<Will the Minister please focus on the review that is now 15 months overdue?>

<Will the Taoiseach please clarify the position? I presume>
It is important to reiterate here the finding from chapter 4 of this thesis that modal verbs are not accurately recorded by Dáil Eireann transcribers. Therefore, the fact that ‘please’ appears together with modal verb ‘will’ in all of these questions will not be analysed. Clearly, an audio recording of these sentences would reveal information about the stress and intonation on ‘please’ in these examples; such information is not available to the corpus linguist working on a corpus such as the QTC, which has not been compiled with annotation related to paralinguistic information. As noted in chapter 2, the limitations of corpus linguistics mean the use of co-text strategies is of vital importance to the corpus linguist investigating pragmatics. With that in mind, the researcher analysed closely the context of all the examples of ‘please’ in medial position found here. All 7 of these uses occurred in the context of issues where there is considerable difference between the questioner and the government. In addition, all 7 uses occurred after a lengthy preamble on the part of the questioner, detailing previously unsuccessful attempts to have the topic addressed. It seems, therefore, that the use of ‘please’ by opposition deputies in Dáil Eireann may be a face-threatening act (FTA), despite the ostensible reading of ‘please’ as a politeness marker. When opposition deputies use ‘please’ in Dáil Eireann, it is structured in such a way as to put pressure on the government minister. It indicates frustration on the part of the questioner, and implies a strong sense of obligation, and of needs being frustrated.

The 8th and final use of ‘please in an interrogative in the Dáil Eireann data is significantly different from the other 7 uses;

<Deputy Brian Hayes> Would the Minister of State start again please?

‘Please’ occurs here in final position. It has been noted by some researchers (Stubbs, 1983; Wichmann, 2004; Sato, 2008) that ‘please’ in final or initial position tends to indicate a non-hostile request, and is more polite than medial position ‘please’. In particular, ‘please’ in final position often indicates a presumption of compliance, and is basically a social protocol (think of ‘pass the salt, please’ at the dinner table). This certainly appears to be the case with this use of ‘please’, which is used during an exchange where the deputy appears not to hear the opening remarks of the government minister. The fact that this use of ‘please’ is in final position, in contrast with the medial position use in hostile questions, indicates that there may be an awareness (even unconscious) of the significance of the modal verb + medial ‘please’ structure on the part of politicians in Dáil Eireann.
The British data confirms and reinforces the findings of the Irish data. There are 27 uses of ‘please’ by opposition deputies in the British data. Of these, 21 are in medial position, and follow a modal verb. As with the Irish data, all 21 uses of the modal verb + ‘please’ structure are in hostile questions, where there is considerable difference between government and opposition policies. The following are two illustrative examples;

<Will the right hon. and learned Lady please tell the House why manufacturing has declined faster under this Labour Government than under any other Administration ever?>

<Will he please see that something is done, because these people are crying out for the Government to take action against modern-day slavery?>

However, unlike the Irish data, there are also 5 uses of ‘please’ in initial position and 1 use of ‘please’ in final position. The use of ‘please’ in final position is unquestionably in a hostile question;

<How many of those who have been reclassified from the ESA to jobseeker's allowance have actually found a job? May we have the figure, please?>

The reason for this slightly unusual usage of ‘please’ is unclear, and may be related to the fact that the question with which it appears is secondary to the initial, open-ended question. The uses of ‘please’ in initial position are in notably less hostile questions. For example;

<Robert Key> Please will the Minister update us on the Watchkeeper UAV programme that is based at Boscombe Down in my constituency?

<Rosie Cooper> Please could the Minister comment on the negotiations between Royal Mail and the Communication Workers Union?

It is also interesting to note that the 5 uses of ‘please’ in initial position occur either standing alone, or else following a very brief initial statement. This is partly due to the Commons rule of very brief questions and answers during QT, of course, but the 21 uses of ‘please’ in medial position tend to occur after longer preambles from the speaker. Again, this echoes the findings of the Irish data.
5.2.3 Analysis of usage of ‘please’ in terms of politeness theory

Clearly, the usage of ‘please’ by parliamentarians during QT in Dáil Eireann and the House of Commons is similar, if not identical. In both settings, ‘please’ is used sparingly, and in a very patterned way. This appears to be deliberate, and may be a reflection of the very structure and meaning of QT. Questions are, after all, an inherent part of QT – they are part of the very structure of the event. There is, therefore, no need for ‘please’ as such in this setting, if we assume that (in interrogatives) ‘please’ is often a courtesy gesture which contextualises a speech act as a request, and which mitigates the force of a request. When ‘please’ is used in the QT settings (both in Ireland and Britain), it seems to be deliberately used to draw attention to the request form, and to draw attention to the frustration and unhappiness of the questioner. The double function of ‘please’ (as noted in section 5.1), as both mitigating device and request signal appears to be exploited by politicians during QT.

‘Please’ appears to be used as a signal by the questioner drawing attention to the imposition being placed on the person being questioned. It may well be the case, in fact, that the use of ‘please’ in the parliamentary setting is both a mitigation gesture (towards the addressee) and also a gesture towards the wider audience (either in the chamber or outside the chamber). In a discourse event like QT, there are competing needs on the part of both speaker and listener. The questioner needs to give the appearance of being a reasonable and articulate person, and he/she also needs to abide by the rules of the house. At the same time, he/she can only prosper at the expense of the person being questioned, and hostile behaviour is required of the questioner.

In this parliamentary context, Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ (discussed in section 2.1.6 of this thesis) may be useful. Tracy suggests that one of the features which identifies ‘reasonable hostility’ is that it includes speech tokens that pay attention to the listener’s face wants. It seems that, in the QTCs for both Britain and Ireland, ‘please’ may very well have this function. Ilie (2004: 51), in her study of insulting language in the parliaments of Britain and Sweden, notes that Brown and Levinson’s theory of facework may not be helpful in studying parliamentary exchanges, where face aggravation is a necessary and expected part of the discourse event. Similarly, Culpeper (2011: 24) points out that a weakness with Brown and Levinson’s terminology is that it doesn’t account for intentional FTAs, where there is a deliberate and purposeful attempt to damage the positive face of the
The findings of this study appear to support the view of Ilie that Brown and Levinson’s framework is unsatisfactory when looking at the kind of institutional rudeness which occurs legitimately during parliamentary exchanges, and that Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ is of use to researchers investigating politeness in parliamentary discourse.

If Brown and Levinson’s framework appears unsatisfactory when analysing use of ‘please’ during QT, what then of Speech Act theory? Sadock (2004: 54) points out that a speaker’s intention in making an utterance (and the listener’s recognition of that intention) is central to interpreting Speech Act theory. As noted in section 3.3 of this thesis, the idea of ostensible speech acts refers to a speech act where a speaker appears to perform a speech act (in this case, a request), but the speaker is not being serious, and both the listener and the speaker are aware of this. Certainly, the use of ‘please’ during QT in both Ireland and Britain (when used by opposition questioners) appears to fulfil at least some of the conditions necessary for a speech act to be considered an ostensible speech act. Firstly, there is clearly an off-record purpose on the part of the speaker – the use of ‘please’ appears to be deliberately drawing attention to the speaker’s frustration, for the attention of the wider audience. There is also a certain amount of pretence, collusion and mutual recognition involved: both the questioner and the responder know that the use of ‘please’ is not necessary (or even usual) during QT, and it is playing a rhetorical role in the exchange, rather than as a courtesy token. There does not, however, appear to be much ambivalence involved in this use of ‘please’, indicating that seeing ‘please’ questions during QT as ostensible speech acts is not entirely satisfactory either. It appears that a combination of Brown and Levinson’s framework with Culpeper’s research on impoliteness, together with a recognition of the ostensible mitigation being employed in parliamentary exchanges and Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’, may be the most satisfactory way to account for usage of ‘please’ in the parliaments of Ireland and Britain during QT.

5.3 ‘Thank you’ in QTC

5.3.1 ‘Thank you’ word list findings

‘Thank you’ is conspicuous by its rarity in both the British and the Irish data analysed here. In the Irish data, ‘thank you’ appears 4 times. All four uses of ‘thank you’ in Dáil Éireann occur outside of the normal function of QT, when ministers are being questioned by the
opposition. These 4 uses appear to be sincere gestures of appreciation for courtesy on the part of the listener. In the British data, there are 22 uses of ‘thank you’. This is a far higher number than in the Irish data. When normalised to words per million, we can see;

![Bar chart showing 'Thank you' in QTC](chart.png)

Although the occasional use of *go raibh maith agat* in the Irish data makes a slight difference to these statistics, this is not nearly enough to account for this substantial difference. Once again, as with ‘please’ in the Irish data, the conventions which have built up over time in both settings account for this difference. A closer look at the uses of ‘thank you’ in the British corpus reveals that 21 of the 22 uses of ‘thank you’ in the British data are MPs thanking the Speaker.

The two most common synonyms for ‘thank you’ which appear in this data are ‘I appreciate’ and ‘I am grateful’. There is a large difference in frequency of use between the British and the Irish data here. ‘I am grateful’ (including ‘I am very grateful’) appears 136 times in the British data, yet it only appears 4 times in the Irish data – a huge discrepancy. On the other hand, ‘I appreciate’ appears 71 times in the Irish data, but only 17 times in the British data. ‘I am grateful for’ seems to be more formal than ‘I thank’, which may account for its avoidance in the Irish data. As noted earlier, the Irish setting appears to have less formal rules of engagement, with a general avoidance of highly ritualised language. Perhaps the use of ‘I thank’ (a slightly formalised version of ‘thank you’) is seen by Irish deputies as closer to informal speech than ‘I am grateful’, which is almost never heard during everyday speech in Ireland.
5.3.2 ‘I thank’ (the Minister)

There are 197 uses in the British corpus of the phrase ‘I thank’, followed by one of the following:

- The Minister/Prime Minister (67 uses)
- The Secretary of State (26 uses)
- Him/her (4 uses)
- My friend/my right honourable friend (61 uses)
- The honourable gentleman/lady (31 uses)
- The Government (3 uses)
- Other (various individuals, outside parliament) (5 uses)

In the Irish corpus, there are 192 uses of ‘I thank’. Again, there is considerably less usage of ‘I thank’ in Ireland. When normalised to words-per-million, we see the phrase is used twice as many times in Britain as in Ireland;

![Chart showing 'I thank' in QTC](chart.png)

Again, as with the greater frequency of ‘please’ in opposition interrogatives in Britain, this is certainly due to the shorter speech turns in the British setting (see section 1.4 of this thesis). Although there is the same amount of time allocated to QT in Ireland and Britain, the differing interaction patterns and the lengthier speech turns undoubtedly account for much of this difference in frequency - there are simply far more questions and replies in the British QT. It was noted in chapter 1 (section 1.4) that the average length of speech turn in the British QTC is 5 lines, whereas in the Irish QTC the average speech turn is 12 lines.
In Ireland, ‘I thank’ is followed by

- The Minister (100 uses)
- The Taoiseach (24 uses)
- The Tánaiste (5 uses)
- Him/her (2 uses)
- The Deputy (19 uses)
- Deputy ______ (23 uses)
- The Ceann Comhairle/Leas Ceann Comhairle (9 uses)
- Other (10 uses)

As noted in chapter 4 of this thesis, terms of address and pronouns are not reliably recorded by Dáil transcribers (or indeed in the British Hansard), so these figures should not be considered reliable data, and further analysis of these will not be undertaken here. In the Irish data, a large number of ‘I thank’ uses are in the context of Ministers being congratulated on their new ministerial role by opposition deputies – there were two large cabinet reshuffles during the six months from which the corpus was compiled. 20 uses of ‘I thank’ are in this context. For example, on the day Pat Carey was appointed as Minister for Community, Equality and Gaeltacht affairs;

<Deputy Pat Carey> I thank the Deputy for his good wishes.

<Deputy Pat Carey> I thank Deputy Wall for his good wishes.

<Deputy Pat Carey> I thank Deputy Byrne for her comments.

There are also 13 uses of ‘I thank’ where a Minister or an opposition deputy thanks the Ceann Comhairle for the opportunity to speak. These have been omitted from the following analysis, as have the 10 times when ‘I thank’ was addressed to people outside of the chamber, as in the following example;

<Deputy Phil Hogan> I thank the front line services in local authorities and in all statutory bodies and agencies for the tremendous work they did over the past few months in dealing with flooding in the first instance and frost and snow in the past few weeks.
5.3.3 ‘I thank’ in Dáil Eireann interrogatives

Having omitted all other uses of ‘I thank’ in Dáil Eireann, we are left with 149 uses of ‘I thank’ where it is used in an interactive fashion (during a question-answer exchange) between Government and opposition, invariably followed by a word like ‘reply’, ‘response’, ‘answer’, ‘comments’, or ‘remarks’, sometimes together with a modifying adjective, such as ‘comprehensive’ or ‘helpful’. These uses of ‘I thank’ invariably appear in an opposition deputy’s reply to a Ministerial answer; the Ministerial answer is generally a (scripted) response to a pre-submitted question. Following a close reading of all of these uses, again using a co-text strategy in order to maximise insights, these 149 uses of ‘I thank’ have been divided into two broad categories; sincere (where the phrase is used with positive language, or where ‘I thank’ is followed by a compliment or an acknowledgement - in other words, ‘I thank’ is here functioning primarily as a gesture of appreciation), and as a mitigating gesture (where ‘I thank’ is followed by negative language, dismissal of the answer, or aggressive demands for further or more detailed answers). For example, the following are 2 examples which were categorised as sincere uses of ‘I thank’;

<Deputy Eamon Gilmore> I thank the Taoiseach for his reply and for setting out the details of what was clearly a full and successful programme during his visit to the US. I welcome the appointment of Mr. Gabriel Byrne as Ireland’s cultural ambassador.

And;

<Deputy Pat Breen> I thank the Minister for his reply and commend him for highlighting problems in Gaza, specifically the refusal of Israel to allow him to visit Gaza.

The following are 2 examples which were considered to ‘I thank’ functioning as a mitigating gesture;

<Deputy Ciarán Lynch> I thank the Minister for his response, but I am baffled by the manner and tone of that reply.

And;

<Deputy Michael D’Arcy> I thank the Minister for the reply but it does not say much about anything. In respect of the code of conduct, is the Minister aware that the banks have already lodged thousands of cases with the courts?
There are 103 uses of ‘I thank’ being used in apparently sincere fashion, and 43 uses of ‘I thank’ being used as a mitigating gesture, followed by an attack or criticism. Just over one-quarter of the uses of ‘I thank’ in Ireland (28.8%) are mitigation uses. When usage of ‘I thank’ is analysed in terms of topic, a pattern to this usage emerges.

In terms of topic, there is unquestionably a tendency to use ‘I thank’ sincerely in matters where there is broad agreement between government and opposition. For example, issues related to Northern Ireland, Foreign Affairs, and European policy have bipartisan support in Dáil Éireann, and when these matters occur in QT, ‘I thank’ is used very frequently in a sincere fashion. ‘I thank’ is never used as a mitigating gesture during questions on these bipartisan issues. For example, during QT on February 16th, questions were asked on Foreign Affairs and European matters. ‘I thank’ occurred 4 times during a brief exchange;

<Deputy Billy Timmins> I thank the Minister for his reply. I wish also to ask some brief supplementary questions.

<Deputy Pat Breen> I thank the Minister for his reply and commend him for highlighting problems in Gaza

<Deputy Lucinda Creighton> I thank the Minister for his reply. It is important that we send a message to the people of Ireland, the electorate, that Europe is not just about referenda or treaties.

<Deputy Michael D. Higgins> I thank the Deputy for his support.

Similarly, on June 23rd, the Taoiseach briefly answered questions on Northern Ireland issues, and his responses are met with sincere thanks from opposition deputies;

<Deputy Eamon Gilmore> I thank the Taoiseach for that reply. He has said he is open to suggestions from all parties on commemorations and I would put one suggestion to him.

<Deputy Enda Kenny> I thank the Taoiseach for that response. He is aware that Mr. Paterson was interested in this question prior to his appointment as Northern Ireland Secretary of State.

<Deputy Enda Kenny> I thank the Taoiseach for his reply. There is a possibility for progress through that mechanism.
On the other hand, all 43 uses of ‘I thank’ as a mitigating gesture take place in the context of issues where there is widespread disagreement between the government and the opposition – issues such as finance, healthcare, education, and employment. Some examples include:

(Employment and Jobs)

<Deputy Denis Naughten> I thank the Minister of State for his reply. It seems the Minister of State is washing his hands of this issue, considering he completed the review in the early half of 2009 and he seems to be satisfied with it.

<Deputy Damien English> I thank the Minister of State for his reply and for acknowledging that a problem exists. He did not really discuss the solutions

(Housing)

<Deputy Terence Flanagan> I thank the Minister of State for his reply. It is disappointing he did not intervene or listen to what Fine Gael had to say about Dublin City Council reducing its affordable prices last year.

(Economics)

<Deputy Noel J. Coonan> I thank the Minister of State for his rather short and vague reply. I will repeat the specific point in my question. Will he fund the Garryard mine waste facility?

<Deputy Liz McManus> While I thank the Taoiseach for that reply, I am concerned it shows a disconnect between his perception of the experience Ireland underwent in the period around Christmas and the reality.

(Education)

<Deputy Ruairí Quinn> I thank the Tánaiste and Minister for Education and Skills for her reply, but her response is somewhat inadequate as we approach the completion of the first decade in the 21st century.

<Deputy Frank Feighan> I thank the Minister of State for his reply. However, it does not set out or allay the fears of thousands of hard-pressed parents. We are discussing the 2010 to 2011 school year.
Clearly, these are strategic uses of ‘I thank’, which, while ostensibly expressing gratitude to the Minister for the reply, are actually followed by a speech act such as disagreement. Unlike the earlier case of ‘please’, where structural use of ‘please’ (medial position of ‘please’ following a modal verb) indicated that ‘please’ was being used as a mitigating gesture, to be followed by some form of ‘reasonable hostility’, here one must pay attention to the accompanying adjectives (‘short’, ‘vague’) and to the words immediately following ‘reply’ (‘but’, ‘however’). The immediate following sentence also generally contains words indicating dissatisfaction or disagreement on the part of the questioner (‘baffled’, ‘disappointing’, ‘inadequate’).

5.3.4 ‘I thank’ in House of Commons interrogatives

The British data for ‘I thank’ shows strong similarities to the Irish data. It is interesting to note that there are 2 examples of ‘I thank’ being used in relation to a personal matter (in contrast to the 20 examples of this in the Irish data), both in relation to the recent death of an MP.

<Mrs. Swayne> I thank the Secretary of State for his fitting tribute to David Taylor

<Hilary Benn> I thank the hon. Gentleman for his kind words about Ashok Kumar.

The most likely reason for this discrepancy is that there was no cabinet reshuffle (or new ministerial appointments) during the time frame from which the British data was collected. On the contrary, a general election was called in Britain in April 2010, and there are a number of references to this in the British corpus. This undoubtedly accounts for the lack of congratulatory or social ‘I thank’ uses in the British data. It may also be, of course, that proximity to election time leads to less likelihood of sincere co-operative gestures (such as personal thanks) in the parliamentary chamber, given that speakers will soon be in direct competition at election time. It seems, therefore, that social uses of ‘I thank’ may be broadly similar in each setting, although the relative lack of data should be borne in mind before coming to a definitive conclusion on this. There are 2 uses of ‘I thank’ when an outside party is the person being thanked; these have been omitted from the following analysis.

There are 195 uses of ‘I thank’ in a question-answer exchange found in the British QTC. As with the Irish data, the researcher has, after a close reading of the Hansard in conjunction with the corpus, divided ‘I thank’ uses into usage as a gesture of acknowledgement/appreciation, or as a mitigating gesture, based on the entire context of each
use. The frequency of uses is similar to the breakdown in the Irish data; 151 uses of ‘I thank’ are uses as acknowledgement/appreciation, while 44 out of 195 uses are as a mitigating gesture (22.5% of uses of ‘I thank’ are mitigating gestures in Britain. In the Irish data, the percentage of mitigation uses, 43 from 149, is 28.8%, a broadly similar percentage). As with the Irish data, use of ‘I thank’ as a mitigating gesture is generally followed by the word ‘but’ or ‘however’, and with a negative adjective. For example;

<Miss McIntosh> I thank the Minister for that reply, but it is a load of twaddle.

And

<Mr. Burns> I thank the Minister for that answer, but I would be grateful if he would check it with those who briefed him, because I think he will find that the situation is not 100 per cent.

As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, one structural difference between QT in Ireland and QT in Britain is the greater amount of questions from friendly sources (MPs from the same party) in the British setting. It is interesting to note that this does not affect the percentage of differing uses of ‘I thank’. As with the Irish data, topical analysis of the context of ‘I thank’ usage reveals interesting information, and a similar pattern to the Irish setting. The issue of Northern Ireland, on which the Labour government and the Conservative (and Liberal Democrat) opposition agree, tends to generate many uses of ‘I thank’. In one QT session alone (on February 3rd), there are 5 uses of ‘I thank’ as a gesture of acknowledgment/appreciation in a brief exchange, usually followed by warm words. For example;

<Mr. McGrady> I thank the Secretary of State for his response. May I place on record the thanks of the people of Northern Ireland to the Prime Minister, the Secretary of State, the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the extraordinary patience and diligence that they have applied throughout these talks?

This is immediately followed by

<Mr. Woodward> I thank my hon. Friend for those remarks. Let us be clear that the Prime Minister works extremely hard whether he is here in Downing street or in Northern Ireland,
<Mr. Woodward> I thank the hon. Gentleman for those remarks, and indeed for his help during those two days when his being in Northern Ireland with the Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs.

Other topics which lead to such uses of ‘I thank’ in Britain are Welsh and Scottish affairs, and affairs related to local government. Unlike in Ireland, the topic of foreign affairs on occasion leads to uses of ‘I thank’ as a mitigation gesture in Britain. For example, Iran and Zimbabwe are discussed in a bipartisan way, and have uses of ‘I thank as a gesture of acknowledgement;

<Jeremy Corbyn> I thank the Minister for what he said about human rights in Iran and I agree with him on that.

<Mr. Thomas> I thank my right hon. Friend for his comments about our work on agriculture in Zimbabwe.

On the other hand, there are uses of ‘I thank’ in relation to European matters where ‘I thank’ is used as a mitigating gesture immediately followed by a criticism of the government;

<Mr. Bone> I thank the Minister for that answer, but it is extraordinary: we pay our European Union colleagues more than £630 million each year for treatment provided to British citizens abroad, yet-I think she said this-we claim back only about £30 million for treatment provided to EU citizens in this country. Why?

This may be reflection of the fact that there is a clear ideological difference in attitudes to Europe among the main political parties in Britain. The Conservative party have traditionally been Euro-sceptic, while the Labour party have been more pro-European, broadly speaking. This may lead to more passionate and face-threatening exchanges, given the higher stakes involved in the discussion. This means the likelihood of use of ‘I thank’ followed by disagreement or criticism is more likely to occur in relation here than in Ireland, where all parties broadly support broader European involvement. This somewhat echoes the findings of Ilie (2004), who noted that parliamentary insults are more frequent in Britain than in Sweden, due to greater ideological polarisation in Britain than in Sweden.
5.3.5 ‘Go raibh maith agat’. Irish language uses of ‘thank you.

One unique feature to the Irish data (which, for obvious reasons, cannot be compared with the British data) is the occasional use of ‘thank you’ in Irish. As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis, questions asked and answered in Irish (questions related to Gaeltacht affairs and the Irish language) have been deliberately omitted from the Irish corpus. However, on occasion, Irish politicians use a word or phrase in Irish during the course of asking or answering a question in English. This has been noted by Hickey (2005: 34); “there is a curious habit of flavouring one's speech by adding a few words from Irish, which is sometimes condescendingly called using the cúpla focal (literally “couple of words”)”. This tendency has also been noted by Kallen (2005), who interestingly sees this tendency as a politeness strategy. This is a form of code switching, “the use of two or more linguistic varieties in the same conversation or interaction. The switch may be only for one word or for several minutes of speech” (Myers-Scotton, 1977: 5). Some commentators have pointed out (Kallen, 2005; Wardhaugh, 2006) that language choice can be of symbolic importance, particularly in situations where the political or cultural situation may not be entirely straightforward. Wardhaugh (2006: 106) gives examples of situations where language choice and code switching may be made to use a political point, to express some kind of solidarity, or as an expression of a particular identity; he names Quebec (language choice between French and English) and Wales (language choice between Welsh and English) as examples of this, but Ireland could also be used to illustrate this. Kallen (2005: 141) points out that the Irish language often functions as an identity marker for Irish people.

We have noted earlier (section 6.3) that le do thoil, the Irish for ‘please’, is only used by the Ceann Comhairle in procedural situations. The situation with go raibh maith agat, the Irish for ‘thank you’, is somewhat different. There are 11 uses of go raibh maith agat in the corpus. Eight of these are by the Ceann Comhairle, and 3 are by deputies. Although one would expect the Ceann Comhairle to use go raibh maith agat in a similar way to how le do thoil is used (in procedural matters at the end of a question), this is not the case. Rather, the Ceann Comhairle uses go raibh maith agat as an initial way of requesting speakers to finish speaking. In all 8 cases where the Ceann Comhairle uses go raibh maith agat, he interrupts a speaker in mid-speech. For example;

  <Deputy John Moloney> I do not want to reduce it to that level of common——

  <An Leas-Cheann Comhairle> Go raibh maith agat, a Aire Stáit.
Let me just say—

Go raibh maith agat, a Aire Stáit.

And also;

When I spoke to officials in the carer’s allowance section of the Department, they said they would re-examine the case without reference to the appeals process. That did not happen, unfortunately. Both the man and his wife are without assistance. I am also familiar with the case of a young farmer—

Go raibh maith agat.

—–with €6.50 of farm assist—–

We do not have time to go through the Deputy’s list of cases.

It is interesting that the Ceann Comhairle switches to Irish in all 8 of these cases. There are no examples of the Ceann Comhairle using ‘thank you’ in this way. There is one example in the British data of the Speaker using ‘thank you’ (together with ‘order’) in this manner;

It may be "all very well", but it is actually true that the percentage of the lottery fund that went to heritage during the three years [. . . ]More than £660 million comes directly from my Department, and £130 million comes from the Big Lottery Fund. Under the Conservative party’s proposals, those amounts would be-

Order. We have got the drift. That is very helpful, thank you.

In this context the Ceann Comhairle is requesting the speaker to stop talking – a face-threatening act. The use of go raibh maith agat appears to be an attempt at softening this attack on the speaker’s negative face. The use of Irish rather than English (Irish being the language of procedural matters in Dáil Eireann) appears to be a further attempt on the Ceann Comhairle to mitigate his FTA, since it is the use of an in-group identity marker – this may be an attempt to indicate solidarity with the speaker, even as the Ceann Comhairle is performing the FTA. It is interesting to note that this strategy appears to work, more or less;
in all 8 examples of the Ceann Comhairle using go raibh maith agat in this manner, only once does the speaker fail to stop speaking within a few words.

5.3.6 Analysis of usage of ‘thank you’ in terms of politeness studies

According to Brown and Levinson’s theoretical framework, the expression of thanks by a speaker is a gesture towards the speaker’s own negative face, because the speaker is indicating the power of the person being thanked; the speaker is essentially accepting a debt (1987: 67). However, as we have seen, approximately 25% of the usages of ‘I thank’ in both Britain and Ireland are followed by a disagreement or a criticism. Although ‘I thank’ is used here as a mitigating gesture, it does not appear to soften or qualify to any great extent the disagreement or criticism which follows (as in the ‘I thank the Minister, but that is a load of twaddle’ example). There appears to be an explicit incongruity to these usages of ‘I thank’, as the ostensibly polite discourse marker is followed by an insult or an attack in these examples. This incongruity, of course, only highlights the face-threatening nature of the attack in question. As with the use of ‘please’, these usages of ‘I thank’ indicate a weakness in the Brown and Levinson framework, which is primarily focused on the avoidance or mitigation of FTAs. Although ‘I thank’ appears to have somewhat of a mitigating function here, it is difficult to judge the sincerity of this mitigating gesture, when it is followed by such an explicit attack. What the analysis contained here primarily shows, in fact, is that careful consideration of the entire context of a speech turn needs to be borne in mind. It is only by careful analysis of the entire context of a use of ‘I thank’, with particular attention being paid to the following conjunctions (‘but’, ‘however’) that one can judge the sincerity or insincerity of the speech act.

This is, in fact, very similar to the findings noted earlier in the analysis of ‘please’ (section 5.5). Whereas ‘please’, due to its structural flexibility, can be analysed in terms of sentence position, ‘thank you/I thank’ needs to be analysed in terms of the entire speech turn and the topic under discussion. It may be the case that ‘I thank’ here is being used both as a mitigating gesture (towards the addressee) which flags the ostensibly co-operative and collegial nature of the speaker, while ‘I thank’ also does not prevent the speaker from engaging in criticism or disagreement with the opposition. Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ can help to account for this use of ‘I thank’, as this concept acknowledges the need to pay attention to the face wants of the addressee, while allowing for the necessary criticisms and disagreements in this setting. The use of ‘thank you’ to the
Ceann Comhairle, and the use of *go raibh maith agat* by the Ceann Comhairle and Sinn Fein deputies (when it is unquestionably being used sincerely) indicates that the theory of ‘ostensible mitigation’ (referred to in section 3.3 of this thesis), which certainly accounts for the use of ‘I thank’ in hostile questions, is not sufficient to account for the varying and complex uses of ‘thank you’/*I thank*/*go raibh maith agat* in Dáil Éireann and the House of Commons. As with ‘please’, it seems that a combination of Brown and Levinson’s framework, the concept of ‘ostensible speech acts’ and Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ is the most logical and useful approach to discussing ‘thank you’ in parliamentary settings.

5.4 Conclusion and summary

This analysis has revealed a number of differences between the use of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’/*I thank* in Ireland and Britain. These include

- The different conventions which have built up in each parliament over time. In Ireland, the Ceann Comhairle uses ‘please’ while maintaining order, while, in Britain, MPs occasionally say ‘thank you’ to the Speaker of the House, a practice which is not followed in Ireland
- In Britain, ‘I am grateful’ is often used as a synonym for ‘thank you’. This almost never occurs in Ireland
- In Ireland, *go raibh maith agat* is occasionally used during QT, usually by the Ceann Comhairle. This appears to be a politeness strategy on the part of the Ceann Comhairle. *Go raibh maith agat* is also used for ideological reasons by Sinn Fein deputies

These differences indicate slightly different politeness norms in the Irish setting and the British setting. There certainly appears to be greater formality in the British setting. This is indicated by the use of ‘order’ by the Speaker in the British setting, rather than the Irish preference for ‘please’. It is further indicated by the more formal ‘I am grateful’ being used frequently in the British parliament rather than ‘I thank’. It is also indicated by the Ceann Comhairle’s face-saving use of *go raibh maith agat*, an in-group identity marker, as a way of keeping order in the parliamentary chamber. This data also revealed that ‘I thank’ is used in broadly similar ways (it is used as a mitigating gesture rather than as an acknowledgement token approximately 25% of the time in each setting) in Ireland and Britain, but there are some significant topical differences. These topical differences (for example, European affairs
generate sincere uses of ‘I thank’ in Ireland, but hostile use in Britain) seem to confirm that ideological differences between left and right are less significant in Ireland than in Britain, a finding which has been long noted by many commentators on Irish politics (Fitzgerald, 1991, 2003; Gallagher, 2010a, 2010b). In Ireland, subjects such as the everyday management and upkeep of education, healthcare and the economy are more likely to lead to hostile, face-threatening language use (which is mitigated somewhat by the use of ‘I thank’), rather than foreign affairs or Northern Ireland issues.

Despite these differences, however, what is most striking about the use of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in Dáil Éireann and the House of Commons is the similarities between the usage in both settings, and indeed the similarities of use between ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. In both settings, ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ are used in a deliberate, strategic fashion, in order to draw attention to the speech acts being performed (respectively, requests and acknowledgements). In the case of ‘I thank’, this gesture is often used as a mitigating gesture preceding a disagreement or a criticism of some kind. Both ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ are used in a variety of ways in both settings, and the use of corpus linguistics can indicate and illuminate the usage of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in parliamentary discourse. These findings of the corpus-based research yield a number of interesting insights, although the relatively small number of uses of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ found should be borne in mind. In addition, the lack of data related to stress and intonation should also be borne in mind. Nevertheless, this data indicates that a simplistic view of these discourse markers as politeness markers is inadequate when accounting for the complexity of usage of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in both the national parliaments of Ireland and Britain. All questions which occur in a parliamentary setting require a response, of course, but one specific form of ‘please’ usage (medial position following modal verb) indicates that the questioner is strongly demanding responsive action from the recipient, and indicates frustration and irritation on the part of the questioner. This use of ‘please’ actually makes a question more forceful, in contrast to how ‘please’ is usually perceived to be used (as a softener, to make a request more indirect). This is clearly a strategic use of ‘please’, rather than an attempt to convey politeness. It may subconsciously be an attempt on the part of the questioners to manipulate the surface meaning of ‘please’ as a courtesy token. A similar pattern emerges when one examines ‘I thank’ in detail. Despite often being used to express gratitude and acknowledgement, it is often used in the parliamentary setting as a mitigating gesture which sets the scene for a disagreement or a criticism to following the thanking gesture.
In terms of Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, the data uncovered here reveals some of the limitations of this theory. The findings of this corpus analysis appear to suggest that Brown and Levinson’s theory of positive and negative face is not entirely satisfactory for analysing exchanges in an environment which is both highly ritualised and formal in nature, as well as for analysing exchanges which are deliberately and overtly face-threatening. In fact, the findings from this analysis of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ seem to confirm the findings of Watts and Locher (2005: 10), that “solid and comprehensive as it is, Brown and Levinson’s Politeness Theory is not in fact a theory of politeness, but rather a theory of facework, dealing only with the mitigation of face-threatening-acts”. It also seems that traditional Speech Act theory is an inadequate framework for dealing with situations such as those found in QT, although Austin’s division of speech acts into ‘functional differentiations’ such as disagreements, acknowledgements, criticisms, etc. (discussed in section 2.1.2 of this thesis) is certainly a useful one. It appears that one of the most useful frameworks for analysing speech acts in the parliamentary setting is the idea of ‘ostensible speech acts’, first proposed by Isaacs and Clark (1990), and later developed by, among others, Link and Kreuz (2005). This framework accounts for the mutual recognition and pretence encountered during parliamentary exchanges, when both participants recognise the insincere and strategic use of the discourse markers ‘please’ and ‘thank you’. It also seems that Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ can account for (at least some of) the linguistic behaviour which is taking place here, and that ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in the Irish and British parliamentary settings are speech tokens which pay attention to the listener’s face wants, while generally occurring in response to another face attack (as noted in section 2.1.6 of this thesis).

The analysis of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ undertaken here indicates that a range of factors need to be considered by researchers investigating politeness in parliamentary settings. The sentence structure of the speech act (as was seen with ‘please’ in medial position), the topic being discussed (the hostile use of ‘I thank’ in Britain but not in Ireland when discussing European issues), and the ideological views of parliamentarians (use of go raibh maith agat by Sinn Fein deputies), all need to be considered, as do the conventions of the parliament in question. This research suggests that a range of politeness frameworks needs to utilised to fully understand the complex nature of politeness in parliamentary interactions, and a range of methodologies also. The corpus research here has revealed some interesting insights, but the use of corpus alone is certainly not sufficient, and at the very least the full parliamentary transcripts should be utilised in conjunction with the corpus. Chapter 7 of this thesis expands
on some of the findings revealed in this chapter by examining entire exchanges which feature ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and by examining some aspects of facework which are utilised during these exchanges.
Chapter 6 – ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ in response to questions

<Mr. Bone> Will the Minister make it quite clear whether the Government are pursuing the option of consolidating NHS charities on NHS balance sheets? Can we just have a simple yes or no?

<AEL> The hon. Gentleman may operate in a world in which yes or no does it for him, but most things in life are a bit more complex.

(exchange from the British QTC)

6.1 Introduction and background

This chapter follows a broadly similar structure to the preceding chapter, by analysing in detail the use of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to polar questions. As with the previous chapter, this chapter opens with a brief description of the linguistic tokens ‘yes’ and ‘no’, followed by a discussion of word list findings for these tokens in both QTCs. Following this initial discussion, findings for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the polar question framework are discussed. There is some evidence in chapter 4 that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ may not always be recorded accurately in parliamentary transcripts when they are used as interjections (for example, when they are shouted from the parliamentary chamber by a speaker other than the one who holds the floor). However, it appears that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are faithfully transcribed when they appear in response to yes/no questions. This analysis of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to questions is followed by analysis of what these findings may indicate about politeness during Question Time (QT) in Dáil Eireann (and also in Westminster), as well as a discussion about what these findings may indicate about Irish English.

Stubbs (1983: 111) points out that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are syntactically unusual (they share this property with ‘please’, of course). They are often seen as sentence substitutes, but they should perhaps be seen as ellipses, since they often replace clauses. ‘Yes’ and ‘no’ are always
non-initial in discourse – they must be a response to a preceding utterance (or action); as such, they are essentially an interactive, pragmatic phenomenon, and may have much to tell us about politeness norms. Although ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are clearly contrastive in some ways (‘do you like whiskey? Yes, I do/no, I don’t’), they do not always have to follow a yes/no question;

It is true, in a sense, that anything may follow it [a yes/no question], but clear constraints are placed on the interpretations of the utterance which does follow. Hearsers will try and interpret whatever follows as meaning ‘yes’ or ‘no’. That is not to say that only the forms ‘yes’ and ‘no’ can occur; but that whatever does occur is already pre-classified as meaning either ‘yes’ or ‘no’, or, if this is impossible, then as querying or refusing assumptions made by the questioner (Stubbs, 1983: 105).

Stubbs goes on to point out that although yes/no questions appear to offer a binary choice to the responder, in reality answers can appear on a continuum of certainty (for example, ‘I don’t think so’ would appear on a continuum somewhere closer to ‘no’ than ‘yes’, but it is not a definitive ‘no’). This point is also made by Hockey et al.; “respondents do not always produce overt yes or no lexical items in response to a yes/no question. In addition, when respondents don’t include a clear yes or no word, they may mean to communicate a clear yes or no meaning, or something else” (1997: 1). Although ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are not in themselves politeness features, it is also clear that yes/no questions (and responses to them) are closely linked with politeness in some ways. Stubbs points out that after routine questions or small requests, ‘no’ is generally followed by an apology or an account – it is unusual for ‘no’ to stand alone. For example, the exchange ‘have you got a light? No, sorry, I don’t smoke’ is far more likely than ‘have you got a light? No’ (Stubbs, 1983: 113). This is even more evident in the Irish setting (Diamant, 2012). Brown and Levinson themselves (1987: 114) note that English speakers go to remarkable lengths to avoid using the word ‘no’ in response to a question, much preferring a token agreement.

Although Michael Stubbs’ 1983 description of the theoretical background to ‘yes’ and ‘no’ is still very much relevant to researchers looking at these tokens, there have been a number of more recent studies which have also examined ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in various ways. These include Hockey et al., (1997), Holtgraves (1997), Koshik (2002) and Keevallik (2010). Koshik, for instance, points out that yes/no questions do not depend (for understanding) on the structure of the question alone, but also on the “displayed knowledge state or epistemic knowledge from which the questions are asked” (2002: 1851). In addition, when looking at the
theoretical background of ‘yes’ and ‘no’, it is also worth reiterating at this point the fact that many researchers working with Irish English (Diamant, 2012; Amador-Moreno, 2010; Kallen, 2005; Filppula, 1999) have noted that Irish English speakers tend to use ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in notably different ways to speakers of other varieties of English. This is discussed in detail in chapter 3 of this thesis, but it is worth repeating Kallen’s summary of the issue at this point;

Even the simple question-answer adjacency pair in Irish English affords an enhanced opportunity to engage in conversational reciprocity. Speakers of Irish English frequently answer questions with phrases or full clauses that repeat the verb of the question rather than using a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’. This pattern is generally taken to originate in substratal transfer from the Irish language, which has no word for ‘yes’ or ‘no’ but relies on repetition of the verb. This conversational pattern may thus originate in syntax rather than in politeness, but its effect is that Irish responses will not appear as bald as simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ responses

(Kallen, 2005:139).

Finally, in terms of political discourse, a number of researchers have commented on yes/no questions during parliamentary discourse. Fenton-Smith points out (2008: 107) that despite the overwhelming prevalence of yes/no questions in QT, researchers should be aware that very few of them are expected to receive a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer. “It is assumed in this context that questions are to be taken as a point of departure for discussion – as prompts for a short speech”. Fenton-Smith indicates that excessively short answers may give an impression of evasiveness – which obviously politicians want to avoid. Politeness theory may also play a role here, however – short, one word answers may be seen as a threat to the ‘face’ of the questioner. Wilson points out that, in political interviews, basic yes/no questions are rarely interpreted as that, but rather as indirect requests for information. Wilson warns against looking at political language in purely structural terms, for this reason; “this is not to say that a functional analysis does not have a role to play in the study of political questions and answers, merely that more attention must be paid to the analytic description of units selected for analysis in terms of their contextual distribution” (1990: 141).
6.2 Word list findings for ‘yes’ and ‘no’

The word ‘yes’ appears 151 times in the Irish data; this places it at number 726 on the word list for the QTC for Ireland. ‘Yes’ appears 98 times in the British data, showing up at number 506 on the British word list. When normalised to words-per-million, results show;

(Chart 6.1)

The word ‘no’ appears far more frequently in both corpora. In the Irish QTC, ‘no’ appears 1609 times, placing it at number 66 on the word list. In the British data, ‘no’ appears 587 times, placing it at number 85 on the British word list. When normalised to words-per-million, results are as follows;
It is important to note here a slight structural difference between ‘yes’ and ‘no’. The particle ‘no’ can be used as a marker of negation, as well as functioning as an interactive particle. This study focuses primarily on ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in interactions, and primarily focuses on ‘yes’ and ‘no’ when they are used in response to interrogatives. For this reason, it is expected that ‘no’ would appear more frequently than ‘yes’, in terms of frequency. These charts show that ‘yes’ appears slightly more in the British data, whereas ‘no’ appears slightly more in the Irish data. It should be pointed out, however, that the figures are relatively similar to each other, and their similar position on the respective word lists indicate that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are used with broadly similar frequency in the two settings. This is a somewhat surprising finding. As noted in section 1.2.3 of this thesis, there are many more questions and answers in the British setting, due to the shorter speech turns in that setting. One would, therefore, expect ‘yes’ and ‘no’ to occur much more frequently in the British setting than the Irish setting. In addition, it was noted in section 3.4 of this thesis that ‘yes’ and ‘no’ tend to be used somewhat less by Irish speakers of English than speakers of other varieties of English, due to the lack of words for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the Irish language. Again, this theoretically ought to lead to ‘yes’ and ‘no’ appearing more frequently in the British setting than the Irish setting, yet this does not appear to be the case.

It should be noted here, however, that these raw figures for the use of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ may be somewhat misleading, due to the multiple functions of ‘no’ in English. ‘No’ can be used as both a marker of negation and as an interactive particle. This can be seen when one looks at
the most common collocates of ‘no’ in both QTCs. In the Irish data, the most common collocate of ‘no’ is ‘longer’ (77 times), followed by ‘doubt’ (69 times), ‘one’ (45 times), ‘problem’ (26 times) and ‘way’ (25 times). The most common phrases which include ‘no’ include ‘there is no’ (290 times), ‘I have no’ (111 times), ‘there was no’ (83 times) and ‘there are no’ (43 times). Findings for ‘no’ in the British data are broadly similar. In the British setting, the word ‘no’ occurs most often in the phrase ‘there is no’, which occurs 88 times. In addition, other common phrases include ‘we have no’ (15 times), ‘there will be no’ (14 times) ‘there are no’ (12 times), and ‘I have no’ (12 times). The words which collocate most frequently with ‘no’ in Britain are ‘doubt’ (25 times), ‘one’ (24 times), ‘longer’ (23 times), ‘plans’ (17 times) and ‘question’ (14 times). Due to these multiple functions of ‘no’, making comparisons with ‘yes’ is not a straightforward matter. For this reason, following a brief discussion on the collocates of ‘yes’ in this data (section 6.2.1, following), the analysis of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in this chapter primarily concentrates on ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to polar yes/no questions in both parliamentary settings.

Finally, when one is looking at overall findings for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the QTC corpora, it is amusing and instructive to note that the phrase ‘yes or no?’ appears 7 times in the Irish corpus. It is invariably used by opposition deputies, demanding an answer from a government minister. Examples from the Irish data include;

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> The Minister promised this, so can he answer “Yes” or “No” to the question as to whether the new scheme will be operative before the carbon levy is introduced.

And;

<Deputy Brian Hayes> The proposal by the innovation task force is that bonus points should be introduced next September. In other words, it would be implemented in respect of students taking their leaving certificate exams in 2012. Will this occur, yes or no?

This phrase is also common in the British QTC. ‘Yes or no?’ appears 11 times in this setting. As with the Irish data, it is always used to attack the government of the day – including the colourful example given at the heading of this chapter. It attacks the government by both indicating dissatisfaction with the previous speech turn of the minister, and by giving the impression that the minister’s reply has lacked clarity. It also attempts to commit the minister to a definite statement, which politicians tend to avoid, since this may limit their future
freedom of action (as noted by Bayley and Chilton, and discussed in chapter 3 of this thesis)
The (relative) frequency of the phrase ‘yes or no?’ in both corpora indicates both the face-threatening nature of exchanges during QT, and the polar nature of exchanges in that setting.

6.2.1 ‘Yes’ in Irish and British data

It is amusing and instructive to note that the word which follows ‘yes’ most frequently in Dáil Eireann is ‘but’. ‘Yes’ is followed by ‘but’ on 17 occasions out of the 151 uses of ‘yes’ in Dáil Eireann. This may well confirm the findings of the previous chapter, that politicians often use a linguistic token to draw attention to the nature of their interlocutor’s response (this is similar to the use of ‘I thank’ in the parliamentary settings, noted in chapter 5); this is, in fact, an ostensible use of ‘yes’ where the use of ‘yes, but’ is a qualified ‘yes’, which draws attention to the speech act of disagreement or criticism which follows the particle ‘yes’. Examples include;

<The Taoiseach> As I explained, nor would the Taoiseach of the day have been involved in that issue.

<Deputy Enda Kenny> Yes, but the Minister for Defence is the person who has the record.

And;

<Deputy Joan Burton> The Minister brought it in here.

<Deputy Brian Lenihan> Yes, but it was prepared by the interim chief executive of NAMA at the time.

There is a major difference between the Irish data and the British data when one analyses the collocates of ‘yes’ in the British setting. The word ‘but’ only occurs with ‘yes’ twice in the British setting – a striking difference with the 17 uses in the Irish corpus. In contrast, the three most common collocates with ‘yes’ in the British setting are ‘and’, ‘of course’, and ‘absolutely’. ‘Yes, of course’ occurs 6 times in the British data, and ‘yes, and’ also occurs six times. ‘Yes and’ appears 9 times in the Irish corpus; however, ‘yes, of course’ only appears once in the Irish data – when a minister is on the defensive.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> The Minister is supposed to know what is going on. He is supposed to take action to protect people from poverty.
Yes, of course. Is the Deputy aware of how much the price of fuel has increased since the beginning of the year?

In contrast, all 6 uses of ‘yes, of course’ in the British setting are apparently much less defensive. For example;

Will the Minister try to make sure that there is a measured response to the outcome of the negotiations, and in particular that the amount of bureaucracy that charities will have to face as a result of this change is kept to an absolute minimum?

Yes, of course. In fact, I met PPL and PRS this week after a meeting that I had the previous week with the Association of Charities Shops and the charities concerned.

The reason for this difference between the Irish and British settings appears to be that the broader range of questioners in the British parliament leads to more ‘friendly’ questions, which are more likely to receive a positive response. It has been seen (see section 1.2.3) that approximately 20% of the questions in the British QT are from MPs who support the government. This is also discussed in more detail in section 7.2 of this thesis.

Having examined the collocates of ‘yes’ in both settings, the 151 uses of ‘yes’ in the Irish setting and the 98 uses of ‘yes’ in the British setting were then looked at more closely. In the Irish setting, a large number of uses of ‘yes’ were interjections by opposition deputies, in support of a colleague’s statement, or agreeing with a government minister – 27 uses of ‘yes’. There is not a single example of ‘yes’ being used in this way (as a stand-alone interjection) in the British data, which is most unlikely; it is almost certainly a transcription issue (as noted in chapter 4, interjections are inconsistently recorded in both settings). In addition to these interjections, a large number of ‘yes’ uses in the Irish QTC were in procedural matters, between the Ceann Comhairle and a deputy. There were 5 procedural uses of ‘yes’ in the British setting. Because this appears to be a transcription issue, and because the previous chapter has highlighted issues with the transcription of orality features such as interjections, deeper analysis of these findings will not be undertaken here.

Many of the uses of ‘yes’ in the British setting appear mid-speech, both by opposition MPs and government ministers. Of the 98 uses of ‘yes’ in the British data, 21 occur in the middle of a speech. Although these occasionally appear to be an answer to an earlier yes/no question, many of these mid-speech uses appear to be a rhetorical device, as in the following example;

[...] Will the Minister try to make sure that there is a measured response to the outcome of the negotiations, and in particular that the amount of bureaucracy that charities will have to face as a result of this change is kept to an absolute minimum?

Yes, of course. In fact, I met PPL and PRS this week after a meeting that I had the previous week with the Association of Charities Shops and the charities concerned.
<Mr. Hain> Does the hon. Gentleman not agree that, compared with Rwanda and most countries in the rest of the world—this is the point that I was making, if he had not chosen to take that quotation out of context—Wales is indeed still a wealthy country? Yes, we have suffered setbacks in the past few years, but we suffered terrible setbacks in the '80s and '90s.

There are fewer examples of ‘yes’ in mid-speech in the Irish setting; 12 out of the 151 uses of ‘yes’ are mid-speech. As with the British setting, in these situations, ‘yes’ appears to be largely a rhetorical device, as in the following example;

   <The Taoiseach> The responsibility of Government is to discharge its duties based on the budgetary realities and the fact that we have a configuration in our spending as it is means that every public expenditure programme must make a contribution. Yes, there was a Government decision on cuts to wages on the basis that we felt to ask the non-pay side of expenditure programmes to take the necessary hit would have greatly affected the provision of services to those who most require them.

It is interesting to note that ‘yes’ appears more frequently mid-speech in the British setting, despite the longer speeches in the Irish setting. This may indicate a preference for traditional rhetorical speech devices in the British setting. The examples above, in fact, appear to be examples of hypophora, where a speaker asks and then answers his/her own question. This again may point to a greater preference for formality in language use in Westminster when compared with the Irish setting. In addition to these various uses of ‘yes’, there are some further miscellaneous uses of ‘yes’ in both settings which have also been excluded from detailed analysis here; 2 references to the television show Yes Minister in the Irish setting, for example! There is also one reference to this television show in the British data. There are also two uses of ‘yes’ in the Irish setting which are embedded quotes from a report.

6.3 Usage of ‘yes’ in response to yes/no questions

Once all other uses of ‘yes’ in the Irish and British QTCs have been identified and categorised, what remains are uses of ‘yes’ in direct response to a question from the opposition, that is, in the response part of a question-answer exchange. In practice, questions from the opposition invariably take the form of yes/no questions. There were no open ‘Wh’ questions observed in this data. There are 29 uses of ‘yes’ in response to ‘yes/no’ questions in
the Irish data. In contrast, there are 58 uses of ‘yes’ in response to yes/no questions in the British data. When normalised to words-per-million, results are as follows;

(Chart 6.3)

There is a very large difference here. As noted earlier (section 1.4), there are many more questions asked in the British setting than the Irish setting. This almost certainly accounts for some of this large difference. The other potential reason for this difference is the larger number of questions posed by ‘friendly’ MPs in the British setting – this is discussed in section 1.2.3 and section 7.2.

6.3.1 Irish data

The 29 uses of ‘yes’ in polar question exchanges in the Irish setting have been examined in terms of language in the question asked, topic (and speaker) of questions, and length of immediate reply. In terms of speakers, all 29 questions which lead to a ‘yes’ response are posed by opposition deputies. In terms of length of reply, more than half of the replies, 17 out of 29 uses, are extended answers (at least 2 sentences), which begin with ‘yes’ before the Minister gives some detailed information. 5 of the 29 uses of ‘yes’ are contained in a single sentence reply, as in the following example;

<Deputy Liz McManus> Is it the policy of the Minister with responsibility for sport?

<Deputy Eamon Ryan> Yes, it is a policy to follow the course we are taking, which is the right one.
The remaining 7 uses of ‘yes’ are single word or very brief (2 or 3 word) answers, which either end an exchange or which are contained in the middle of an extended exchange. In the latter category, the Minister is usually confirming a statement from the opposition, as in the following example;

<Deputy Brian Hayes> Can I take it from the Minister’s reply — I hope this is the position — that she will now be the Minister directly responsible for international education in this country?

<Deputy Mary Coughlan> Yes.

<Deputy Brian Hayes> That has been the big problem so far.

There are also two exchanges in Dáil Éireann where a single word ‘yes’ answer ends an exchange between speakers. Single word answers which end an exchange are sometimes seen as FTAs, in situations where a longer answer may be expected; single-word answers in these situations (of which parliamentary exchanges may be considered, as noted by Bayley – see section 3.2) may give an impression of evasiveness or abruptness. Brown and Levinson (1987: 114) themselves point out that length of reply is often related to politeness. The 2 exchanges are as follows;

<Deputy Micheál Martin> [ . . .] The French Government made a key proposal on Gaza’s hospitals. All the aid is waiting to get into Gaza and we will continue to maintain pressure as best we can to ensure a resolution is found to this unacceptable and unjustifiable situation.

<Deputy Pat Breen> Is the Minister aware of the electricity problems being experienced in Gaza?

<Deputy Micheál Martin> Yes.

And;

<Deputy Batt O’Keeffe> [ . . .] I am about to bring the education (patronage) Bill to the Dáil and hopefully it will become law before the end of the year. In the interim period, however, legal arrangements have been put in place in respect of the patronage of the schools.

<Deputy Ruairí Quinn> Will the Minister publish those legal arrangements?
This is an interesting finding, because (as noted in section 3.4 of this thesis, and also the opening section of this chapter), previous research has indicated that Irish English speakers often tend to use ‘yes’ and ‘no’ with a short additional sentence. Indeed Kallen (2005) and others (Diamant, 2012; Hickey, 2007; Amador-Moreno, 2010; Filppula, 1999) have suggested that single-word ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers may be seen as particularly face-threatening in the Irish setting, due to this transfer from the Irish language, as well as because of the heightened reciprocity found in Ireland. However, the seven uses of ‘yes’ standing alone in the Irish QTC appear to contradict this (there are no single-word uses of ‘yes’ in the British data). The reason for this finding appears to be a consequence of the greater structural rigidity in the British setting, and the longer time allocated to individual questions in the Irish setting. This, as noted earlier, leads to more fixed speech turns in the British setting, with less variation in sentence structure and interaction patterns in that setting.

Finally, in terms of topic the most common topics are education (4 uses of ‘yes’ by the Minister for Education) and health (3 uses of ‘yes’ by the Minister for Health). 3 of the 29 uses of ‘yes’ are by the Taoiseach during Taoiseach’s QT. There appears to be some correlation between the topic being discussed and the level of face-threatening language used in the question which generates a ‘yes’ answer; this tendency is much more evident in the British data, as discussed in the following section. In the Irish context, bipartisan topics such as foreign affairs lead to questions which do not contain strongly face-threatening language. An example is as follows;

<Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin> On the same issue, did the Taoiseach avail of an opportunity to raise the situation of undocumented Irish immigrants in the United States? Arising from whatever exchange took place, if any, can the Taoiseach advise if progress is expected to alleviate their plight?

<The Taoiseach> Yes, I did raise the issue directly with the President and with others. The feeling in the United States is that the best prospect for a solution for the undocumented is through comprehensive immigration reform.
In contrast, topics such as health and the economy, where there are clear ideological (or at least policy) differences between parties lead to more hostile exchanges, as in the following example;

<Deputy James Reilly> The bottom line is that there have been serious delays in surgeries and people are being left in pain needlessly [. . .] People are waiting 72 hours for treatment and this is not anecdotal, it is happening daily. People are contacting me by e-mail and telephone to ask what the Minister is going to do about this. The Minister could simply put out to tender services for physiotherapy, speech, language and occupational therapy [. . .]

Will the Minister consider that?

<Deputy Mary Harney> Yes. We are providing additional beds. I am in dispute with some of the Deputies from Kerry because we are providing more rehab beds as opposed to long-stay facilities, such as those in Tralee. That is because that is the requirement and that is what is advised.

Of the 29 question turns which generate ‘yes’ answers in Dáil Éireann, 8 questions can be considered extremely face-threatening (such as the example above); that is, these speech turns directly and unambiguously criticise the minister’s performance of their job. Of these 8 questions, 3 are related to finance/economy, 2 are related to health, and 2 are related to education. The remaining question is related to social inclusion, and appears during Taoiseach’s QT. This confirms findings from the previous chapter, where it was noted that the topic under discussion appears to be central to the level and degree of politeness used by interlocutors in an exchange.

6.3.2 British data

As with the Irish data, the 58 British exchanges which feature ‘yes’ in a question-answer polar question exchange have been analysed in terms of topic (and speaker), face-threatening use of language and length of reply. There are notable differences evident between the two settings. It is interesting to note that of the 58 uses of ‘yes’ in the British setting, no less than 24 of the questions are asked by Labour MPs to a Labour minister. This (40%) is far more than the estimated 20% of questions which are posed by ‘friendly’ MPs in an average session of QT, and indicates that these questions are deliberately asked in order to generate a discussion on government achievements, and to portray the Minister (and government) in a positive light. As shall be seen in the following section (section 6.4), of the 28 questions in
the British setting which provoke a ‘no’ answer, none are asked by a Labour MP. Although all questions are to some degree an imposition on the negative face of the hearer (that is, the right of the hearer to be unimpeded), the ‘friendly’ questions posed by Labour MPs during QT can really be considered as opportunities for the hearer to burnish his/her own positive face, and the positive face of the government. Two examples of ‘friendly’ questions (with their replies) in the British setting are as follows:

<Nick Ainger> My right hon. Friend will know that the construction industry in Wales has suffered during the recession and that this is partly due to the banks' restricting lending in this sector-despite there being a significant demand for housing and despite the fact that the banks have received billions in taxpayers' support. Will my right hon. Friend raise this issue at tomorrow's economic summit in Llanelli, where Welsh Assembly Members and other colleagues will be in attendance, to ensure that lending is released to the construction industry, so that we get skilled workers back in work?

<Mr. Hain> Yes, of course I would be happy to raise this matter, which has been a source of continuing agenda discussion at recent economic summits in Wales. We will certainly discuss the issue tomorrow in Llanelli, and I will bring my hon. Friend's arguments to bear because the construction industry is vital. The investment that we are putting in will see more and more construction jobs, all of which would be put at risk if the Tories got into power.

And;

<Mr. Lindsay Hoyle> Will my colleagues on the Front Bench reaffirm to the good people of Chorley that there will be free swimming lessons for young people and pensioners in the next financial year?

<Mr. Bradshaw> Yes, and it is very much to be deprecated that, almost exclusively, those local authorities that do not offer free swimming to young people and pensioners are Conservative-controlled.

Both of these examples are significant, because the minister being questioned not only answers the question in the affirmative, the minister also uses these questions to attack the face of the opposition. This clearly points to the performative function of questions during
QT, particularly questions which are anticipated, such as questions from a member of one’s own party.

As well as the number of ‘friendly’ questions which receive a ‘yes’ answer in the British setting, another significant difference with the Irish setting is in length of answers. As seen in the examination of the Irish data, there was a variety of answer lengths in the Irish setting, including single word answers, one sentence answers, and extended responses. On the other hand, in the British setting, all 58 responses which feature ‘yes’ (in the answer part of an exchange) are either two, three or four sentences in length. As noted earlier in this research (section 1.2.3), this again indicates the structural rigidity and adherence to rule in the British setting which is much less evident in the Irish setting, as well as again indicating that the shorter length of time allocated per question in the British setting undoubtedly has an impact on the linguistic behaviour of parliamentarians. There is no example in the British data of a ‘yes’ answer standing alone, unlike the Irish data.

As with the Irish data, there is no obvious pattern to the topics or speakers which generate ‘yes’ answers, other than the aforementioned fact that Labour MPs ask a large number of questions which generate ‘yes’ answers. Of the 34 questions in Westminster asked by Conservative/Liberal Democrat/Independent MPs which generate ‘yes’ responses, the most common topics are justice (4 questions), education (3 questions) and the economy (3 questions). As with the Irish data, and a finding which corroborates findings from the previous chapter (dealing with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’), topics on which there are bipartisan agreement do not generate face-threatening language and are often phrased neutrally or even positively. In the British context, examples include Northern Ireland affairs and (in some cases) foreign affairs. For example, a question asked by a Conservative MP related to Northern Ireland is as follows;

<Sir Patrick Cormack> In the context of asset recovery, will the hon. and learned Lady warmly commend the co-operation between the Police Service of Northern Ireland and the Garda Siochana, which are working increasingly closely together to combat all forms of crime, in all parts of the island of Ireland?

<The Solicitor-General> Yes, I am sure that is something that should be thoroughly commended, as part of a pattern of co-operative behaviour that is reflected across the UK these days.
Similarly, a question related to Zimbabwe (on which there is bipartisan agreement) from a Conservative MP to a Labour minister is as follows;

<Mr. Bellingham> I am grateful to the Foreign Secretary for that reply. Does he agree that, although the economic news coming out of Zimbabwe is now more promising, there are still huge concerns about human rights abuses and about the detention of Movement for Democratic Change MPs such as Roy Bennett? Does he also agree that the existing sanctions should not be lifted until those issues have been dealt with?

<David Miliband> Yes, I agree that numerous aspects of the situation in Zimbabwe are of deep concern. It is right to say that, over the past year, the economic situation has changed in a quite fundamental way, although it is not quite right to refer to the detention of Roy Bennett as a continued threat to him through a legal case.

Of the 34 questions from opposition MPs which generate ‘yes’ responses, 8 questions can be considered extremely face-threatening; that is, they unambiguously criticise the performance of the Minister in question. An example is as follows;

<Paul Holmes> Carbon emissions from ICT are one part of a very poor picture overall. The Minister has received £681,000 of public money from the Department of Energy and Climate Change as part of a low-carbon technology scheme. Is she confident that that will be well spent when, of the 13 Cabinet Office buildings, none has received an energy efficient rating, and five, including Downing street, got a worse rating in 2008-09 than they did in the previous year?

<Angela E. Smith> Yes. One reason why those buildings got a slightly worse rating was that there was more activity and staff worked later nights. However, that is still not acceptable, and we are ensuring that we put that money to good use to bring down carbon emissions across the estate.

The topics of these 8 hostile questions are justice (3 questions), finance/economy (3 questions), the environment (1 question, the example above) and education (1 question). As with the Irish data, findings here suggest that the topic under discussion should always be borne in mind by the researcher investigating parliamentary discourse, and suggests again
that the use of co-text strategies by the corpus linguist is essential for a fuller understanding of the material under discussion.

6.4 Usage of ‘no’ in response to yes/no questions

Once all other uses of ‘no’ in the Irish and British QTCs have been identified and categorised (section 6.2.1), what remains are uses of ‘no’ in direct responses to a question from the opposition – in other words, where ‘no’ is used as an interactive particle. There are 34 such uses of ‘no’ in the Irish data. There are 28 uses of ‘no’ in polar question exchanges in the British data. All of these uses of ‘no’ are uses of ‘no’ as an interactive particle (as opposed to ‘no’ as a marker of negation, as discussed in section 6.2.1). When normalised to words-per-million, results are as follows;

(Chart 6.4)

Broadly speaking, results are similar to results for ‘yes’ in polar question exchanges, as seen in chart 6.3, with approximately twice as many uses of ‘no’ in the British setting as in the Irish setting. This is to be expected, given the larger amount of questions asked in the British setting, and the shorter speech turns in that setting, leading to greater frequency of question-answer patterns. Results for ‘no’ in the two parliamentary settings do appear somewhat more similar than results for ‘yes’ – there is a difference of 29 words per million for ‘no’ between the two settings, compared with a difference of 100 words per million for ‘yes’. This may be accounted for, as noted in sections 1.2.3 and 7.2, by the fact that there are virtually no ‘friendly’ questions asked in the Irish setting when compared with the British setting. Once
this is taken into account, it is reasonable to say that usage of ‘no’ in polar question exchanges in both settings correlates with usage of ‘yes’ in the same settings.

6.4.1 Irish data

As with the analysis of ‘yes’, uses of ‘no’ in polar question exchanges have been analysed in terms of length of immediate reply, topic and speaker, and use of face-threatening language. Of the 34 uses of ‘no’ in response to a question in Dáil Eireann, all 34 questions are posed by opposition questioners. 19 uses of ‘no’ are followed by detailed replies – replies of at least three sentences. 12 uses of ‘no’ are followed by one or two sentence replies. There are 3 examples of single word ‘no’ answers. These are as follows;

<Deputy Phil Hogan> A less costly solution should have been found. The Minister could have discussed the issues with the Minister for Transport rather than resort to the High Court. Would he accept that it would have been preferable to address the matter through Departments and State agencies rather than incur these enormous costs?

<Deputy John Gormley> No.

And;

<Deputy Joan Burton> Do I hear a note of doubt entering the Minister’s voice? Is he not closing off the possibility that the guarantee will, perhaps in piecemeal fashion, be extended after 29 September? [. . .] In a way that scheme was the Minister’s device to allow for the swapping of the senior debt into a new form of more limited, time structured guarantee. Is he thinking in that way?

<Deputy Brian Lenihan> No.

And;

<Deputy Enda Kenny> The Green Party seems to have attached a priority to certain legislation, for example, the Dog Breeding Establishments Bill 2009. [. . .] Has the liaison person informed the Taoiseach as to the current position in so far as that legislation is concerned?

<The Taoiseach> No.
In all three of these examples, the single word ‘no’ ends the exchange between the two speakers. This can be seen as a very strong FTA, since the speaker is directly contradicting the assumptions of the questioner, without in any way attempting to mitigate or explain this contradiction. As noted in the previous section, this may be even more face-threatening in the Irish setting, due to the lack of reciprocity in this response. Also, as noted in section 6.3.1, Brown and Levinson also pointed out that very brief replies may in some contexts give an impression of lack of politeness.

It is notable that ‘no’ answers appear frequently in response to face-threatening language from the opposition in the Irish setting. 20 of the 34 uses of ‘no’ in polar question exchanges involve opposition questions which could be considered extremely face-threatening. One Example is as follows;

<Deputy Thomas P. Broughan> Cork and Shannon airports have suffered grievously from the recession and the downturn in numbers. Has the Minister spoken with the DAA in the context of putting major new initiatives into the two sister national airports? What does the Minister expect Dublin Airport’s debt levels to be? [. . .] Is the Minister concerned by these debt levels and what does he intend to do? Is he just trying to pass the task on to the next Government?

<Deputy Noel Dempsey> No, as I hope to be a part of that as well. What I intend to do is what I try to do at all times. When one sets up a semi-State organisation, particularly a commercial one, it should be allowed to do its own business, organise its own affairs, pay for itself and, if at all possible, pay a dividend to the State.

The other 14 uses of ‘no’ involve the opposition looking for information, or attempting to clarify a point. Although these are still an imposition to some degree on the minister’s negative face, these questions use neutral language and do not directly attack the minister’s positive face. Examples include;

<Deputy Billy Timmins> I thank the Minister for his reply. Can he confirm that he has received a final Garda report on the matter?

<Deputy Micheál Martin> No. I have just received the report of the Irish Passport Office.
<Deputy Billy Timmins> Very well. Will the Minister consider sharing that report’s contents with Members?

And;

<Deputy Joan Burton> Did I hear the Minister say that he expects interests costs this year to be above €5 billion and perhaps to increase to approximately €7.5 billion owing to the amounts and bond spreads involved?

<Deputy Brian Lenihan> No, I was referring to next year and up to 2014.

Of the 17 hostile question turns which generate ‘no’ responses (questions which criticise the minister’s performance in some way), the most common topics is the economy (7 questions). Other topics include transport, health, justice and the environment (2 questions each). This may reflect the time at which the corpus was compiled (January to June 2010, when Ireland was in the middle of a recession and related banking crisis). An example of a hostile question related to economic matters is as follows;

<Deputy Richard Bruton> The Minister has chosen to mince his words. He is admitting he has made no final decisions about the impact on pensions. However, has he substituted a non-pensionable pay cut when everyone else suffered a pensionable pay cut? Through this action has he put the foot in the door for discrimination between the low and high paid?

<Deputy Brian Lenihan> No, as I indicated the period was necessary to, first, prevent a disorderly withdrawal from the public services and, second, to afford a period for reflection on how we devise pension strategy and payments for these grades.

6.4.2 British data

As with the Irish data, British polar question exchanges which feature ‘no’ have been analysed in terms of length of reply, topic and speaker, and use of face-threatening language. As with British data featuring ‘yes’, almost all British exchanges which feature ‘no’ are of approximately the same length (with one exception, discussed below); 27 of the 28 responses are either 2, 3 or 4 sentences in length. This again reinforces the finding that there is much greater structural rigidity in the British setting. There is one example in the British data of a single word ‘no’ response to a question;
<Mr. Peter Bone> Does the Secretary of State believe that the wearing of the burqa in public should be banned?

<Mr. Bradshaw> No.

This is the exchange between the two speakers in its entirety. The incongruity of this exchange is striking, and indicates (as with the Irish data) that single-word rejections of a question may be considered FTAs in the parliamentary section. As noted in section 3.2 of this thesis, in the parliamentary setting single word answers may give an impression of abruptness or contempt for one’s interlocutor, since questions are invariably taken in this setting as starting points for a short speech.

It is interesting to note that the 28 uses of ‘no’ (in the polar question framework) in Westminster are all in response to opposition questions. This is in contrast to ‘yes’ (as noted in section 6.3.2) where 24 out of 59 questions which feature ‘yes’ are posed by Labour MPs questioning a Labour minister. This indicates that ‘no’ is more face-threatening than ‘yes’, a point noted by Brown and Levinson (see section 6.1), who noted the lengths people go to in order to avoid using ‘no’ in everyday, casual conversation.

Of the 28 uses of ‘no’ in a response to a polar question, the majority (22 uses) are in response to extremely face-threatening questions. Examples include;

<John Hemming> Starting with the tax on pension funds, the Government have introduced a number of policies over the years that have discouraged final salary schemes. I have always wondered whether that was intentional or due to incompetence. It looks like incompetence; am I right?

<Angela Eagle> No, there are very many reasons why defined benefit pension schemes have been in decline. The decline began in the 1960s when I was still at school. Among the main reasons for it are increases in longevity and changes in FRS 17 and various other accounting rules.

And;

<Mr. David Burrowes> Have the Government learned anything from their evaluation last year of the integrated drug treatment system? Senior prison staff criticised the Government’s obsession with maintaining opiate users. They were "specifically concerned
about the cocktail of illegal substances which prisoners may have access to during time in custody which may potentially be used combined with a daily dose of prescribed methadone." Is that not a picture of a Government who have lost control of drugs in prisons, and given up on prisons and prisoners becoming drug-free?

<Maria Eagle> No, I do not accept that analysis from the hon. Gentleman. It is fair to say that the drug treatment provided in prisons is clinically led under best practice arranged by the National Treatment Agency.

The remaining 6 uses involve the minister clarifying a point or giving information to the opposition. An example of a non-hostile question-response exchange is as follows;

<Andrew Selous> Is the Minister aware that a golf club in my constituency proposes to stop offering reduced membership to its pensioner members, on the basis of its understanding of the Equality Bill? Has it got it right?

<The Solicitor-General> No, it has not. I can write to the hon. Gentleman to set out, step by step, how it has got it wrong. But take it from me—it has got it wrong.

The 22 hostile questions which generate a ‘no’ response range over a broad variety of topics, with the most popular topic being finance/economy (6 uses) – an identical finding to the Irish data. Other popular topics for generating ‘no’ answers include education, health, transport and the environment (all with 2 questions each). Of the 6 examples of non-hostile questions, 2 are related to foreign affairs; this may indicate (again) that topical differences are central to the use of face-threatening language. An example of a non-hostile foreign affairs question is as follows;

<Mark Pritchard> To return to the horn of Africa and piracy, is the Secretary of State aware that some people in international shipping are turning off their automatic transponders, which is making it very difficult for ships, including those from the Royal Navy and other navies from across the world, to protect international shipping? It might also be a breach of chapter 5 of SOLAS—the international convention for the safety of life at sea—and disqualify any future insurance claims.
David Miliband: No, I was not aware of that important point, but I am happy to forward it to Operation Atalanta headquarters—the centre of the EU naval mission off Somalia—at Northwood here in the UK. He raises an important point.

6.5 Analysis

6.5.1 Politeness theory

Central so any discussion of what findings uncovered here may reveal about politeness in Dáil Éireann and Westminster is the role of ‘friendly’ questions in Westminster. This research has shown that questions from Labour MPs to Labour ministers are very likely to generate a ‘yes’ response, disproportionate to the number that might be expected. In addition, it has been seen in section 6.4.2 that questions in Westminster which generate a ‘no’ response are never asked by Labour MPs. It is also clear that many questions from Labour MPs which generate a ‘yes’ response often lead to the minister attacking the performance of the opposition. This again raises the importance of the theory of ostensible mitigation, as mentioned in the previous chapter, and in chapter 3 of this thesis. There appears to be off-record collusion between the questioner and the responder to produce a joint speech turn which attacks the positive face of the opposition. In this context, it appears that the question (and the ‘yes’ response following) are ostensible speech acts, with the main purpose of the speech event taking place towards the end of the minister’s turn—when he/she attacks the positive face of the opposition. The use of ‘yes’ answers to friendly questions appears to satisfy all of the conditions outlined by Link and Kreuz (2005)—there is clearly pretence, mutual recognition, collusion, ambivalence, and an off-record purpose to this speech act. It may be unique to the parliamentary setting to see a question (at ostensible attack on a hearer’s negative face) actually used to foreground an attack on the positive face of a third party who is neither a questioner nor a responder to the question being asked.

It is also clear from the findings uncovered here that the topic under discussion is closely related to the politeness norms used in a discussion in the parliamentary setting. This is true of both the Irish and the British setting, and is true of both ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in polar question exchanges. This is a pattern which was noted in the earlier discussion of ‘I thank’ (section 5.3). It has been noted by de Ayala (2001) and Harris (2003) that politicians must refrain from attacking the personal face of their interlocutor—personal insults are forbidden in the parliamentary setting. On the other hand, professional face is permitted (indeed, expected) to
be attacked, and this is clearly seen in this data when topics such as the economy, health, justice and the environment are under discussion. As an example, the topic of the economy leads to language such as ‘incompetent’ (in the British setting) and ‘mincing words’ (Irish setting). This raises the question, of course, as to where professional face segues into personal face. This use of insulting language indicates that Culpeper’s impoliteness research has a role to play in this setting, since this language is not expected, sanctioned or (ostensibly) rewarded in the parliamentary setting. It seems, therefore, that results for ‘yes’ and ‘no’ support the findings from the analysis of ‘please’ and ‘thank you’; Brown and Levinson’s framework of positive and negative face is a useful tool for examining certain aspects of language use in the parliamentary setting, but it ought to be utilised together with some other theories, including recent research on impoliteness. It seems that the theory of ostensible speech acts, utilised in conjunction with Brown and Levinson and recent impoliteness research, can help to describe and explain the multi-faceted use of language in both Dáil Eireann and Westminster during QT.

6.5.2 Irish English

Many of the differences which occur between the two QTCs may be accounted for by the large percentage of questions in the British setting which come from Labour MPs and are aimed at a Labour minister. This probably accounts for differing collocates with ‘yes’ in the two settings (as noted in section 6.2.1, ‘yes’ is followed by ‘but’ more often in the Irish setting than the British setting). There is also some evidence from the data analysed in this chapter for a greater preference for rhetorical strategies in the British setting when compared with the Irish setting – this is evident in the more frequent mid-speech use of ‘yes’ in the British setting. This is unsurprising, and supports findings from the previous chapter that formal language use is more common in the British setting than the Irish one (it was noted in section 5.2 the British Speaker’s use of ‘order’ rather than the Ceann Comhairle’s use of ‘please’, and also noted the use of ‘I am grateful’ in Westminster, which is never used in Ireland). Findings from both chapter 6 and this chapter, then, support the argument of Kallen (2005), Hickey (2007), Amador-Moreno (2010) and others, who indicate that speakers of Irish English tend to be more informal than speakers of other varieties of English.

The other significant difference between the two settings examined in this research is the occasional single word use of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the Irish setting, which is very rare in the British setting. On 5 occasions in Dáil Eireann, single word answers end an exchange; these
examples are given in sections 6.3.1 and 6.4.1. In addition, there are 5 occasions in the Irish setting where ‘yes’ occurs standing alone in a clarification sentence, as well as 5 uses of ‘yes’ followed by a single sentence and 12 uses of ‘no’ followed by a single sentence. This appears to be related to the structure of QT in each setting, with the strict two minute time limit on questions in Westminster ensuring single speech turns of two to three sentences in length. Nevertheless, the occasional use of single word ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers in Dáil Éireann may indicate differing politeness norms in that setting, when compared with Westminster. Given that Irish English speakers tend to use simple ‘yes’ and ‘no’ answers less frequently than other speakers of English, and tend to use a short sentence together with these particles (Diamant, 2012; Amador-Moreno, 2010; Kallen, 2005; Filppula, 1999), it could be argued that these single word replies may be more face-threatening when they actually are used in the Irish parliament. It has also been argued (Fenton-Smith, 2008; Bayley, 2004; Wilson, 1990) that very brief answers are not seen as appropriate in political discourse, since very short answers may give the impression either of evasion or abruptness. This finding seems to indicate a paradoxical tension in the Irish setting, between the norms of reciprocity and strong inter-personal relationships and the face-threatening nature of parliamentary exchanges, where it is occasionally necessary to attack the face of the questioner. This again illustrates that Brown and Levinson’s theory of facework does not appear sufficient to explain the multi-faceted nature of exchanges during QT in Dáil Éireann (based as it is on the avoidance of mitigation of FTAs), and (as with the previous chapter) indicates that Karen Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ is useful when examining exchanges in parliamentary settings.

6.6 Summary and conclusion

This chapter has revealed information about ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in polar question exchanges in the settings of Dáil Éireann and Westminster during QT. Findings from this chapter, dealing with ‘yes’ and ‘no’, can be summarised as follows.

- In Britain, friendly questions often lead to face attacks on the opposition – this indicates the ostensible nature of ‘questions’ in QT when these questions are asked by members of the same party. This also points to the performative nature of the genre of QT and again indicates that the role of the wider audience must always be borne in mind when examining language use in this setting.
During ‘friendly’ questions (which are much more common in the British setting), ‘yes’ is much more likely to appear than ‘no’, and ‘yes’ is likely to be followed by ‘of course’. In contrast, in Ireland (where there are no ‘friendly’ questions), ‘yes’ appears less often than in Britain, and ‘yes’ is more likely to be followed by ‘but’.

In Ireland, single word use of ‘yes’ (7 times) and ‘no’ occur occasionally (3 times). This is in contrast to Britain, where there is one use of ‘no’ standing alone, and no use of ‘yes’ standing alone.

Many of the findings of this chapter have reinforced the findings of the previous chapter, which dealt with ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ in the same settings. The following points can be made when examining findings from chapters 5 and 6. Firstly, there is clearly a strong link between the rules of the speech event and the language used in the speech event. The language used in the British setting is unquestionably more formal, and greater attention appears to be paid to the rules of the event in that setting. There also appears to be greater preference for rhetoric in Britain. There is greater flexibility of speech turns, speech lengths and language in Ireland. As noted in chapter 3, this may be due to personalism being a defining characteristic of Irish political culture. Another significant point when examining chapters 5 and 6 is that the topic under discussion during QT is closely related to the level of face threat and face attack seen in the language used. Topic is closely related to politeness, in both settings. Any analysis of politeness in parliamentary settings needs to bear in mind the topic under discussion, the political climate at the time, and ideological differences between the parties. This point has been alluded to briefly by Harris (2001: 458); this research both confirms her findings and extends those findings to the Irish setting.

The findings from a corpus investigation into ‘yes’ and ‘no’ use in the polar question framework, then, confirm and supplement the principal findings of the previous chapter; Brown and Levinson’s taxonomy of positive and negative face is a useful framework for examining politeness during QT. It is also suggested that the theory of ostensible speech acts (Link and Kreuz, 2005) can be used to supplement the notion of facework, and that this combination leads to a more fully rounded picture of politeness strategies in QT, both in Ireland and Britain. It is also suggested that impoliteness research has a role to play when examining language use in this setting. It is also clear that corpus findings need to be supplemented with in-depth analysis of some of the texts from which the QTCs have been compiled. The following chapter, which contains a line-by-line examination of politeness
strategies found in selected texts (from both settings), goes some way to providing such an analysis.


Chapter 7 – Some aspects of facework during QT

QT may be regarded as another exemplar of situations described by Culpeper in which impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but central to the interaction that takes place.

Bull and Wells (2011: 15)

I have not seen Deputy Costello’s Bill but I will have it examined. I am aware of his experience, which is similar to my own in drugs task force areas, and that would inform some of our thinking [. . .] If Deputy Wall is aware of measures in the draft Bill that can inform, advise and strengthen the legislation I wish to advance, he should bring them to my attention and I will take them on board.

(example from Irish exchange D)

7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 have discussed in detail the corpus-based findings on the use of ‘please’, ‘thank you/I thank’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in the settings of Dáil Eireann and the House of Commons. It has been seen that the topic under discussion is central to understanding how these tokens are utilised during QT. It has also been seen that applying a number of theories (specifically, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory, recent impoliteness research by Culpeper, Tracy’s concept of ‘reasonable hostility’ and Link & Kreuz’s theory of ostensible speech acts) leads to a fuller picture of how certain politeness features are used in the parliamentary setting. This chapter builds on and extends the findings of the corpus-based analysis by examining in detail a number of sample texts from the QTCs. This chapter adds further qualitative analysis to the corpus-based analysis of ‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in Dáil Eireann exchanges found in earlier chapters, by focusing on the context in which these tokens are used. This leads to a fuller picture of how and why Irish politicians perform facework in parliamentary exchanges, and thus maximises insights into findings revealed by the corpus research. It should be clarified here that this chapter focuses on exchanges which
feature these tokens, but does not specifically focus on these tokens. The analysis in this chapter helps to widen the focus of this research to a broader examination of politeness theory and facework during QT. This chapter addresses the third research question identified in chapter 1 of this thesis; “Are there differences in politeness strategies employed during exchanges which include the linguistic tokens (a)’please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ during Dáil Eireann QT, and to investigate how these politeness strategies differ in exchanges during House of Commons QT?”. It also addresses the secondary research questions, “Are there similarities and differences between the usage of FTAs in Dáil Eireann and Westminster during QT?”, “Are there similarities and differences between positive politeness strategies utilised in these two settings?”, and “Where differences occur in the use of certain aspects of facework between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?”

7.2 Methodology of facework investigation

“In terms of the overall strategy for analytic elaboration, there is, on the one hand, an issue of corpus construction, and on the other, one of case selection within the corpus” (Have, 2007: 146). The QTC corpora compiled by the researcher have been used primarily for the identification and analysis of lexico-grammatical items. As noted in chapter one of this thesis, it was felt that (in conjunction with this corpus-based analysis) an in-depth examination of exchanges which feature these tokens would provide a more rounded and complete picture of politeness in Dáil Eireann, and specifically differences and similarities in the nature of facework utilised by participants in the two settings. Clearly, an examination of all uses in the six month period of the QTCs would be impossible, meaning sample texts must be extracted from the QTCs.

Sampling is the process of selecting a representative set of cases from a much larger set. Researchers sample because they often confront a wealth of potential cases and do not have the time or resources to study them all.

(Ragin, cited in Have, 2007: 70)

This section of this thesis combines approaches based on the methodological frameworks used by Wilson (1990), de Ayala (2001), Harris (2003), O’Keefe (2005), Fenton-Smith (2008), and Bull and Wells (2011). All of these studies are referred to frequently throughout this thesis. Wilson, de Ayala, Fenton-Smith and Bull and Wells have all written on QT in
various parliamentary settings, with de Ayala concentrating on politeness in that setting. Harris’s paper, although not directly concerned with politeness in parliament, is concerned with politeness theory in institutional settings, and utilises a Communities of Practice approach to examining parliamentary discourse. O’Keefe writes about questioning in an Irish context, specifically that of Irish radio shows. De Ayala utilises Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory to identify politeness strategies used during QT in Westminster, making her work particularly relevant to this study, which is an investigation into politeness during QT in Ireland, and which also focuses on politeness strategies. Bull and Wells, as well as being a very recent work on politeness in parliamentary settings, is focused on how face-threatening acts (FTAs) are performed during Prime Minister’s Questions; as such, that research in particularly germane to this study.

Although Wilson’s study is the oldest work referred to here (1990), it is clearly significant to research into politeness during QT, and De Ayala, Harris and (particularly) Fenton-Smith all acknowledge the importance of Wilson’s work for those analysing QT in parliamentary settings. Wilson selected 10 QT sessions in a calendar year (1986), and then randomly chose three of these sessions for detailed analysis. These three sessions were then analysed in both quantitative (the number of question words in each session was counted and analysed) and qualitative ways (Wilson also examined length and quality of answers to yes/no questions, for example). Building on the work of Wilson, Fenton-Smith (2008: 98) suggests a suitable approach to analysing parliamentary language is to select an activity common to many parliaments (in the case of Fenton-Smith’s research, QT, as with this research), and to analyse that activity using a ‘generalizable’ linguistic tool (such as corpus software, which Fenton-Smith himself utilises). For his data, Fenton-Smith analysed in detail all QT exchanges during one week, that of April 3rd to April 6th, 2000. This amounted to 186 exchanges, all of which he analysed in some detail (2008: 100). His study was not a comparative study, meaning it was not directly analogous with this research; rather, his research involved close reading of the Australian data and categorising the data into specific categories, as noted in section 3.2.1 of this research.

De Ayala (2001), in her study of politeness during QT in Westminster first built a corpus of 29 texts. These texts included a total of 271 speech turns. Following on from her corpus-based analysis of these 29 texts, 2 texts were chosen for in-depth analysis. De Ayala does not indicate why these two texts were chosen. It seems that O’Keefe’s 2005 paper on questions used during an Irish phone-in radio show has a somewhat more rigorous methodology than
that of de Ayala. O’Keefe first built a large-scale corpus (55,000 words) based on transcripts from a radio show. She then created a sub-corpus by randomly selecting every 5th question from the initial corpus until she reached 100 questions. This methodology was used by O’Keefe in order to safeguard against accusations of ‘cherry-picking’ data. Harris (2003) in her study of politeness strategies in institutional settings, first compiled a large number of transcripts (in total, 159 encounters) from three separate institutional settings (a magistrate’s court, a doctor’s surgery and a police station). She then uses a number of case studies (six in total) from these settings to illustrate her research on power and politeness. However, Harris does not explain how or why she chose these case studies. There is, therefore, no way of knowing (as with de Ayala) whether these extracts are illustrative of a wider pattern of language usage or not. Finally, Bull and Wells (2011) examined 18 sessions of Prime Minister’s QT from 2007 (9 featuring Tony Blair and 9 featuring Gordon Brown), and isolated within these sessions all exchanges between the Prime Minister and the Leader of the Opposition. These were then examined in detail in order to identify and categorise all FTAs performed during these exchanges.

Having examined the methodologies used in the aforementioned studies, it was decided to choose at random three uses of the tokens in question (‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’) in question-response exchanges in both Dáil Éireann and Westminster. However, a number of qualifications should be noted. In Dáil Éireann, during Taoiseach’s QT (see section 1.2 of this thesis for further description), initial speech turns (by all speakers) take the form of scripted speeches. These are invariably extremely lengthy and cannot be considered conversation. As such, initial Taoiseach’s QT speech turns have been omitted from this analysis. In addition, the initial speech turns by Irish ministers during QT are also extremely lengthy, and are certainly scripted speeches; these have also been omitted from extracts chosen in Ireland, although a very brief description of the speech is included in each section, in order to provide context for the exchange. In order to ensure standardisation between the data from both settings, Prime Minister’s QT has also been excluded from the extracts chosen here for analysis. However, the initial speech turns from ministers in the British setting have been included. Partly, this is because of the brevity of these speech turns – they are all 3-4 lines in length. In addition, however, it should be noted (as Jeremy Paxman does in his 2002 book, The Political Animal) that speakers during QT in Westminster are not permitted to look at any script, and quite regularly, if a speaker during QT looks down at notes, the parliamentary chamber is filled with cries of ‘script!’ from the opposition. In the case of the
use of ‘please’ in the Irish data, there are only three suitable texts for examination. In all other cases, every 10th example of the token to be analysed were chosen. All extracts were examined in their entirety during the exchange in question, with the exception of the initial lengthy speeches in the Irish setting. This spread of usage ensures a wide variety of topics and speakers. The use of random sampling ensures there is no selection bias on the part of the researcher. As was seen in chapter 1 of this thesis (section 1.2), there are some institutional differences between the Irish setting and the British setting which impact upon the length of exchanges, and the turn-taking patterns contained in each exchange (six minutes are allocated to each question in Ireland, while two minutes are allocated to each question in Britain). These institutional differences are considered (and duly noted where they may affect the data) during the relevant sections of this thesis.

All exchanges chosen for analysis in this section of the thesis are described in detail, in sections 7.3 to 7.10. Irish exchanges are described in individual sections, while British exchanges are described in four groups (sections 7.4, 7.6, 7.8 and 7.10) – this is because the specific focus of this thesis is on the Irish exchanges and also because the Irish exchanges are lengthier than the British exchanges. Each section finishes with a bullet-point summary of the salient facework features noted in the particular exchange. The sample texts are included in the thesis; the texts have been numbered line-by-line, and they have been included in a different font (Calibri, rather than Times New Roman), to aid readability. Having examined the chosen exchanges in detail, this chapter concludes with a discussion (section 7.11) of the facework observed in both settings, with a broad bilateral distinction being made between FTAs in these exchanges and positive politeness strategies utilised.

Having examined all 24 extracts in detail it was decided to categorise these strategies into two broad categories, focusing firstly on FTAs (and responses to FTAs) and secondly on positive politeness strategies. This categorisation was decided upon essentially because it reflected what was observed when the data was examined closely. As the researcher was examining these exchanges line-by-line, certain patterns emerged. It became obvious that the Irish data contained a large number of positive politeness strategies, and that the British data did not appear to contain very many positive politeness strategies. On the other hand, it also became clear that face-threatening acts (FTAs) appear to occur in similar fashion in both settings. Therefore, for the qualitative dimension of this research, it was decided to focus on these two aspects of facework. As such, this analysis is entirely data-driven, and it is not intended to utilise Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory in its entirety.
It is acknowledged that this classification is a simplification of Brown and Levinson’s theory of facework. For example, this classification does not account for the overlapping nature of positive and negative face at times. In addition, this classification does not examine facework aimed at the positive and negative face of the speakers themselves. It is recognised that this approach to the qualitative dimension of this research is not systematic; for instance, negative politeness strategies are not discussed. It has been noted in chapter 3 of this thesis (section 3.3) that politicians use both negative and positive face strategies during parliamentary debates, and these strategies are aimed both at their own face needs and the needs of their interlocutor. A systematic approach to facework during QT in Ireland and Britain would need to identify and categorise all facework strategies observed during QT. Such a major undertaking is beyond the scope of this research. Sandra Harris, in her seminal 2001 paper, noted the difficulty of identifying facework strategies during QT;

A pragmatic analysis of Prime Minister’s QT demonstrates the difficulties both of assigning absolute politeness values to particular speech acts and of any ultimately meaningful separation between negative and positive face as linguistic strategies, requiring mitigation. Not only do positive and negative face strategies co-occur, often within the same utterance, but the mitigating linguistic strategies which Brown and Levinson associate with threats to positive face are largely absent [. . .] deliberate face threats co-occur with negative face strategies which are usually associated with deference and distancing

(Harris, 2001: 469)

As noted in section 1.1.4 of this thesis, a number of recent studies have focused on one particular aspect of facework in parliamentary discourse. For instance, Charlotte Taylor (2011) focuses solely on negative politeness strategies during QT, while Ambuyo et al. focus on FTAs during QT in the Kenyan parliament. Similarly, the significant paper by Bull and Wells (2011), which is referred to throughout this research examines and categorises FTAs only.

The categorisation utilised in this chapter aims to identify and clarify facework which is primarily aimed at the other side of the parliamentary chamber. It is believed that the conflictual nature of exchanges during QT (indeed, during all parliamentary discourse) means that examining face strategies aimed at the interlocutor may reveal information about facework in this particular context. To give a salient example, in the tables included in this discussion (section 7.11), ‘talking up government’s positive face’ is listed as a FTA by a minister. This is categorised as such because it is in direct reply to opposition criticism of the
government. This could also be categorised as a gesture towards the government’s own positive face needs, of course, but it is suggested that for the purposes of this discussion a broad bilateral classification of (1) FTAs and (2) positive politeness strategies is sufficient for this particular discussion, and to answer the third research question which underpins this research; “Are there differences in some aspects of facework employed during exchanges which include the linguistic tokens (a) ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ during Dáil Eireann QT, and to investigate how these (im)politeness strategies differ in exchanges during House of Commons QT?” It is also intended to address the secondary research questions, “Are there similarities and differences between the usage of and response to FTAs in Dáil Eireann and Westminster during QT?”, “Are there similarities and differences between positive politeness strategies utilised in these two settings?”, and “Where differences occur in the use of certain politeness strategies between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?”

The categorisation of FTAs utilised in this chapter is based on the FTAs identified by Bull and Wells in their 2011 paper, ‘Adversarial Discourse in Prime Minister’s Question Time’; this paper categorised FTAs from the opposition into 6 categories;

- preface
- detailed question
- contentious presupposition
- conflictual question
- invitation to perform a face-damaging response (FDR)
- aside.

Bull and Wells also divided responses to FTAs on the part of the government into 5 categories;

- talking up positive face
- rebuttal
- attack (on opposition)
- ignoring the FTA
- self-justifying their behaviour

These have been utilised in this research when identifying FTAs in the exchanges examined here. The list of positive politeness strategies aimed at the opposing side of the house is partly based on Paul Chilton’s categorisation (2004: 40). He notes that the most common positive
politeness strategies used by politicians in parliament (when addressing the opposition) are forms of solidarity (such as appeals to patriotism or brotherhood) – such forms of solidarity have been identified and categorised in tables 7.3 and 7.4 of this chapter.

The method of analysis developed in this section of the research, then, hopes to combine approaches from the six studies mentioned above. The combination of Brown and Levinson’s approach to politeness (as utilised by Harris, de Ayala and Bull and Wells) within the context of parliamentary QT (as examined by Wilson, Fenton-Smith and Bull and Wells) reveals qualitative insights into how politeness strategies are used in Dáil Eireann. The methodology used in this study is heavily informed by previous research in the field of parliamentary discourse and politeness studies.

7.3 Description of Irish sample texts which contain ‘please’

7.3.1 Extract A

Minister’s Questions, January 26th, 2010. Exchange between Sean Barrett and Pat Carey

<Deputy Seán Barrett> Many of these questions suggest that it is a matter of curiosity as distinct from developing actual facts in order to develop policy. Whether it is autism or any other form of disability, it is important from the viewpoints of education and health that we should have proper and accurate statistics. The only way to get them is from the census. It is quite absurd that everybody was consulted bar those elected to this House. We are directly involved with various types of illness, including autism. We have to deal with such issues daily, but we cannot develop proper policies without having accurate statistics. Will the Minister of State please make inquiries in this regard? I tabled a similar question a couple of years ago, so I gave plenty of notice. I am not doing this from curiosity, but because I was asked to do so by people who are dealing with autistic children. They feel it is necessary to get accurate statistics to develop a proper framework in which to provide services for such children and in other areas also.

Another question refers to “anybody with an intellectual disability” and adds “if so, please state the type”. It should then ask whether the person is satisfied that there are adequate education facilities. Those are the sort of questions that should be posed. The most serious issue of all is the lack of speech therapy for young children who are left with a disability as a result of not receiving such services early on. I ask the Minister of State to re-examine this matter. As public representatives we are depending on him to make our case to those involved in this issue. Ultimately, it is the Minister of State’s responsibility to say whether this goes in or stays out. That is what governments are for and the Minister of State is in a positive position to be able to do something about it.

<Deputy Pat Carey> I would not go all the way with what Deputy Barrett is suggesting. He should not forget that we have a fairly significant body of disability legislation, which was enacted by this
House in recent years. The national disability database together with other pieces of legislation, such as the EPSEN Act, have been progressively implemented. They are the principal vehicles whereby the type of information the Deputy is talking about would be compiled.

As regards how questions for inclusion in the census form are chosen, all EU member states will be conducting censuses in 2011 in compliance with an EU regulation, which is the first covering censuses. All member states have to cover a number of core questions and are also bound to produce their outputs according to standard methodology agreed at EU level. If the Deputy has time to consult the website, he will see the core questions that have to be asked. There are also other non-core questions, which each member state can frame in its own way.

As regards the deficit of statistics on persons with autism, the Central Statistics Office suggests that it is simply not possible to collect statistics concerning specific disabilities on a census form. Indeed, it is not realistic to collect information on specific individual disabilities on any household survey. The range and enormously diverse nature of illness and disability are not suited to survey collection. It is more appropriate to gather such data from administrative records. That is constantly improving because one of the issues that arose when I met the officers in the Central Statistics Office was the matter of how else it could be done if it could not be done in the census. The CSO publishes over 300 statistical releases and publications each year. It provides high quality statistical information which is a vital input to planning for the future and monitoring outcomes at national, regional and local levels. The CSO has, for some time, promoted greater use of objective statistical information in evidence-based policy making across all areas of public services, including those relating to intellectual disability. In this regard, it is a matter for each Department to set out and prioritise its own statistical data needs.

In response to Deputy Barrett, because there is merit in the idea, I will arrange for the CSO officials responsible for the census to meet the appropriate committee as soon as possible so that some of the concerns the Deputy and other Members have raised can be dealt with. Their concerns are not without value, but there is no point in suggesting the next census can be revisited. In the meantime we could consider how we can get more specific data and how we can prepare for the following census.

Discussion

As noted in chapter 3 of this thesis, Harris (2001: 460) describes the prototypical form of a parliamentary question as a series of propositions followed by an interrogative, followed frequently by a summarizing or action-seeking proposition. Bull and Wells (2011: 8) note that the propositions which preface the interrogative are often used to perform face-threatening acts (FTAs). This pattern is followed in the first extract chosen from the Irish QTC. This exchange is between the Government Chief Whip and the opposition on the subject of the upcoming census, and whether there would be questions about autism included in the census. The Minister’s initial speech turn (29 lines, not included) gives the information that questions on autism would not be included. This is accounted for by explaining how the
census form came to be designed. The initial speech turn from the questioner opens with a preface which includes some FTAs (line 1, “it is a matter of curiosity as opposed to actual facts”, and line 4, “It is quite absurd that everybody was consulted bar those elected to this House” – an attack on the Minister’s area of responsibility. The speech turn of the questioner continues to a second question (line 16, “I ask the Minister of State to re-examine this matter”). Again, this is preceded by an attack on how the census was constructed (line 13; “It should then ask whether the person is satisfied that there are adequate education facilities. Those are the sort of questions that should be posed”). The questioner then makes overt the link between the Minister and the (perceived) inadequate nature of the census, as this initial speech turn from the questioner concludes with what Harris calls an action-seeking summarizing proposition; “Ultimately, it is the Minister of State’s responsibility to say whether this goes in or stays out. That is what governments are for and the Minister of State is in a positive position to be able to do something about it” (lines 17-19). This lengthy speech turn of 19 lines contains a number of FTAs, aimed at attacking the Minister’s competence in compiling the census.

In a pattern that is repeated throughout the extracts examined here, the Minister’s response to the FTAs is multi-faceted. He opens his speech turn with a qualified disagreement; “I would not go all the way with what Deputy Barrett is suggesting” (line 20). This is an example of what Bull and Wells call a “rebuttal” (2011: 11). This rebuttal is followed by talking up the positive face of the government – in lines 21-23, the Minister points to the disability legislation which the government has previously passed. The main body of the Minister’s answer, however, is an attempt to justify the government’s position by pointing to the restraints placed on the government by an external source, the EU – in line 27, the Minister points out that “All member states have to cover a number of core questions and are also bound to produce their outputs according to standard methodology agreed at EU level”. This is followed by an attack on the questioner’s face; (line 28) “If the Deputy has time to consult the website, he will see the core questions that have to be asked”. There is an implication here that the questioner is not aware of material which he should be aware of. The second part of the Minister’s response is another attempt at self-justification, again suggesting that the propositions implicit in the question are not in fact the responsibility of the government; (line 31) “the Central Statistics Office suggests that it is simply not possible to collect statistics concerning specific disabilities on a census form”. The Minister then ends his response with 2 gestures towards the face of the questioner; firstly, there is a compliment for the questioner,
in line 44; “In response to Deputy Barrett, because there is merit in the idea . . .”. This is followed by an acknowledgement in line 47 that “their concerns are not without value”. These gestures mitigate somewhat the face attacks on the questioner contained in the Minister’s reply; they are, in fact, positive politeness strategies aimed at building solidarity and common ground between the speakers, while also minimising threat to the hearer’s positive face. There is also mitigation evident, of course, in the qualified rebuttal which opens the Minister’s speech turn – “I would not go all the way with what Deputy Barrett is saying”.

Facework in extract A;

- FTAs in preface
- Attack on government performance
- Talking up of government’s positive face
- Rebuttal of FTA performed by questioner
- Self-justification
- Gesture towards questioner’s positive face – indicates common ground and shared concerns

7.3.2 Extract B

Minister’s Questions, June 22nd, 2010. Exchange between Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin and Mary Harney.

1 <Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin> I ask the Tánaiste——I beg the Minister’s pardon; that is outdated.
2 <Deputy Mary Harney> I thank the Deputy.
3 <Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin> Did the Minister, in the course of any of these contacts, discuss the issue of prescription charges with pharmacy representatives? Such charges are now proposed for medical card holders. Has there been any contact between the HSE and the IPU on the practicalities of operating these additional charges? When is it intended they will be introduced? Will the Minister please note again that I strongly oppose these charges, full stop?
4 <Deputy Mary Harney> I thank the Deputy for promoting me, but it is a different Mary who has the job of Tánaiste.
5 I have discussed prescription charges with the IPU — not at the meeting I mentioned but at a different meeting — and the union expressed its views. The legislation has been approved by the Government and will be going to the Seanad next week. The intention is to have it operational as soon as possible after the legislation has been passed and signed by the President.
6 <Deputy Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin> Did the HSE and the IPU discuss the practicalities of implementing these charges?
One area in which we have much information is on what drugs patients receive with assistance from the State. For example, all the drug costs of general medical scheme patients heretofore have been paid by the State. The HSE has data on all those patients and the medicines they receive each month and it pays pharmacies accordingly. The intention is that the legislation will provide for a deduction of 50 cent per item prescribed, subject to a cap of €10 per family. No doubt we will be debating this in the House shortly.

Discussion

This extract is an exchange between the Minister for Health and the opposition, on the subject of prescription charges. The Minister’s initial reply (12 lines, not included), outlines the government’s position on these charges. The exchange examined here begins with the Minister being addressed by an incorrect title, which is immediately self-corrected by the speaker, and this self-repair is then acknowledged by the Minister (lines 1-3). Immediately following the Minister’s acknowledgement of the error, the opposition questioner, in his first lengthy turn (lines 4-9) asks a series of direct questions. There are 4 questions in total asked in quick succession. The 4 questions are centred on the question of discussions between the Minister’s department and pharmacy representatives. This opening turn does not appear to satisfy the schema outlined by Harris (2001); there are no presuppositions before the question proper. This indicates a clear structural difference between the British QT format and the Irish QT format; in all probability, this flexibility may be due to the fact that individual Irish questions are allocated six minutes each during QT, while British questions are only allocated two minutes. This speech turn features a number of bald, on-record questions, performed with minimal mitigation. Of the 5 questions asked by the opposition questioner, the only mitigating device to appear is the word ‘please’, in line 8 (chapter 5 has suggested that this particular use of ‘please’, medial position following a modal verb, may indicate a strong FTA). Certainly, 4 questions in quick succession during the initial turn (lines 4-9) is a forceful FTA.

Despite the face-threatening nature of the questioner’s turn, the Minister’s first response is to acknowledge the questioner’s initial error, and joke about that particular error. This seems to indicate a certain desire on the Minister’s part to maintain face relations with the questioner, despite the questioner’s obvious hostility. This indicates that the Minister does not, in fact, perceive any threat to her personal face from the questioner. Following on from this gesture towards the questioner’s face, the Minister answers the initial question asked (line 3-4, ‘did the Minister discuss the issue . . .’) with an affirmative answer (line 10, ‘I have discussed . . .’). She also addresses the secondary question about the timing of the introduction of the
particular legislation. The Minister then finishes her turn, thus ignoring the questioner’s final question (lines 6-7), about the questioner’s opposition to the changes. The questioner appears to be unhappy with the quality of information received in the Minister’s reply, which leads the questioner to his second turn (lines 14-15), where he asks for more specific information about the discussions in question – an example of what Bull and Wells call a “detailed question” being used as a FTA (2011: 8). This second question is answered with a slightly lengthier response from the Minister, in lines 16-21. After attempting to answer the deputy’s concerns, the Minister again makes a gesture towards the face of the questioner (line 19), by indicating there will be a debate on the issue in the (unspecified) future. This appears to acknowledge the dissatisfaction of the questioner, without necessarily indicating that the questioner will gain satisfaction in the future or without acknowledging that the questioner has a right to be dissatisfied.

Facework in extract B;

- Detailed questions to the Minister
- Talking up of government’s positive face
- Attack on government performance
- Jocular remarks between the speakers, indicating professional rapport – gestures towards hearers’ positive face needs
- Minister acknowledges opposition’s concerns
7.3.3 Extract C

Exchange between Éamon Ó Cuív and Róisín Shortall.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> **Will the Minister please focus on the review that is now 15 months overdue?** He speaks about being concerned about people in danger of losing their homes but he allows this matter to drift so there is an inexcusable delay in producing the review. Stop confusing this with the wider issues on debt, and there is no doubt that big problems exist. I am asking about the specific review undertaken. What is the reason for the delay in that? When does the Minister expect that review to be complete? When can we see a copy of it?

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> I came to the Department at the end of March and have been there for three months. We hope to have the review completed in the next few weeks.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> When will it be ready?

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> In the next few weeks.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> We have been told “the next few weeks” for the past 15 months.

<An Leas-Cheann Comhairle> Allow the Minister to answer the question.

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> Most people would accept that “the next few weeks” means from two to four or five weeks.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> The difference is that we have been told “the next few weeks” for the past 15 months.

<An Leas-Cheann Comhairle> Allow the Minister to answer please, Deputy Shortall.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> There is no sense of urgency at all on this issue.

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> I will try to be more specific. I hope it will be in the next month.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> We were told that—

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> In the English I use on the east coast and west coast, “the next few weeks” means “the next month”. If Deputy Shortall would find “the next month” more satisfactory, I will say “within the next month”. This will mean that within four months of my arrival at the Department, this matter will be brought to finality. Not only are we bringing the mortgage interest supplement review to finality, which is only part of the jigsaw, we are also bringing the Cooney report to finality and making decisions.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> We will wait and see.

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> By making decisions on both we will be able to give a comprehensive response. I might be wrong but I do not believe the mortgage interest supplement review on its own would answer the major debt problems that people face because—
<Deputy Róisín Shortall> Nobody is saying that.
<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> Good. I am glad.
<Deputy Róisín Shortall> The Minister should stop putting up straw men. The Minister was asked—
—
<An Leas-Cheann Comhairle> Allow the Minister to answer the question. I want to allow another supplementary from Deputy Enright.

**Discussion**

This exchange is between the Minister for Social Protection and the opposition, on the subject of mortgage interest supplements. The Minister’s reply (to multiple pre-submitted questions, not included) is 10 lines long, and indicates that the government is waiting on reports from review groups. As with the first extract from the Irish data, the initial reply from the opposition broadly follows Harris’s pattern; the presuppositions to the question contain a FTA, questioning the competence of the minister. (line 2, “He speaks about being concerned about people in danger of losing their homes but he allows this matter to drift so there is an inexcusable delay in producing the review”). Again, the initial speech turn from the questioner features multiple questions (lines 1, 5 and 6) – this is common to all initial turns in the Irish setting, and is a significant difference between the Irish setting and the British setting. This initial turn also contains some contentious presuppositions (line 2, “he allows this matter to drift so there is an inexcusable delay”). The Minister, in his initial turn, answers one of the opposition questions (“we hope to have that review completed in the next few weeks”, line 8), while also using a self-justifying strategy to answer the questioner’s initial charge (in line 1, the questioner points out that the review is 15 months overdue, while the Minister’s self-justification in line 7 is that he has only been in office for 3 months). This does not satisfy the questioner, who repeats her question in line 9. To this, the Minister repeats his reply. There follows a testy exchange (lines 11-23) where the questioner repeatedly displays dis-satisfaction with the Minister’s reply, and with government performance – for example, in line 18 she notes “there is no sense of urgency with this at all”. In line 21 the Minister indicates his frustration with the repetition of the questions by the opposition deputy; “In the English I use on the east coast and west coast, ‘the next few weeks’ means ‘the next month’”. This ministerial reply also contains further self-justification from the Minister, as he talks up his own performance and the performance of the government; lines 23 to 26; “This will mean that within four months of my arrival at the Department, this matter will be brought to finality [. . .] we are also bringing the Cooney
report to finality and making decisions”. The opposition questioner, however, is still dissatisfied, and continues to attack the Minister, by indicating her unhappiness with the Minister’s reply; line 33, “the Minister should stop putting up straw men”. At this stage, the exchange is ended by the Ceann Comhairle, who calls the next question.

Of the three Irish exchanges analysed here which feature ‘please’, this third exchange is the most face-threatening. It contains numerous attacks on the face of the Minister and the government, with minimal gestures towards their positive face – the only mitigating gesture is the use of ‘please’ in line 1, the opening question. As noted in chapter 5 of this thesis, the use of ‘please’ in medial position in a question following a modal verb can often indicate frustration or anger; this may be the case in this exchange. Although the Minister’s reply contains a number of responses to the FTAs performed by the questioner, unlike the previous two examples, there are no gestures towards the face of the questioner contained in the Minister’s reply; in contrast, the Minister’s reply solely attempts to rebut the FTAs (via self-justification and talking up his own face), while simultaneously attacking the face of the questioner through the use of humour (“in the English I use on the east and west coast”). The multi-faceted nature of the facework contained in this exchange again indicates that no single theory can account for the complexity of politeness features inherent in QT exchanges.

Facework in extract C:

- Contentious presuppositions (“inexcusable delay”, “confusing”)
- Detailed questioning indicates dissatisfaction with reply
- Self-justification (in Minister’s answer)
- Minister’s response attacks the performance of questioner
- Talking up of government’s own positive face
- Rebuttal of opposition FTA
7.4 Description of British extracts using ‘please’

**Extract G**

Parliamentary questions, March 10\(^{th}\). Tessa Jowell and Andrew Rothbathan

1. **<Mr. Robathan>** There is a suspicion abroad that the whole range of ministerial visits may have had more to do with electioneering for the coming general election, having used public money to get up there. *Will the Minister please tell the House-if she cannot do so now, will she put a full list in the public domain-what party political engagements each Cabinet Minister had when he or she went to Durham?*

2. **<Tessa Jowell>** It is absolutely reprehensible to undertake uninformed smear. The Cabinet’s visit to Durham and the visits that the Cabinet has undertaken to other cities in England and Wales reflect the Government’s determination to get out and about, not to be wholly based in London, and I want to make it absolutely clear that the conduct of the Cabinet visits and the ministerial meetings are fully subject to the ministerial code. If any party political campaigning is undertaken, the costs are met by the Labour party, which would be responsible. There is complete transparency, and the hon. Gentleman should not make such claims.

**Extract H**

Parliamentary questions, January 14\(^{th}\). Rob Wilson and Kevin Brennan

1. **<Mr. Rob Wilson>** Reading college has suffered from a lack of investment over the years and Thames Valley university is now pulling out. It has been announced that Oxford and Cherwell is going to be the preferred bidder, but I have significant concerns about the bid process and the due diligence that has taken place. *Please will the Minister take a significant interest in this matter, because young people in my constituency deserve a high-quality education?*

2. **<Kevin Brennan>** I am very happy to look into any real concerns the hon. Gentleman has. I am not aware of any concerns about due diligence with the process—of course, Oxford and Cherwell college won the bid in a consortium with another organisation. I know he has written to me, but if has any particular concerns, I would be happy to look into them. I understand that he is meeting the consortium soon, and I hope that that helps to alleviate any concerns he has.
Extract I

Parliamentary questions, March 4th. Anne McIntosh and Kevin Brennan.

1 <Miss Anne McIntosh> This week a delegation from the print industry in the Yorkshire and Humber region told us clearly that sector skills councils are not hitting the mark. Please will the Minister make them more responsive to the needs of employers, particularly to train the up and coming leaders of local businesses?

2 <Kevin Brennan> Yesterday, in the Department, we held a summit at the behest of the sector skills council employers and trade unions in the print industry to consider its future and its needs. If the representatives from the hon. Lady's constituency were not invited to that, perhaps she will let me know. We would certainly like to involve them in those discussions because the print industry has a great future. It is not the old-fashioned industry that it sometimes has a reputation for being. It has lots of small and medium-sized enterprises, and great and exciting technological developments are going on that we need to take advantage of.

Discussion

All three extracts from the British QTC have a more standard structure than the Irish extracts. All three exactly follow the pattern outlined by Harris (2001), and supported by research from Fenton-Smith (2008) and Bull and Wells (2011). All three British extracts are concise (the three questions are 5 lines, 5 lines and 4 lines long respectively), with an initial preface which attacks the Minister contained in each example. The three propositions are as follows;

- (extract G, lines 1-3) “There is a suspicion abroad that the whole range of ministerial visits may have had more to do with electioneering for the coming general election, having used public money to get up there”
- (extract H, lines 1-4) “Reading college has suffered from a lack of investment over the years [. . .] I have significant concerns about the bid process and the due diligence that has taken place”
- (extract I, lines 1-3) “This week a delegation from the print industry in the Yorkshire and Humber region told us clearly that sector skills councils are not hitting the mark”

All three of these prefaces are followed by a question aimed at connecting the Minister with the failure implied in the first part of the question. However, it is interesting to note that the question itself, in each case, does not contain particularly face-threatening language. In extract G, the Minister is asked to list the party political engagements of Ministers visiting
Durham – this is also an example of a detailed question, which the Minister could not possibly be expected to answer *ex tempore*. In extract H, the Minister is asked to “take a significant interest in this matter”, while in extract I, the Minister is asked to make the skills councils “more responsive to the needs of local employers”. There is, then, somewhat of a contrast between the FTA in the prefaces and the questions themselves are greatly softened. This illustrates the tension between the politeness norms expected during QT and the practicalities of the job of being an MP, where face attack is expected and necessary. It is also indicative of a fact pointed out by de Ayala (2001: 149) and Paxman (2002) – there are very strict rules in Westminster about the production of “unparliamentary language”, which MPs are expected to follow rigorously. MPs in Westminster are expected to be familiar with the May treatise – the Westminster guide to parliamentary procedure and convention, which has been followed since 1844.

While the structure of all three questions examined here is identical, there are a number of face strategies used in responses to the questions. In extract G, the Minister opens her reply by attacking the motive of the questioner; (line 6, “it is absolutely reprehensible to undertake uninformed smear”). This is followed in lines 6-10 with a defence of the Government’s performance (“the Government’s determination to get out and about”), before overtly rebutting the FTA performed by the questioner (line 11, “there is complete transparency, and the Gentleman should not make such claims”). This reply follows closely the pattern outlined by Bull and Wells in their 2011 paper, and contains minimal gestures towards the positive face of the questioner.

In extract H, the response by the Minister to the question is, at first glance, straightforward; he denies the statements contained in the preface, specifically the questioner’s concerns about the process in question. It is important to note, however, that the Minister qualifies the rebuttal of the questioner’s assertion with a number of caveats – he notes (line 6) that he is happy to look at the questioner’s concerns, he acknowledges (line 8) that the questioner has previously written to him, he promises (line 9) that he will look into any particular concerns of the questioner, and finally (lines 9-10) the Minister acknowledges that the questioner is already taking action about his concerns, and the Minister winds up by hoping that the questioner’s concerns will be alleviated. On the whole, the Minister gives a remarkably polite answer, which in the space of 4 lines provides many gestures towards the positive face of the questioner. The fundamental disagreement with the proposition held in the original turn appears in line 8, the second line of the Minister’s turn. These gestures towards the face of
the questioner may indicate that, even in the hostile setting that is QT in Parliament, disagreements seem to be a dispreferred option; it has been noted of casual conversation that while agreements are normally performed directly and with a minimum of delay, disagreements are usually heavily mitigated and are not usually positioned early in a turn (Greatbatch, 1992: 273). The Minister concludes with a gesture towards the face of the questioner. The Minister’s statement (lines 9-10, ‘I understand that he is meeting the consortium soon, and I hope that alleviates any concerns he has’) indirectly commends the actions of the questioner while passing responsibility for addressing the concerns of the questioner onto a third party – the consortium.

In terms of politeness theory, the reply in extract I from the British QTC appears to lie somewhere between the first exchange and the second exchange. This reply contains none of the rebuttals of the initial FTA which can be seen in the first exchange, nor does it contain the numerous examples of mitigating techniques contained in the second exchange. This reply does contain a self-justification which talks up the government’s performance, in line 5; “Yesterday, in the Department, we held a summit at the behest of the sector skills council employers and trade unions in the print industry to consider its future and its needs”. This is followed by a gesture towards the face of the questioner, in line 6; “If the representatives from the hon. Lady's constituency were not invited to that, perhaps she will let me know. We would certainly like to involve them in those discussions”. This reply again indicates the delicate balance contained in many of the exchanges analysed here, where FTAs are performed, these FTAs are then rebutted or dismissed, yet these FTAs co-exist with gestures aimed at acknowledging the face of the questioner.

Facework in extracts G-I;

- FTAs contained in question prefaces (extracts G, H, I)
- Attack on government performance (extracts H, I)
- Talking up of government’s positive face (extracts G, H, I)
- Rebuttal of questioner’s FTA (extract G, H)
- Attack questioner (extract G)
- Acknowledgement of questioner’s rights/motive (extract H, I)
- Self-justification (extract I)
7.5 Irish extracts featuring ‘I thank’

7.5.1 Irish extract D

Ministerial questions, April 1\textsuperscript{st}. Pat Carey and Jack Wall

<Deputy Jack Wall> Like Deputy Ring, I wish the Minister and Minister of State well in their new portfolios. I assure them we will do everything we can to work with them. I thank the former Minister, Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív, and the former Minister of State, Deputy Curran, for the effort and time they put into Question Time. Question Time is an important occasion during which spokespersons and Ministers can interact and assist each other to improve the brief.

I thank the Minister for his detailed reply. The timescale for implementing legislation or guidelines is a major concern. It is of paramount importance that this happens. A recent newspaper article highlighted a 400\% increase in applications to the Department of Health and Children seeking information about products that could pose health risks to young persons. That related to concerns about head shops.

Deputy Costello, my party colleague, introduced the Planning and Development (Amendment) Bill 2010 to make it difficult for head shop owners to acquire premises and set up immediately. The former Minister of State thought it was a good idea at the time and that it could be done. Will the Minister follow up on this and bring legislation forward, even if that means amending Deputy Costello’s Bill?

News broke earlier that head shop owners want to form a representative association to defend their right to trade and so on. They will not go away because we think what they do is a bad idea. We must examine this issue and act quickly but we must also ensure that what we do is right in order that we can eliminate this threat for once and for all. It is intended the owners will form a group, having examined the legalities involved, and they will fight regulation every step of the way. The Minister can rest assured that the Labour Party will join him and other Ministers in doing everything possible to ensure our youth, the generation of tomorrow, is protected from head shops.

<Deputy Pat Carey> I thank Deputy Wall for his good wishes. I also would like to be associated with the remarks made by Deputies Wall and Ring about the former Minister, Deputy Ó Cuív, and the former Minister of State, Deputy Curran. I agree they did excellent work in the Department. I wish my colleague, the Minister of State, Deputy Mary White, well and I look forward to working with her. I assure the House this will be the only time she will be present for Question Time as an onlooker. She will be an active participant in future.

Deputy Wall’s final comments are relevant. When I served in the Department previously, head shop owners advanced the notion that self-regulation was the way forward for their operation. I did not agree with that then and I do not now. The Government is under no illusion about the determination of head shop owners, many of whom feel they are fulfilling a useful purpose. I do not share that view but they will do everything to ensure they can operate. I am equally determined, as is the Government, to make sure they cannot, which is all the more reason to ensure we take every step
carefully. The three month notification period to the EU has been taken in clear recognition of the experience that if it is not done, it is easy to strike down any measures in the domestic courts.

On the legislation, following the advice of the Attorney General, the interdepartmental group to which I referred is looking at how best to draw up legislation that would be watertight and not subject to constitutional strikedown. That will not be easy but we believe it can be done. It was possible to do it with the Criminal Assets Bureau and I believe it can be done in this area also.

Planning, consumer protection and insurance can be incorporated into the legislation.

I have not seen Deputy Costello’s Bill but I will have it examined. I am aware of his experience, which is similar to my own in drugs task force areas, and that would inform some of our thinking. If Deputy Wall is aware of measures in the draft Bill that can inform, advise and strengthen the legislation I wish to advance, he should bring them to my attention and I will take them on board. A good deal of work is being done to prepare guidelines for parents, young people and those who are not so young. There are a number of head shops in my area and, contrary to the popular perception, it is not always 15 to 21 year olds who use them. I was taken aback to see that people approaching middle age have been consumers of those products. Equally, I do not suggest that every last item on sale in those shops is either illegal or damaging. My point is that customers of such shops are not all of a certain age.

These shops have almost spun out of control in a short space of time. I know the Deputies present as are determined as I am to ensure that does not happen because it is causing a considerable amount of legitimate concern. There are side effects, apart from the obvious ones of anti-social behaviour and damage to health and society. There is no doubt that many of those products, legal and otherwise, are gateways to the use of other drugs. Let no one be under any illusion but that this industry is highly organised and very determined. I am aware of that from my experience two years ago. We will have to proceed with great care and caution in order to ensure we have watertight measures to prevent such shops trading.

Discussion

Irish extract D is an exchange about so-called ‘head shops’ – shops which sell legal drugs. The submitted question asked the Minister about the numbers of head shops in Ireland and any actions the Minister has taken recently to deal with these head shops. The Minister’s reply is a lengthy one of 46 lines (not included), which summarises the government’s position on head shops. The opposition deputy opens his speech turn by offering a personal compliment to the Minister (who has just been appointed to the position). He also compliments the work of the previous Minister. These gestures towards the positive face of the Minister (and his predecessor) again indicate the multi-faceted nature of facework during QT. The supplementary question (lines 10-15) refers to a Bill introduced by the opposition at an earlier time. The speech turn here involves complimenting this Bill, and requesting the
Minister pay attention to this Bill; “The former Minister of State thought it was a good idea at the time and that it could be done. Will the Minister follow up on this and bring legislation forward?” This is a mitigated attack on the face of the Minister, because it implies that the opposition bill is superior to the government’s proposed bill. It also encourages the Minister to acknowledge the work of the opposition. The deputies speech turn ends with the statement (line 20), that “The Minister can rest assured that the Labour Party will join him and other Ministers in doing everything possible to ensure our youth, the generation of tomorrow, is protected from head shops”. This is clearly a gesture towards the questioner’s own positive face, as well as a gesture towards the face of the Minister (by assuring the Minister of cooperation).

The Minister opens his speech turn by thanking the opposition deputy for his good wishes, paying compliments to his predecessor and his new colleagues. The Minister then compliments the opposition deputy on his remarks, “Deputy Wall’s final comments are relevant”. Later in his speech turn (line 42), the Minister pays attention to the positive face of his interlocutor; “I have not seen Deputy Costello’s Bill but I will have it examined. I am aware of his experience, which is similar to my own in drugs task force areas, and that would inform some of our thinking” This is followed by another gesture towards the questioner; “If Deputy Wall is aware of measures in the draft Bill that can inform, advise and strengthen the legislation I wish to advance, he should bring them to my attention and I will take them on board”. The Minister is encouraging the questioner to engage with him in a shared enterprise to help construct the Bill together. There is another gesture towards the face of the opposition towards the end of the Minister’s turn, in line 52; “I know the Deputies present are as determined as I am to ensure that does not happen because it is causing a considerable amount of legitimate concern”. In the context of the oppositional nature of QT, this exchange is extremely conciliatory, and both speakers are attempting to find common ground with the other. Indeed, it could be argued that facework focused on positive face needs is prevalent in this exchange. Perhaps this focus on conciliation is due to the fact that the Minister in question is appearing at QT for the first time; alternatively, the subject matter in hand (‘head shops’) is a subject which engenders cross-party support, which may be the real reason for the lack of positive FTAs in this exchange. As with the corpus findings in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis, the topic under discussion should always be considered by the researcher when analysing language use in the parliamentary setting.
Facework in extract D:

- Attention paid to Minister’s personal face (compliments)
- Questioner assures government of co-operation
- Opposition gives suggestions to Minister
- Attention paid to positive face of questioner by Minister
- Acknowledgement of value of question and suggestions
- Acknowledgement of sincerity and competence of questioner

7.5.2 Irish extract E

Minsters Questions, February 16th. Micheál Martin and Lucinda Creighton.

<Deputy Lucinda Creighton> I thank the Minister for his reply. It is important that we send a message to the people of Ireland, the electorate, that Europe is not just about referenda or treaties and that the role of Ireland in Europe is much more than that.

I appreciate the Minister’s point on the role of the committees. There is an important role for the committees but there is a possibility that much talking can be done over an extended period. We can have debates in the Dáil, the Seanad, the Joint Committee on European Affairs and the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny. We can continue going around the Houses, so to speak, but there is an opportunity for the Government, and more specifically for the Minister as Minister for Foreign Affairs, to front-load much of that and to show a certain initiative in terms of implementation.

I do not want to go through the recommendations of the committee but, for example, would the Minister consider, and I raised this matter during Question Time some months ago, doing something to celebrate Europe Day such as inviting MEPs to address the Chamber, making it an occasion of national importance, putting these two Houses at the very centre of that and making it the focal point in that regard? That would be a positive move. The Minister might agree with me on that.

<Deputy Micheál Martin> The Taoiseach, the Government and myself are keen to be proactive in response to proposals from this House on how we now implement the Lisbon treaty and enhance the role of the Oireachtas in terms of European Union affairs. That means more plenary sessions in this House on European Union matters. We would respond very positively to that. I am impatient. I would like the House to get on with it and come to us with clear proposals. I believe that is possible, particularly given the enhanced role from the legislative perspective in terms of the issue of subsidiarity, for example, and assessing each directive that comes through and the legislation proposed.

There is a need to ensure that we create the mechanisms within the House that enable us to deal efficiently and expeditiously with EU legislation in an informed way and also, in more general debates, to bring European Union issues more into the mainstream of Oireachtas work. It is a major problem here compared to other European Union states, which I believe get a greater hearing in their Parliaments.
I agree with what the Minister said, but this is not just a question of dealing with legislation and legislative proposals coming from the European Union. It is fair to say that both the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny and the Joint Committee on European Affairs have a large workload. We meet with both committees almost every week, which is unusual. Most committees do not meet as frequently as those two committees. It is not just about the legislative aspect, therefore. It is also about the communication aspect. I believe there is a bigger role for the House and for the Government. The Minister might share his thoughts with the House on having a European affairs office here in Leinster House, for example, as is the case in the Parliament in Denmark. School tours to Leinster House, for example, do not make it over to the European Commission office or the European Parliament office. They have no engagement. It would be a very constructive move for the Government to initiate something like that here in the House.

I am on record already as supporting the establishment of a European affairs office in the House. I understand it was recommended by the Joint Committee on European Scrutiny chaired by Deputy Perry, if my recollection is correct. It is a matter, therefore, for the parliamentary commission to prioritise and implement that, but I am supportive of it.

At Government level we are responding to the Lisbon treaty by enhancing the level of engagement with the European Union institutions at all levels, including Cabinet and interdepartmental level, to ensure the structures we have are robust and effective in terms of dealing with increasing volumes of directives and legislation.

Discussion

This extract is a reply by Minister for Foreign Affairs to a pre-submitted question on whether the Minister would establish an all-party task force on Ireland’s future in the European Union. The Minister’s reply is a lengthy one (39 lines, not included), and the Minister denies a request from the opposition. This denial is heavily mitigated. The denial is accounted for by an explanation for why it is being denied (because the committee system is seen by the Minister as preferable), and the denial is greatly delayed – it appears in line 34 of the Minister’s turn. The reply by the opposition questioner opens with her thanking the Minister for his reply. This is followed by a gesture towards the Minister’s face – “I appreciate the Minister’s point on the role of the committees”, but this gesture is followed by a reiteration of the premise behind her initial question, that a task force is needed; “There is an important role for the committees but there is a possibility that much talking can be done over an extended period” (line 4). The questioner goes on to make another suggestion to the Minister (line 10, “would the Minister consider . . .?”), and finishes her turn by saying of her new suggestion (line 14); “That would be a positive move. The Minister might agree with me on that”. These suggestions are negative politeness strategies, since they are aimed at limiting the government’s freedom of action.
The Minister then has another speech turn, where he makes another gesture towards the positive face of the opposition, in line 15; “The Taoiseach, the Government and myself are keen to be proactive in response to proposals from this House” and notes of the questioner’s proposal, “we would respond very positively to that”. This is also a gesture towards the government’s positive face, as it is an attempt to portray the government as open-minded and co-operative. The Minister, at the end of his speech turn (lines 23-27) acknowledges the limitations of the Irish parliamentary system; this is a negative politeness strategy, since it acknowledges the government’s limited freedom of action. In her second speech turn, the opposition deputy opens her turn by saying “I agree with what the Minister said”, before criticising the committee system which is the Minister’s preferred option – an attack on the government’s positive face. This attack does not contain any overt face-threatening language, but the implication is clear, in lines such as “It is also about the communication aspect. I believe there is a bigger role for the House and for the Government” (lines 33-34). The Minister concludes the exchange with a brief speech turn (lines 39-46) which initially defends his own performance (“I am on record already as supporting the establishment of a European affairs office in the House”) before moving on to defending the government’s record (“At Government level we are responding to the Lisbon treaty by enhancing the level of engagement with the European Union institutions at all levels”). This exchange does not contain any overt attacks on the positive face of either interlocutor, and criticism of the government is heavily mitigated, or indirect; the primary FTAs in this exchange, as in the previous Irish exchange, are negative FTAs, which occur when one’s freedom to act unhindered is threatened.

Facework in extract E;

- Mitigating language used by both Minister and questioner
- Questioner acknowledges previous government actions
- Questioner makes suggestions to the government on future actions
- Minister acknowledges sincerity of opposition
- Minister blames third party for limitations
- Questioner attacks government performance
- Talking up of government’s positive face
Ministers Questions, February 2nd. Dara Calleary and Denis Naughten

<Deputy Denis Naughten> I thank the Minister of State for his reply. It seems the Minister of State is washing his hands of this issue, considering he completed the review in the early half of 2009 and he seems to be satisfied with it. Is it not the case that it took him almost two years into the country’s economic collapse before he actually reviewed the existing work permit rules in place up until June 2009?

While I accept that the majority of new applications issued may be for people already in the country, can he explain how it is that approximately one third of all the permits issued last year were new work permits but, in 2006, approximately one quarter of all work permits issued were new work permits? I argue the situation should be the exact opposite. Given that 85,000 additional young people are unemployed since this Government took office in 2007, and that 185,000 people became unemployed last year, is the Minister of State not concerned with the trend of those statistics?

<Deputy Dara Calleary> The new arrangements have been in place since last June and I will be happy to review them again this June as I think one year is a suitable time to allow them to become embedded.

As I outlined, we have considerably restricted the classes for which work permits may be issued. The Deputy may be referring to the green card scheme under which permits are issued on the basis of demand. I will check the figures and revert to the Deputy with the analysis.

<Deputy Denis Naughten> I accept that some of these permits being issued are new work permits for people who may have fallen out of the system — it is important that such people are given legitimate status — and for people who may be leaving one employment for another in the same sector. However, new employment permits are still being issued in the agriculture and catering areas and in the domestic and services industries. Many of these permits are for low-skilled jobs. A total of 185,000 people lost their jobs last year. Is the Minister of State not concerned about the proportion of new permits being issued compared to 2006? One would imagine that there would have been far more new permits, proportionately, issued at a time when the economy was expanding? Will the Minister of State carry out a review to ensure that the people currently residing here, whether Irish or non-Irish, have the opportunity to gain employment and be taken off the live register?

<Deputy Dara Calleary> As part of that review, we considerably strengthened the labour market needs test so that jobs seeking a work permit had to be advertised through FÁS and in the national newspapers to ensure that the hidden way of advertising them in the past was done away with. I am happy the labour market needs test is strong enough to support the new applications issued. Many Deputies approach the Department regularly to try to get support for various work permits, particularly in the catering industry as we become more specialised in our tastes as a country and in the way the industry is responding to those tastes. I am happy with the current labour market needs test and I will consider a further review.
In this extract, the Minister of State for Trade is responding to a pre-submitted question on plans to review Ireland’s new work permit scheme. The Minister gives a scripted reply of approximately 20 lines (not included), defending the government scheme. The questioner opens his speech turn by thanking the Minister – this is an example of thanking as a mitigation gesture, followed by a criticism of the minister. His next sentence is a direct criticism of the Minister; “It seems the Minister of State is washing his hands of this issue”. He then directly questions the Minister’s job performance, in line 2; “Is it not the case that it took him almost two years into the country’s economic collapse before he actually reviewed the existing work permit rules?”. This is a direct attack on the performance of the government, and the questioner continues the attack with an attack on the Minister, in line 11; “is the Minister of State not concerned with the trend of those statistics?”. This speech turn contains some mitigating gestures towards the Minister (the use of the verb ‘concern’ is relatively mild, for example). Overall, however, this speech turn is the most hostile, face-threatening speech turn from the Irish extracts which feature ‘I thank’. This speech turn is an example of what Bull and Wells call a “conflictual question” – any answer the Minister gives is going to damage the face of the government. This FTA is followed by the Minister’s reply, in which he defends the performance of the government, and points to government achievements; “we have considerably restricted the classes for which work permits may be issued”, line 15. He concludes his turn with a gesture towards the face of the questioner, by acknowledging the right of the questioner to information; “I will check the figures and revert to the deputy with the analysis”.

This conciliatory gesture does not appear to satisfy the opposition deputy, who again performs multiple FTAs, in the form of repeated questioning, as in line 22; “A total of 185,000 people lost their jobs last year. Is the Minister of State not concerned about the proportion of new permits being issued compared to 2006?”. There are three questions in quick succession at the end of the questioner’s speech turn here. One of these questions is a repetition of the Deputy’s original question (where he asks is the Minister “not concerned” about the statistics), which is also extremely face-threatening to the Minister – it implies that the Minister’s speech turn was unsatisfactory. The Minister’s second speech turn again defends the performance of the government (line 28), “we considerably strengthened the labour market needs test”) and he concludes the exchange by again defending the
government’s performance, in line 34; “I am happy with the current labour market needs test and I will consider a further review”.

Facework in exchange F;

- FTA contained in question preface
- Conflictual question
- Invitation to give a face-damaging response (FDR)
- Acknowledgement of opposition question
- Talking up government’s own positive face
- Rebuttal of opposition attack

7.6 British extracts using ‘I thank’

**Extract J**

Ministers Questions, February 10th. Wayne David and Anne McIntosh

<Mr. Wayne David> My right hon. Friend and I have regular discussions with Welsh Ministers on the implications for Wales of the whole of the UK’s legislative programme. This Bill is very much a cross-border Bill, and it is a good example of the Government and the Welsh Assembly Government collaborating to benefit those on both sides of the border.

<Miss McIntosh> I thank the Minister for that reply. We welcome the Flood and Water Management Bill, but we are concerned by a number of potential cross-border issues relating to how the flood risk management strategy for Wales might impact on England. What assurance can he give the House today that those issues will be dealt with timeously, transparently and sensitively?

<Mr. David> I can provide the assurance that the cross-border issues will be central to the implementation of this legislation. It is clear that, right from the start of the discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government, there has been close co-operation between us, and a recognition on both sides of Offa’s dyke of the need to ensure that our policies dovetail, overlap and pull in the same direction. This is a good example of the kind of partnership that devolution is all about, and it is in sharp contrast to what would happen if the Conservatives were in power.
**Extract K**

Ministers Questions, January 12th. Ann Keen and Daniel Kawczynski.

1. <Ann Keen> The Department has invested a record £2 billion in dentistry and set up a national access programme to help the national health service deliver its commitment to providing, by 2011, access for all who seek it. It is, of course, the responsibility of Shropshire County primary care trust to plan and develop appropriate services, including dental services, to meet the needs of its resident population.

2. <Daniel Kawczynski> I thank the Minister for that answer, but I must tell her that my experience of trying to find an NHS dentist in Shrewsbury for myself and my family has been an absolute nightmare. Can she provide me with a list of NHS dentists in Shrewsbury and Atcham that are currently taking on patients, so that I can share that with my constituents?

3. <Ann Keen> I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman and his family were troubled with uncomfortable dental pain at some time, but I know that he accessed the advice line and that he was assisted. I would be happy to talk outside the Chamber about any particular points that he wants to make on that. Of course, access to NHS dentistry has grown in Shropshire. Over the past 12 months the number of people who have seen an NHS dentist has risen by more than 11,000. I am aware that the PCT is tendering three new contracts-in Market Drayton, Oswestry and Bridgnorth-which are due to start in April 2010, and a new contract was tendered in 2006 for Shrewsbury as a high-priority area.

**Extract L**

Ministers Questions, 23rd March. Jack Straw and David Davies.

1. <Mr. Jack Straw> Overall, the reoffending rate for all adult offenders went down by 15.9 per cent. between 2000 and 2008, and by a greater margin in respect of juvenile offenders. However, there is a problem, which I readily acknowledge, in respect of short-sentence prisoners, among whom the reoffending rate increased in the same period by 3.9 per cent. Those persistent offenders tend to be the most intractable to deal with, having failed on community punishments and failed to deal with their alcohol and drug abuse. The courts, police and National Offender Management Service are putting great effort into directing more of these offenders from crime, including through intensive alternatives to custody, "through the gate" supervision and better management of offenders, which is being piloted in the integrated offender management projects. Those measures are all helping to shape an improved strategy for short-sentence prisoners. In addition, last week I announced a very important initiative with the organisation Social Finance in respect of Peterborough prison, where social investors are to be paid by results to get reoffending down.
<David T. C. Davies> I thank the Minister for that comprehensive reply. Does he agree that the ineffectiveness of short custodial sentences, which we both agree about, is not remedied by saying, "Let's not send people to prison at all"? It would be remedied far better by looking at the reoffending rate for those with long sentences, which is much lower, and by ensuring that people are kept in prison long enough to address their problems with alcoholism, drugs and lack of education.

<Mr. Straw> The Government are the last people to suggest that people should not be sent to prison when the courts require it. One of the main drivers of the 25,000 increase in the prison population since 1997 has been that the courts, quite correctly, have been sending more people to prison and for longer. As for getting the prison population down, the hon. Gentleman should direct his remarks to those on his own Front Bench. It was, after all, the shadow Justice Secretary who said that if he could get back to the prison numbers that existed in 1993-44,000 rather than 84,000—he would have succeeded, and that he would be very happy to have that engraved on his tombstone. I think that it would be rather more of a political tombstone were he to try that. The people in prison need to be there, and what we must do is make more effective use of short sentences.

Discussion

As with the extracts featuring ‘please’, the British extracts from the QTC which feature ‘I thank’ have a very fixed structure. All three extracts have three speech turns; the initial reply from the Minister (to a pre-submitted question) followed by a supplementary comment/question from the questioner, followed by another speech turn from the Minister. The speech turns in the British extracts are all much shorter than those in the Irish setting – speech turns are invariably 5 to 6 lines long.

The first British extract (extract J) is focused on Welsh affairs; it has been seen in chapter 5 that Welsh and Scottish affairs do not generally lend themselves to FTAs in the House of Commons. The Minister has been asked about discussions with the Welsh Assembly government on the Flood and Water Management Bill. The Minister gives a somewhat vague answer, noting that “regular discussions” take place between him and the Welsh government. The opposition deputy thanks the Minister, and welcomes the Bill generally (a gesture towards the government’s positive face), before noting some concerns she has with the Bill. This is an attack on the government’s positive face, as it points to limitations in the government Bill – it is an example of what Bull and Wells call a “contentious presupposition” being used as a FTA. The opposition deputy concludes her turn by asking the Minister for assurances (line 7) that the Minister will deal with cross-border issues “timeously, transparently, and sensitively”. The Minister, in his speech turn, responds by
saying (line 9), “I can provide the assurance that the cross-border issues will be central to the implementation of this legislation” (a rebuttal of the previous FTA). He goes on to praise the work of his government, and closes his turn (and the encounter) with a seemingly unprovoked attack on the face of the opposition (line 13); “This is a good example of the kind of partnership that devolution is all about, and it is in sharp contrast to what would happen if the Conservatives were in power”.

The second British extract, extract K, involves the Under-Secretary of State for Health responding to a pre-submitted question on the provision of NHS dental services in Shropshire. The Minister opens her speech turn by pointing to the government’s “record investment” in Dentistry nationwide, before pointing out that it is the Shropshire County Trust’s responsibility to provide dental services in that particular county. The questioner’s supplementary response again thanks the Minister, followed by a question asking for very detailed information, which the Minister could not realistically supply. There is also an implication in her question that there are inadequate dental services in the area of Shrewsbury – an attack on the positive face of the government through a contentious presupposition. The Minister’s reply pays attention to the face of the questioner, by expressing concern for his family’s dental problems (whether this is sincere or not is unclear), and the Minister then reaches out to the questioner, in line 11; “I would be happy to talk outside the Chamber about any particular points that he wants to make on that”. This is both a gesture towards the positive face of the questioner (by acknowledging their right to ask the question and by signalling co-operation with the questioner), and also a gesture towards the positive face of the government (by pointing overtly to the open, co-operative nature of the government).

Finally, the Minister rebuts the FTA performed by the questioner, by talking up the government’s positive face, in line 14; “I am aware that the PCT is tendering three new contracts-in Market Drayton, Oswestry and Bridgnorth-which are due to start in April 2010”.

The third and final British extract (extract L) which contains ‘I thank’ is the longest of the British exchanges featured in this analysis. It follows the rigid pattern set out in the British exchanges of reply-supplementary question-reply, and is an exchange between the Secretary of State for Justice and his opposition counterpart. The pre-submitted question asked the Minister about the effectiveness of short custodial sentences, to which the Minister replies with statistical information. This reply, in itself, contains seemingly contradictory facework strategies, as the Minister both talks down (line 2) and talks up (line 10) the government’s face within 10 lines. The opposition MP’s reply thanks the Minister for his ‘comprehensive’
reply, before acknowledging common ground with the Minister; line 14, “the ineffectiveness of short custodial sentences, which we both agree about, is not remedied by . . .”. This is a gesture towards the government’s positive face needs, while also portraying the opposition as co-operative. The opposition MP then gives his own solution to the problem, in lines 15-17. This is an indirect attack on the face of the government, by implying that their policies are ineffective. It also directly attacks the negative face needs of the government, as it offers a suggestion to the government on how to deal with crime more effectively. It is an invitation to the Minister to perform a face-damaging response (FDR). The Minister, in his own reply, attacks the opposition directly, in line 22; “As for getting the prison population down, the hon. Gentleman should direct his remarks to those on his own Front Bench”. This is followed by quoting the earlier words of an opposition MP, before the Minister points out “. I think that it would be rather more of a political tombstone were he to try that” (line 26) – this is an attack on the face of the opposition. All three of the British exchanges which feature ‘I thank’, then, contain multiple examples of facework, aimed at both positive and negative face; indeed, at times these seemingly contradictory strategies are contained in the very same speech turn.

Facework in British ‘I thank’ exchanges;

- Attack on government performance through contentious presupposition (J, K)
- Invitation to perform a FDR (extract L)
- Compliment paid to government action (extract J, “we welcome the Bill”)
- Supplementary question asking for very detailed information (extract K)
- Rebuttal of opposition FTA (extracts J, K)
- Concern expressed for face of questioner (extract K)
- Co-operation signalled with opposition (extract K)
- Common ground signalled between opposition and government (extract L)
- Attack on opposition (extract J, L)
- Talking up government’s positive face (extract J, K, L)
7.7 Irish extracts featuring ‘yes’

7.7.1 Irish extract M

Minister’s Questions, January 21st, 2010. John Gormley and Ciarán Lynch

<Deputy Ciarán Lynch> I thank the Minister for his reply. As I understand it, 11 or 12 local authorities have not responded to the Minister.

<Deputy John Gormley> I listed the local authorities that have not responded.

<Deputy Ciarán Lynch> I was trying to count them as the Minister read them out and I think they amount to 11 or 12.

<Deputy John Gormley> The Deputy has counted them.

<Deputy Ciarán Lynch> I assume the Minister wrote to each local authority. It would be acceptable and understandable, given the workload faced by local authorities, not just with the flooding but taking into account the Christmas period and the snow and inclement weather that their priorities might have been to deal with the emergencies they faced rather than to write reports.

What will happen to the information? Where will it go and will it be brought to the attention of the national emergency committee in a particular format or en bloc? Will an independent assessment of the data be made?

I do not imply anything untoward of the local authorities but a certain level of performance indication would be derived from the information that has been sent to the Department. Will there be an assessment to ensure that the information is accurate and captures all local authority activity?

<Deputy John Gormley> Yes. I can assure the Deputy that that will happen. The reports have been circulated to the relevant sections of my Department for consideration and any action that may be required. The reports were also sent to the Department of Transport, which has responsibility at central government level for national and non-national roads and also to the Office of Public Works, which is the lead Government agency for the implementation of the national flood policy in the matter of flood risk and mitigation. It is important that when we consider all of the reports, the one Deputy Lynch would be most familiar with is the one from Cork, that we focus on the areas that proved to be vulnerable on that occasion. As the Deputy is aware, areas flooded that had never flooded previously. We have to take that into account for future emergency planning and write it into the equation. All of that is being done. We are carrying out a full assessment of what occurred during the floods. All of that information will be fed into the assessment so that we can learn valuable lessons from the experience.

Discussion

This extract involves the Minister for the Environment responding to a pre-submitted question about flooding and local authority responses to flooding. His speech turn of 14 lines is not included. The opening speech turn from the opposition deputy thanks the Minister for
his reply, and clarifies a point about the number of local authorities referred to in the Minister’s turn. This leads to a brief exchange (lines 4-7) clarifying this matter – this gives both parties a common point of reference and acknowledges common ground. The opposition deputy then has his first lengthy speech turn, which he opens by making a gesture towards the face of a third party, local authorities (line 7). This, of course, can also be seen as a political gesture, aimed at the wider audience; paying attention to the positive face of local authorities (by acknowledging their hard work) can be construed as the questioner attempting to win favour with that group. The questioner then asks three questions in quick succession (lines 11-13) which inflicts a significant imposition on the Minister being questioned. These questions look for detailed information. Amusingly, in line 14 the questioner again takes care to make a gesture towards the face of local authorities, before ending his speech turn with a final question (the fourth question in this speech turn), again attempting to gain information from the Minister.

The Minister opens his reply with the word ‘yes’, answering the final question posed by the opposition. He then says ‘I can assure the deputy that will happen’ (line 17), apparently adding extra clarification to his ‘yes’ reply, and thus rebutting the FTA from the opposition. The Minister then gives detailed information, thus talking up the government’s positive face. The Minister makes a gesture towards the positive face of the questioner in line 23, where he acknowledges the deputy’s knowledge of his own community, and acknowledges the deputy’s interest in and knowledge of the subject at hand (line 24, ‘as the deputy is aware . . . ’). The Minister’s turn ends with the Minister again paying attention to the government’s positive face, by pointing to the government’s work in dealing with flooding, and by indicating exactly what the government is doing at this point in time. As such, this answer legitimises the questions of the opposition while simultaneously dealing with the threat to the negative face of the government inherent in the question.

Facework in extract M

- Talking up of government’s positive face
- Rebuttal of opposition attack
- Gesture towards positive face of questioner
- Detailed question for Minister
Minister’s Questions, June 29th, 2010. Éamon Ó Cuív and Róisín Shortall

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> We are in the midst of the worst pension crisis in decades. What, if anything, will the Minister do about that? How will he address the current funding deficits and how will he prevent those deficits occurring again in the future? The Minister quoted some actions taken by his predecessor since 2008. They really amounted to tinkering with the pensions system. What actions will the current Minister take to ensure that the pension situation is made more secure, given the scale of the deficits that exist at the moment? What will he do to lower the risk profile of Irish pension funds? Has he anything in mind to address that issue? Is he prepared to carry out a review of which investments are appropriate for pension funds? A key criticism made by the Pensions Board was that the investments that had taken place over recent years were high risk investments. That is why so much money was lost from pension funds.

Is the Minister prepared to get investment managers to clarify to their clients the risks that they are taking? Pension policy holders are simply not aware of these risks. Is he prepared to introduce a pension insurance scheme? Will he legislate to ensure companies can no longer walk away from defined benefit schemes that are insolvent? Will he consider extending the PIPS scheme?

<An Leas-Cheann Comhairle> The Deputy has asked many questions, but she will have another opportunity to speak.

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> The Deputy has asked many good questions. I would like to see the risk profile lowered and I will be talking to the new chairperson of the Pensions Board this week, as I believe that the pensions issue is very important. The first pension for most people is the contributory old age pension, and the objective is to maintain that at 35% of the average industrial wage. That is the first priority because we must ensure that the most universal pension is protected.

I am a little bit surprised at the question about the risk profile. The Government has been accused of not taking away policies because we ensured that people’s investments in banks, bonds and so on were secure. Proposals are being put about by people that we should have put those bonds at risk. This would have meant that even what were considered safe investments would have become risky. The Government policy has been quite clear. We believe that what were considered safe investments by pension funds should remain safe investments, and that this would extend to bonds held in Irish banks, as well as to deposits held in Irish banks. This is fundamental to ensuring that safe investments continue to be considered safe.

The primary responsibility for the oversight of pension funds rest with the Pensions Board, but I will be entering into discussions with the board and if there is a need for further changes, I will certainly look at them.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> Given the scale of the deficit, there clearly is a need for action to be taken. Does the Minister intend to provide more staff at the Pensions Board? It recently stated that it does not have the staff and expertise to carry out its functions adequately at the moment. There is a
contradiction to this approach, because it also returned a surplus of €400,000 to the Department and reduced the fees to pension schemes by 7.5%. Does the Minister have confidence in the Pensions Board and in its ability to do the task given to it? This crisis has happened on the board’s watch. How does he intend to proceed in respect of reform of the board?

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> Yes, I do have confidence in the Pensions Board. We are in the midst of world turmoil and the Government has taken every step to create as much stability as possible in financial institutions here. We have not always had——

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> The board’s representatives say that they do not have the capacity to do the job.

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> The issue of staff is being discussed with the Department of Finance. I will be discussing that issue with the Pensions Board and its new chairman, who was appointed yesterday.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> Why did the board hand back nearly half a million euro?

<Deputy Éamon Ó Cuív> The board gets its income from a levy, and it had a surplus.

<Deputy Róisín Shortall> Why did the board not recruit the experts that were needed?

**Discussion**

This exchange involves Minister (for Social Protection) Éamon Ó Cuív responding to pre-submitted questions about pensions. The Minister’s initial reply (not included) is 22 lines long and essentially gives details from the Pensions Act introduced by the government. The opposition deputy opens her speech turn with a very hostile attack on the Minister, in lines 1-4; “We are in the midst of the worst pension crisis in decades. What, if anything, will the Minister do about that? How will he address the current funding deficits and how will he prevent those deficits occurring again in the future? The Minister quoted some actions taken by his predecessor since 2008. They really amounted to tinkering with the pensions system”. This contains a number of contentious presuppositions which are aimed at damaging the face of the Minister, by accusing him of incompetence (“What, if anything, will the Minister do?”, and “tinkering with the system”). This attack is followed by a barrage of questions, in lines 4-9; “What actions will the current Minister take to ensure that the pension situation is made more secure, given the scale of the deficits that exist at the moment? What will he do to lower the risk profile of Irish pension funds? Has he anything in mind to address that issue? Is he prepared to carry out a review of which investments are appropriate for pension funds?” After giving some further background details, she asks a number of further questions, in lines 11-
14; “Is the Minister prepared to get investment managers to clarify to their clients the risks that they are taking? Pension policy holders are simply not aware of these risks. Is he prepared to introduce a pension insurance scheme? Will he legislate to ensure companies can no longer walk away from defined benefit schemes that are insolvent? Will he consider extending the PIPS scheme?” This is an invitation to the Minister to perform a face-damaging response (FDR), and again contains a number of contentious presuppositions (“are simply not aware of the risks”), thus damaging the positive face of the Minister.

The Leas-Céann Comhairle intervenes at this point, to indicate that the deputy should end her turn. Interestingly, despite the extremely hostile nature of the opposition speech turn the Minister opens with a gesture towards the positive face of the opposition, acknowledging that “The Deputy has asked many good questions” (line 17). This appears to indicate that the Minister does not appear to take offence at the face-threatening nature of the opposition speech turn, and is in fact prepared to be conciliatory, to a degree. The Minister then agrees somewhat with the opposition assertions (“I would like to see the risk profile lowered”, line 17), thus indicating common ground with the opposition, and the Minister then gives some details on that issue. At this stage, however, the Minister attacks the positive face of the opposition, by suggesting that her question is naïve; “I am a little bit surprised at the question about the risk profile”. The Minister then goes on to defend government policy, in lines 22-29, thus talking up the government’s positive face. The Minister ends his speech turn by defending his record, and (partly) attempting to deflect responsibility for pensions towards a third party, the Pensions Board.

The opposition deputy begins her second speech turn with a statement which implies criticism of the Minister; “Given the scale of the deficit, there is clearly a need for action”, line 33. This second speech turn also includes multiple questions, in lines 34, 38 and 39, all of which attack the Minister’s oversight of the Pensions Board. One of these questions is a repetition of a question from her initial speech turn (asking the Minister for a review of the system). The Minister, interestingly, chooses to respond to the second of these three questions by using ‘yes’ (“Does the Minister have confidence in the Pensions Board/Yes, I do have confidence in the Pensions Board”), and again attempts to deflect responsibility for the pensions crisis, this time (lines 41-42) by talking about the world economic crisis – an example of what Bull and Wells call “self-justification”. In total, during this exchange, the opposition deputy has asked no less than 15 questions of the Minister, ranging over some very detailed matters. The exchange ends at this point, and the Dáil report moves on to the
next question — presumably this is because the six minutes allocated to this question have expired (this makes sense given the length of the exchange). It is unclear from the record if the Minister attempted (or was willing) to answer this final question.

Facework in exchange N

- Contentious presuppositions
- Invitation to the Minister to perform a FDR
- Detailed questions
- Rebuttal of FTA performed by questioner
- Gesture towards questioner’s positive face (“the deputy asks many good questions”)
- Talking up of government’s positive face
- Self-justification

7.7.3 Irish exchange O


1 <Deputy Ruairí Quinn> I thank the Tánaiste for her reply. Do I take it that the Secretary General in her Department is the responsible Accounting Officer?

2 <Deputy Mary Coughlan> Yes.

3 <Deputy Ruairí Quinn> The Tánaiste will be haunted by FÁS for longer than she thought.

4 <Deputy Brian Hayes> Yes.

5 <Deputy Mary Coughlan> I do not agree. While I have had my challenges with FÁS, we made a good appointment in respect of the new board, whose members I believe have plenty of drive, energy and enthusiasm. Moreover, there will be greater synergies between FÁS and the skills portfolio in respect of further education, PLCs and so on with the Minister of State responsible. It will bring better synergies and will focus on the development of the national skills strategy. Consequently, I look forward to it.

Discussion

This brief exchange is between the Minister for Education and Skills and her opposition counterpart. The Minister gives a lengthy answer (26 lines, not included) to a question related to the transfer of certain responsibilities from the Department of Enterprise, Trade and
Employment to her department. The opposition deputy opens his speech turn by thanking the Minister for her reply, and then asks an apparent clarification question; “Do I take it that the Secretary General in her Department is the responsible Accounting Officer?” The Minister responds with a single word “yes”, to which the opposition spokesman responds with a somewhat cryptic comment (line 4) - this refers to the fact that in the past this Minister had a negative relationship with FÁS (Ireland’s national training authority), which will now be part of the Minister’s remit. This is an attack on the Minister’s record in a previous role, and is unquestionably a FTA from the opposition (the Minister had attempted in 2009 to halve the number of members on the FÁS board, while she was Minister for Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment). This is a conflictual question, where any response from the Minister will damage her own face. The Minister responds robustly to this attack. She opens her speech turn with a flat rebuttal (line 6, “I do not agree”). She partly acknowledges the opposition point (“While I have had my challenges with FÁS”), she robustly defends the government’s action in moving FÁS to her department, in lines 6-10. She ends by making a gesture towards her own positive face needs, by claiming that she is looking forward to the new arrangement.

Facework in exchange O

- Conflictual question
- Rebuttal of opposition FTA
- Talking up of government’s positive face

7.8 Description of British extracts featuring ‘yes’

**Extract S**

Minister’s Questions, March 10th, 2010. Paul Holmes (Conservative) and Angela E. Smith

1. <Paul Holmes> Carbon emissions from ICT are one part of a very poor picture overall. The Minister has received £681,000 of public money from the Department of Energy and Climate Change as part of a low-carbon technology scheme. Is she confident that that will be well spent when, of the 13 Cabinet Office buildings, none has received an energy efficient rating, and five, including Downing street, got a worse rating in 2008-09 than they did in the previous year?

2. <Angela E. Smith> Yes. One reason why those buildings got a slightly worse rating was that there was more activity and staff worked later nights. However, that is still not acceptable, and we are ensuring that we put that money to good use to bring down carbon emissions across the estate.
Extract T

Minister’s Questions, January 12th, 2010. Stephen O’Brien (Conservative) and Phil Hope

<Mr. Stephen O’Brien> Despite the answers that the Minister has just given - this is of particular relevance to those of us who are trustees of charities and are finding that this problem is exercising us a lot in respect of our various fiduciary duties - the Government are still allowing there to be a risk of charitable donations being subsumed into hospital accounts. When people give to charity, they expect that money to be for extra things, rather than for those that are part of the established costs in the NHS budget. Will the Minister give an absolute guarantee that under the Treasury’s new rules there will be no danger whatever of money given to charity being counted as part of the NHS budget, and that there will be no resultant offsetting?

<Phil Hope> The short answer is yes. The long answer is that NHS charities are not part of the NHS, have never been part of the NHS and, under this Government, never will be part of the NHS. They are independent bodies, governed by an independent regulator, doing fantastic work in providing fantastic services. I hope that the hon. Gentleman-and the hon. Member for North Norfolk (Norman Lamb), who speaks for the Liberal Democrats-will stop putting out misleading information, and instead will reinforce the fact that NHS charities remain independent.

Extract U

Minister’s Questions, February 4th, 2010. Richard Benyon (Conservative) and Huw Irranca-Davies

<Mr. Richard Benyon> There is a widespread view around coastal communities that if people disagree with the Minister’s Department, they get cut out of negotiations on important issues. I was contacted just today by the Thanet Fishermen’s Association, which has been waiting since the beginning of last November for a reply on the transfer of unused quotas. Will the Minister give the fishing community and other organisations interested in CFP reform the firm assurance that they will be involved in negotiations on this important matter, even if they disagree with his Department’s stance?

<Huw Irranca-Davies> Yes, absolutely, but that is not to say that we will always agree. In fact, fishermen often accuse me of over-consulting and over-engagement, which can make it difficult for them to get to meetings and to engage with these matters. I guarantee that we will do as the hon. Gentleman asks, but that does not mean that we should walk away from the difficult decisions on moving from where we are now to achieving a long-term sustainable future. I know that, in his heart of hearts, he agrees with that.
Discussion

It is again clear from a brief glance that the British exchanges have a much more standard structure than the Irish exchanges. As with the Irish exchanges, the initial speech turn from the minister in question has been omitted from analysis. As with all other British exchanges analysed in this chapter (see section 7.3), the three British exchanges which feature ‘yes’ all begin with a speech turn which contains an preface followed by a question. These assertions are as follows:

- (extract S, lines 1-3); “Carbon emissions from ICT are one part of a very poor picture overall. The Minister has received £681,000 of public money from the Department of Energy and Climate Change as part of a low-carbon technology scheme.”

- (extract T, lines 3-4); “the Government are still allowing there to be a risk of charitable donations being subsumed into hospital accounts.”

- (extract U, lines 1-2); “There is a widespread view around coastal communities that if people disagree with the Minister's Department, they get cut out of negotiations on important issues.”

All three prefaces, as suggested by Harris (2001) and Bull and Wells (2011) contain an FTA. Extract S opens with an assertion which is aimed at damaging the positive face of the Minister, with a reference to a “very poor picture overall”. Extract T also contains a face-damaging assertion, that “the government are still allowing there to be a risk” in this area – this contains an assertion that the government have failed to minimise this risk in the past. The initial lines of extract U contain an implication that the government is unsympathetic to coastal communities, and that the government is not open to negotiations. It is interesting to note that none of these British speech turns contain multiple questions, in stark contrast to the Irish questions. The British question turns are 5, 8 and 6 lines long respectively – another indication of the standard structure of the British exchanges, as well as an indication of the shorter time allocated to questions in the British setting. All three questions attempt to commit the Minister to a public assertion of some kind – these are attacks on the Minister’s negative face needs, of course, since they limit the Minister’s freedom of action in some way; (extract S, line 3, “Is she confident that . . .”); extract T, line 6, “Will the Minister give an
absolute guarantee that . . . ; extract U, line 4, “Will the Minister give the fishing community and other organisations interested in CFP reform the firm assurance that . . .”)

There are some notable differences in the replies from Ministers in the British setting. The answer in exchange S opens with a single word ‘yes’ – this answers the question “Is the Minister confident that that [money] will be well-spent. The Minister here attempts to partially rebut the accusation contained in the question, before acknowledging that the questioner does indeed have a point (“However, that is still not acceptable”, line 7) before going on to outline what the government is doing to improve performance in this area. The second British exchange opens with the Minister saying “the short answer is yes” (this is in response to the question of the Minister giving a guarantee on the question of charities). He then goes on to directly rebut the assertion contained in the opposition question (that charitable donations may go to the NHS budget). This is followed by an attack on the questioner (and other opposition parties), when they are accused of “putting out misleading information” (line 13). The Ministerial answer in exchange U opens with “yes, absolutely” (answering the question as to will the Minister give assurances to the fishing community), but this ‘yes’ is immediately qualified with “but that is not to say that we will always agree”. He then goes on to rebut the accusation implicit in the question (that the Minister does not engage with the fishing community) by noting that “fishermen often accuse me of over-consulting and over-engagement” (line 9). This is followed by two gestures towards the positive face needs of the questioner; the Minister promises that “I guarantee that we will do as the hon. Gentleman asks” (line 10), before in the final line of his speech turn the Minister says “I know that, in his heart of hearts, he agrees with that” (line 13). This clearly acknowledges the sincerity of the questioner’s motives - a gesture towards the questioner’s positive face needs.

Facework in British exchanges which feature ‘yes’

- Face-threatening language used in question preface (exchanges S, T, U)
- Rebuttal of FTA (exchange S, T, U)
- Attacks on questioner (exchange T)
- Acknowledgement of point of question (exchange S)
- Talking up of government’s positive face (exchange S, U)
Acknowledgement of questioner’s sincerity (exchange U)

7.9 Irish extracts featuring ‘no’

7.9.1 Extract P

Minister’s Questions, February 25th, 2010. John Gormley and Joanna Tuffy

<Deputy Joanna Tuffy> I will need to examine the specific details in the tables. The Minister said a total of €1.5 billion was spent over the period in question.

<Deputy John Gormley> I thought I said €1.1 billion. That is how much we spent on 73 projects between 2005 and 2009.

<Deputy Joanna Tuffy> How much does the Minister anticipate will be spent over the next three years? Will it be a similar amount?

<Deputy John Gormley> The proposed water services investment programme for the years 2010 to 2012, which will be published over the coming weeks, will set out the new water supply contracts to be progressed over the period of the plan. I have not published it yet. I have already given the Deputy information on the nature of the expenditure that is incurred when investing in water supply infrastructure. I will try to find as much information as I can. As I have not yet published the 2010-12 water services investment programme, Deputy Tuffy will have to wait for further details on it. I cannot reveal in response to a parliamentary question something that has not yet been published. In general terms, I can assure the Deputy that we have not just maintained the budget — we have increased it.

<Deputy Joanna Tuffy> Under the new programme, will the focus change to repairing existing infrastructure? Are there many new projects that have yet to be completed?

<Deputy John Gormley> No. The Deputy is right. I have already said we will ensure we spend considerable additional moneys on conserving water and repairing mains pipes. It makes sense to do so. I am aware of terrible water supply difficulties, particularly in my constituency, that are caused by leaking pipes and exacerbated by the cold weather. We have to deal with that. The new programme will be fully inclusive of water conservation projects. It will show water conservation works that are in progress. New contracts are scheduled to go to construction over the next two or three years. The new programme will allow for the further progression of water conservation schemes through the planning stages. As Deputies are aware, some €130 million has been spent on water conservation measures since 2003. That expenditure has been based on the needs assessments of the water services authorities. There is potential for contracts valued at over €300 million to commence over the next three years. The intention is to facilitate this under the 2010-12 investment programme. Most of the funds will be invested in the rehabilitation or replacement of the equivalent of 650 km of mains.
Discussion

This extract is an exchange between the Minister for the Environment and his opposition counterpart, relating to investment in water services. The Minister’s initial reply of 12 lines (plus a supplementary chart handed round in the chamber, which is referred to in line 1) is not included. The first speech turn by the opposition involves clarifying a figure mentioned by the Minister. This is further clarified by the Minister in lines 3-4. The first significant supplementary from the opposition is in lines 5-6; “How much does the Minister anticipate will be spent over the next three years? Will it be a similar amount?” This is an example of a detailed question to the Minister. The Minister’s response of 8 lines (lines 7-15) directly addresses the question posed by the opposition, but does not specifically answer the question. There is an attack on the face of the questioner, as the Minister points out, “As I have not yet published the 2010-12 water services investment programme, Deputy Tuffy will have to wait for further details on it. I cannot reveal in response to a parliamentary question something that has not yet been published.” – a rebuttal of the opposition FTA. The Minister then follows up with a gesture towards the positive face of the questioner, by making a general reply to the question asked. This reply also boosts the government’s positive face, by pointing out that the government has increased the water budget.

The second supplementary question from Deputy Tuffy is a related question (line 16-17), which attacks the government’s face by pointing out flaws that the government has not fixed; “Under the new programme, will the focus change to repairing existing infrastructure? Are there many new projects that have yet to be completed?” – another example of an invitation to perform a face-damaging response (FDR), since if the Minister acknowledges this question he is admitting the government’s current focus in inadequate. The Minister replies to this second supplementary by saying ‘no’, presumably a direct response to the question about new projects yet to be completed. The Minister then pays attention to his questioner’s positive face, by noting, “The deputy is right”. The Minister then goes on to talk up his both own positive face (by pointing out his awareness of difficulties in his own constituency, lines 20-21), and the government’s positive face. From lines 21-30, the Minister speaks of what the new programme will entail, and also mentions government achievements in this area to date.
Facework in extract P

- Invitation to perform a FDR
- Detailed question to the Minister
- Attention paid to positive face needs of opposition
- Talking up of government’s positive face
- Talking up of Minister’s personal positive face (self-justification)

7.9.2 Extract Q


1 <Deputy Fergus O’Dowd> Can the Minister answer this question clearly? The last day we had
2 Question Time in the Dáil with the Minister, he said he was not aware of the statement by Irish Rail
3 that the DART interconnector timetable had been significantly altered. Who did the Minister meet
4 from CIE that morning? Is it true he was briefed on this issue by CIE that morning?

5 <Deputy Noel Dempsey> No, that is not true. The subject never came up. I met the board members
6 and the chief executive of CIE. I try to meet the boards of companies under the aegis of the
7 Department of Transport once a year and it was such a meeting. In the middle of the day, I became
8 aware of a statement issued by CIE and Deputy O’Dowd raised the matter in the House. Deputy
9 O’Dowd suggested CIE had changed policy and decided the opening of the project would be delayed
10 until 2018. Deputy O’Dowd asked if this was Government policy and I replied that it was not. It was
11 not Government policy then but it is a fact that in the design phase of this project, it was estimated
12 the DART underground could be operational within four and a half years of construction. However,
13 when the project went into the detailed design phase, the company involved estimated the
14 construction phase, including testing and commissioning, would take six years to complete. That is
15 where the matter arose. It did not arise because of a change of policy or because CIE decided it
16 would not follow Government policy.

17 Government policy on this issue is that it is delivered in the shortest timeframe possible, and we are
18 now informed this is the shortest timeframe possible.

19 <Deputy Fergus O’Dowd> Apart from the board, did the Minister meet any officials or employees of
20 Irish Rail that day and, if so, could he tell us who they were and the jobs they held within that
21 organisation?

22 <Deputy Thomas P. Broughan> On the same point, the Minister almost threw a wobbler here at the
23 end of questions that day. It seemed as if he had been left in the dark by CIE. That is certainly the
24 impression he gave us, and the House. How does that tally with the answer he gave to Deputy
25 O’Dowd?
The Minister gave us some information but the public expected that metro north with the Railway Procurement Agency, RPA, and an interconnector with Irish Rail would go in tandem, yet we now find that metro north is much further down the road, so to speak, than the interconnector. Has the Minister done any analysis as to the reason that should be the case? The Minister then tells us that for environmental reasons they will use two boring machines rather than four but this would appear to be a significant reason for the delay. How will we handle this major project if it is not done in tandem with metro north? In terms of the stations — St. Stephen’s Green and so on — we have shared facilities. The RPA is building a box, as it calls it, for the interconnector but it seems to be haphazard. Has the Minister confidence in Irish Rail that it can deliver this major project?

On the big dig, we heard about the Broombridge line this morning. The statue of Daniel O’Connell, our great liberator, is due to be removed from O’Connell Street in the near future to facilitate these works. Can the Minister give us an updated report now from the big dig committee? What is the position regarding the big dig committee? It appears that, because of the slowness of the interconnector, we may be getting into a position where we will have chaos in the centre of Dublin for over a decade rather than a smart building programme over three or four years, which would get it done quickly. Incidentally, I understand there is no chance of having metro north completed by the anniversary of the seminal event in 1916 which led to the foundation of our State. Work will be ongoing on it when, hopefully, we will all be present outside the GPO for that ceremony. It all seems very vague. The Minister appeared to be flabbergasted that day and I wonder what happened? What did they do to him?

<Deputy Noel Dempsey> Whether I was flabbergasted is the Deputy’s interpretation. I made it clear there was no policy change because the question put to me by the Deputy was that the statement CIE had made had changed the policy. I made it clear that CIE does not make policy; the Department and the Minister make policy. As I said at the time, I was not aware of the statement before it was made, which is not the normal protocol with CIE on operational matters such as this one and, therefore, from that point of view, that was a breach of protocol as far as I was concerned but I was not flabbergasted. I was at pains to point out that it was Government that decided the policy on this issue. The Deputy might want to put down a specific question on that.

If I meet somebody when I arrive to visit a State agency, even the person on reception, I will always say hello to them. My recollection is that is what I did that morning. I probably met a few personnel from Heuston Station. I met with the board. A number of officials were waiting to brief the board on whatever was on the agenda on that particular day. They were the people I met on the day. I had conversations with all of them but I did not have meetings with people and discuss interconnectors or anything else.

Discussion

This exchange is between the Minister for Transport and his opposition counterpart, on the subject of delays in building a Dublin interconnector railway. The Minister’s initial turn (of 17 lines, not included) outlines the reasons for the delay. It is in response to two pre-submitted questions, which means that two opposition deputies are entitled to ask supplementary questions. The opposition spokesman opens his speech turn by pointing to a
contradiction between the Minister’s statement and an earlier statement on the matter. Deputy O’Dowd then asks two questions, in lines 3-4; “Who did the Minister meet from CIE that morning? Is it true he was briefed on this issue by CIE that morning?” This is a very face-threatening speech turn, which involves multiple questions, and asks the Minister for detailed information. The Minister flatly denies the final question posed by Deputy O’Dowd; “No, that is not true. The subject never came up”, line 5. The Minister then outlines his pattern of meetings with CIE (Irish public transport company), and attempts to clarify the government’s position, thus both rebutting the opposition FTA and talking up the government’s own positive face.

The opposition spokesman then asks a second supplementary question, in lines 19-21, aimed at further clarifying the Minister’s answer. At this stage, the Labour spokesman on transport intervenes, with a lengthy speech turn, in lines 22-45. He is entitled to intervene here as he has submitted one of the questions the Minister is responding to. This speech turn opens with a direct attack on the Minister’s positive face, by saying (lines 23-24); “the Minister almost threw a wobbler here at the end of questions that day” – this is an example of what Bull and Wells (2011, 11) call an “aside” – departing from the question format to perform an FTA. He goes on to further attack the Minister, by noting, “It seemed as if he had been left in the dark by CIE. That is certainly the impression he gave us, and the House”. This is a very direct FTA, a conflictual presupposition, which is followed by a question to the Minister asking him to explain his (seemingly) contradictory statement. The Labour spokesman then continues with an extremely hostile speech turn, which has a number of attacks on the Minister’s positive face needs. This includes a number of asides, such as, “we will have chaos in the centre of Dublin for over a decade rather than a smart building programme over three or four years, which would get it done quickly“ (line 39), and “I understand there is no chance of having metro north completed by the anniversary of the seminal event in 1916” (line 41), as well as the statement, “It all seems very vague” (line 43). The Labour spokesman then accuses the Minister of appearing “flabbergasted”, which is another conflictual presupposition.

The Minister, in his response (to both questioners), firstly denies the assertion that he was “flabbergasted”, thus attempting to rebut the opposition attack. He repeats that he was not flabbergasted (line 52), before suggesting that the opposition put down a specific question on the matter – this is another attack on the opposition, by suggesting that their questions are inappropriate. The Minister concludes his speech turn by defending his own positive face, as
he notes in lines 54-59 that he always says hello to people. He concludes his speech turn by repeating his denial of having meetings with CIE personnel. This denial is a rejection of opposition assertions, and as such is an attack on the positive face of the opposition.

Facework in extract Q

- A number of asides by the opposition
- Detailed question
- Conflictual presuppositions
- Rebuttal of opposition assertions
- Attack on positive face of opposition
- Talking up of Minister’s positive face

7.9.3 Extract R

Minister’s Questions, May 20th, 2010. Micheál Martin and Billy Timmins

1. <Deputy Billy Timmins> I thank the Minister for his reply. Can he confirm that he has received a final Garda report on the matter?

2. <Deputy Micheál Martin> No. I have just received the report of the Irish Passport Office.

3. <Deputy Billy Timmins> Very well. Will the Minister consider sharing that report’s contents with Members? Ultimately, the people wish to know who abused and used Irish passports. In addition, is the aforementioned report conclusive? Does the passport service report identify clearly who used Irish passports? The Minister should indicate the current status of the Garda investigation, whether a member of the Garda Síochána travelled to Dubai to carry out part of the investigation and, if not, the reason. If Ireland is serious about this investigation, a member of the Garda would have travelled there. The Minister should also enlighten the House as to the current status of investigations by other countries and whether he has had dealings or bilateral talks with representatives of such countries in respect of information they may have obtained. If individuals or countries are identified as having been behind this action, what steps does the Government propose to take? This is a very serious matter. Much outrage was expressed at that time and I hope it will not be diluted by the passage of time.

4. <Deputy Micheál Martin> I agree with the Deputy that this is a serious matter. I undertake to share the report with the spokespersons present. While there are aspects to the report that I may not be able to publish as so doing in essence would compromise the security of the passport system itself, aside from that I wish to publish as much of the material as possible. It depends on one’s definition of “conclusive”. There are conclusions. Moreover, there have been conclusions to the British Serious
Organised Crime Agency, SOCA, investigation. While its conclusions ultimately may not be definitive, I will cite the former British Foreign Secretary, Mr. David Miliband, who stated: ‘Given that this was a very sophisticated operation in which high quality forgeries were made, the [British] Government judges it highly likely that the forgeries were made by a State intelligence service. Taking this together with other inquiries and the link to Israel established by SOCA, we have concluded that there are compelling reasons to believe that Israel was responsible for the misuse of the British passports’.

That was the British conclusion and was the level of conclusion to which they could arrive. I have been apprised of their report and have seen its essence. While our report makes conclusions, the Garda conclusion is not complete. Obviously, I will talk to the Deputies again in this regard. I hope to make a statement on this matter within the next couple of weeks. Before I make that statement, I will share its content with the Deputies.

Discussion

This exchange is between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and his opposition counterpart, on the subject of the use of Irish passports in the assassination of a Hamas figure in Dubai. This is a subject on which one would expect to find bipartisan agreement in the Irish parliament. This was designated a priority question – a matter of urgent importance. The Minister gives a lengthy reply (29 lines, not included), which outlines the Irish government’s position on the matter. The opposition speech turn opens by thanking the Minster for his reply, and a clarification question is asked. This is answered by the Minister in line 3, which includes the word ‘no’. This is not a denial, however, rather a clarification. The opposition’s first speech turn proper opens with three detailed questions in quick succession; “Will the Minister consider sharing that report’s contents with Members? [. . .] In addition, is the aforementioned report conclusive? Does the passport service report identify clearly who used Irish passports?” (lines4-7). These questions are followed by a series of suggestions to the Minister; “The Minister should indicate the current status of the Garda investigation, whether a member of the Garda Síochána travelled to Dubai to carry out part of the investigation and, if not, the reason. [. . .] The Minister should also enlighten the House as to the current status of investigations” (lines 7-11). These are contentious presuppositions, since they imply that the Minister has not already given this information to the House, which (in the opposition view he should have done). This is followed by another question, in line 13; “If individuals or countries are identified as having been behind this action, what steps does the Government propose to take?” The deputy concludes his speech turn by asserting the gravity of the matter, and implying common ground with the government, by suggesting that all parties involved have the same feelings on this matter.
The Minister opens his speech turn with a gesture towards the positive face of the questioner – he agrees with him; “I agree with the Deputy that this is a serious matter”. He continues with another gesture towards his interlocutor’s positive face, by undertaking to share all information with him. He then goes on to answer specifically one of the questions posed by Deputy Timmins, as he gives details about information shared between the British government and the Irish one on this matter. In this, the Minister actually denies the opposition request (he can’t publish the material asked for), this denial is heavily mitigated – the Minister notes that he wishes to publish the material, and he will publish as much of the material as possible. The denial is also accounted for with an explanation that the Minister can’t compromise the system – an example of self-justification. The Minister concludes his speech turn with two further gestures towards the positive face of the opposition. In line 30, he promises “I will talk to the Deputies again in this regard”, and in line 31 he promises “Before I make that statement, I will share its content with the Deputies”. Clearly, the Minister is reaching out to the opposition here, and attempting to make them feel part of the process of engagement with this issue. This seems to further confirm findings of the corpus chapters (chapters 6 and 7) that subjects on which there is bipartisan agreement are more likely to lead to positive politeness strategies – although the FTAs contained in the opposition speech turn here also must be taken into account. The fact that these face attacks are met with numerous gestures towards the positive face of the questioner again indicates the multifaceted nature of politeness strategies used in the parliamentary setting.

Facework in extract R

- Detailed questions
- Contentious presuppositions
- Gestures towards positive face of questioner
- Self-justification
7.10 Description of British extracts featuring ‘no’

**Extract V**

Minister’s Questions, 18\(^{th}\) March 2010. Paul Clark and David Amess (Conservative).

<Paul Clark> The Department for Transport published its latest assessment of the likely effects of a third runway at Heathrow Airport on local air quality in the "Adding Capacity at Heathrow Airport-Impact Assessment" document in January 2009. A copy of the impact assessment and earlier technical reports on the air quality modelling have all been deposited in the Libraries of the House.

<Mr. Amess> We are already in breach of European air quality directives. Does the Minister not accept that, as a result of the extension of the third runway, air and surface pollution will increase and it will be impossible for us to meet our air quality obligations?

<Paul Clark> No, I do not accept that. When in January 2009 we announced our decision to proceed with the third runway at Heathrow, we made it clear that we would have in place stringent requirements on air and noise pollution. We have worked with the Committee on Climate Change, which has indicated that, even at the most pessimistic level, we would be in a position to meet growth in passenger numbers of some 60 per cent., or a 54 per cent increase in flights. However, we have made it clear that we will have in place a legally binding agreement that there will be no further expansion beyond 2020 without ensuring that we are on target to meet the stringent requirements that we set out.

**Extract W**

Minister’s Questions, January 28\(^{th}\), 2010. Harriet Harman and Andrew Rosindell

<Ms Harriet Harman> Ministers in this House-in particular my hon. Friend the Parliamentary Secretary, Government Equalities Office-and Ministers in the Lords have had a number of discussions with religious and belief groups and have received a number of representations relating to religion or belief since the introduction of the Equality Bill. Such discussions and representations are ongoing.

<Andrew Rosindell> Will the Minister finally admit that were it not for the successful amendment from Baroness O’Cathain in the House of Lords earlier this week, the Equality Bill as unamended would have further restricted employment for people working in religious organisations?

<Ms Harriet Harman> No, it would not. We thought that it would be helpful for everyone involved to clarify the law, and that is what the amendment that we brought forward aimed to do. That amendment was rejected. However, it would be helpful for the House to understand that there are religious jobs and non-religious jobs within organisations. For example, I would say that a pensions assistant...
ensuring that the records database is kept up to date was not doing a religious job. I would also say that issuing and processing invoices, even if it is done in the employment of the Church of England, is not a religious job.

To make it clear, the law applies to religious organisations when they employ people in non-religious jobs in the same way that it does to everyone else. We have always been clear that we are not going to insist on non-discrimination in relation to religious jobs such as being a vicar, a bishop, an imam or a rabbi. The law has stepped back from that and said that religious organisations can decide themselves how to do that. However, when it comes to non-religious jobs, those organisations must comply with the law, and that is how the law remains.

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Extract X


<John Healey> The Department receives a large number of representations on house building. I must tell the hon. Gentleman that almost all of them argue that we should do more to build more homes in all parts of the country, including Lichfield. That is exactly what I have set out to do in my great nine months as Housing Minister.

<Michael Fabricant> Oh good! Anyway, of the 3 million homes, he will know that the Government project that 1 million will be built as affordable homes by 2020, but the Home Builders Federation has said that the Government will achieve less than half that number. Has it got that wrong?

<John Healey> No, the HBF is reflecting the fact that, over the last 12 to 18 months, during the most serious recession in this country for 60 years, private sector house building by the HBF’s members has fallen through the floor. At the same time, instead of stepping back, we have increased the investment in building affordable homes and we will build more this year and next year than in any year since we came to government.

Discussion

The three British extracts featuring ‘no’, extracts V, W and X all include the initial answer from the Minister in question (to a pre-submitted question), followed by a single supplementary question together with the Minister’s reply to the supplementary question. All three questions which feature ‘no’ answers are posed by opposition MPs. As with all other British extracts featured, the structure of all three extracts are very similar to each other; all speech turns are 3-4 lines long, and consist of one or two sentences. In the first extract, the Minister gives some basic information about air quality and a potential third runway at
Heathrow airport. The opposition supplementary opens with the MP criticising the government’s performance in this area, in line 5; “we are already in breach of European air quality directives”, an FTA contained in the preface. This is followed by a question which directly links the government’s policy with increased pollution—a conflictual question, where all possible responses by the Minister are potentially damaging. The Minister replies by directly rejecting the assertion in the opposition supplementary; “no, I do not accept that”, line 8. This is followed by a defence of government performance in this area, in lines 8-15. This defence involves giving detailed statistics in this area. This defence involves both defending the government’s record to date, and also pointing to the government’s future plans in this area.

Extract W is a discussion on an Equality Bill introduced by the Labour government, and the implications this Bill has for religious groups. In Ireland, such a discussion would be expected to be bipartisan, but in Britain there are some differences between the Conservative and Labour positions on this matter. The Minister confirms that the government is discussing the Equality Bill with religious groups. The opposition speech turn is a single, lengthy question, which attacks the government directly - “Will the government finally admit”?, (line 6, italics added); another conflictual question, which the government cannot answer without acknowledging previous mistakes. The Minister robustly defends the government performance in her response to the supplementary. The question is flatly rebutted, in line 9; “no, it would not”. This is followed by a lengthy (12 line) defence of the British government position, which includes detailed information on what the government’s position is. It also includes examples of how the government Bill would affect various people.

Extract X is an exchange on house-building, and the opening speech turn from the Minister involves him pointing out that almost every MP wants more homes built in their constituency, and points out that he has been Housing Minister for a total of nine months—an example of self-justification. The second sentence of the opposition speech turn involves the opposition MP pointing to statistics from the Home Builders Federation which contradict government predictions. The Minister is then asked “Has it got that wrong?”. This is an attempt to trap the government into criticising a third party, or else acknowledge that the government’s data is incorrect—another conflictual question. The Minister, as in the previous British examples featuring ‘no’, robustly rebuts the assertion in the supplementary question. In lines 8-10 he attempts to place the competing statistics in context. His speech turn concludes with a defence of the government’s performance, and talks up the government’s
positive face; “we have increased the investment in building affordable homes and we will build more this year and next year than in any year since we came to government”.

Facework in British exchanges featuring ‘no’

- Question preface attack government positive face (extracts V, W)
- Conflictual question (extract V, W, X)
- Rebuttal of opposition assertion (extracts V, W, X)
- Talking up of government’s positive face (extracts V, W, X)
- Self-justification (extract X)

7.11 Discussion

The analysis contained in this chapter appears to confirm the findings of the corpus-based analysis in chapter 5; ‘please’ and ‘I thank’ are often used as ostensible mitigation devices in the parliamentary setting. Of the six uses of ‘please’ examined here (three from Ireland and three from Britain), it could be argued that five of the six uses (extract B, C, G, H, I) are in the context of hostile questions. Of the six uses of ‘I thank’, two (extract F, K) are immediately followed by FTAs. As noted in chapter 5, there is clearly a systematic use to these forms at certain times during QT exchanges. What should also be noted are the strong similarities between the two settings, in terms of the co-construction of institutional identities, indicating that despite the oppositional nature of exchanges during QT, both questioners and Ministers are jointly engaged in the co-construction of discourse practices. These exchanges clearly show a mutual understanding between the questioners and Ministers. Both speakers in the exchanges (both in Ireland and Britain) display a clear understanding of their roles (and the limits of these roles), and they display mutual co-operation in the performance of their ostensibly oppositional roles.

The most obvious point of difference between the Irish and the British setting is the greater structural rigidity evident in the Westminster exchanges. All exchanges analysed from the British setting are structured identically; the questions follow exactly the structure outlined by Harris (2001); all questions consist of a brief proposition followed by an interrogative. All speech turns in Westminster consist of 5-8 lines, with opposition speech turns invariably concluding with a single interrogative. The Irish exchanges, on the other hand, are much
more varied in structure. All of the Irish exchanges feature multiple interrogatives during opposition speech turns, while one of the Irish exchanges (extract B) is opened by a succession of questions to the Minister, with no initial propositions. The length of Irish speech turns varies greatly, from single sentences to lengthy speeches. Two of the Irish exchanges (extract C, F) feature interjections from the Ceann Comhairle (attempting to keep discussions focused on the question at hand), while none of the British extracts feature the Speaker of the House. This is particularly evident when one examines the particular context of ‘yes’ and ‘no’ sentences in these exchanges. The length of reply in the Irish exchanges featuring ‘yes’ and ‘no’ vary from single word ‘yes’ (exchange O) to lengthy replies featuring ‘no’ (exchange P). This confirms the findings of chapters 5 and 6, that there is a strong link between the rules of the speech event and the language used in the speech event, and that there is greater flexibility of speech turns, speech lengths and language in Ireland (this was also noted in the preliminary study discussed in chapter 1).

7.11.1 FTAs in QT

Tables 7.1 and 7.2 summarise the FTAs (performed by the opposition) identified during exchanges examined in this chapter, as well as the responses by government to these FTAs.

Table 7.1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Face-threatening acts (FTAs) by questioners in Dáil Eireann and Westminster QT</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflictual question</td>
<td>F, O, Q</td>
<td>V, W, X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contentious presupposition</td>
<td>C, N, R</td>
<td>J, K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Invitation to government to perform FDR</td>
<td>F, N, P</td>
<td>L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Detailed question</td>
<td>B, C, M, N, P, Q, R</td>
<td>K</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aside</td>
<td>Q</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.2

Responses to Face-threatening acts (FTAs) by ministers in Dáil Eireann and Westminster QT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attacks opposition</td>
<td>A, N</td>
<td>G, J, L, X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results are similar for FTAs performed by ministers in both settings, and results are also similar for responses to FTAs in both settings. This analysis clearly substantiates to some degree the findings of previous researchers (Harris, 2001; Fenton-Smith, 2008; Bull and Wells, 2011) that face aggravation is a significant feature of QT. This study confirms that FTAs are central to parliamentary discourse, particularly during QT. These findings on FTAs substantiate recent work by Bull and Wells (2011), and indicate that their taxonomy of how FTAs are performed during QT has some validity.

At this point, it is useful to return to the notion of Community of Practice (CoP), discussed in the literature review section of this thesis (section 2.2.1), and which is central to Harris’s 2001 paper. One of Harris’s central findings was that “Members of Parliament as a community of practice clearly perceive that the main role of the political opposition is to oppose, i.e. to criticize, challenge, ridicule, subvert, etc. the policies and positions of the government” (Harris, 2001: 466). This is clearly seen in the qualitative data examined in this research. The number and range of FTAs utilised in both the Irish and British settings indicate that linguistic behaviour such as challenging and rebutting are central to QT. Indeed, as de Ayala has noted, face-threatening behaviour actually enables the system of QT to work. Language which in other contexts might be considered impolite (for example, “tinkering with the system”, from extract N) is apparently sanctioned (and potentially rewarded) in this particular CoP. There is a legitimate expectation from participants in this CoP that there will be robust exchanges, and these exchanges will involve criticism of the professional
performance of the opposing side of the chamber. This is equally true of both the Irish and British data. Although there are subtle differences in the range and variety of FTAs utilised in both settings, these may be accounted for by referring to the structural differences between the settings. For instance, in Britain, a FTA is more likely to appear in the preface to a question, whereas in Ireland, a detailed question is more likely to occur. This may be accounted for by the greater structural rigidity in the British setting, as well as the multiple questions which feature in many of the Irish speech turns.

It is also clear from this qualitative data that the question/answer framework which underlies QT is familiar to all participants. Particularly in the British setting, all speech turns (from the opposition) contain an interrogative. Sandra Harris (2001) notes that seeing QT as a CoP enables the researcher to account for both the predictability and spontaneity which occurs in highly structured discourse events such as QT. Despite the lengthy speech turns in the Irish setting, it is clear that participants are familiar with the underlying structure of QT, and attempt to follow that structure by, for example, ending speech turns with an interrogative. There are only two exchanges which feature interjections from the Ceann-Comhairle, in exchanges C and N (although exchange C does contain numerous interjections). None of the British exchanges feature interjections from the Speaker of the House.

Numerous researchers (Watts, 2003; Bousfield, 2008; Culpeper, 2010; Bull and Wells, 2011) have pointed out that deliberately adversarial discourse is not well-served by the politeness theory of Brown and Levinson, which assumes that FTAs are avoided by rational speakers. This research confirms those earlier findings, to some degree – clearly, the deliberate performance of FTAs is central to QT, and, as de Ayala points out, “politeness strategies are not the linguistic means necessary to avoid conflict, QT is conflict. Politeness strategies become the means at the Chamber’s disposal to be able to work and progress” (2001: 164). Harris, similarly, notes that “systematic impoliteness is not only sanctioned in Prime Minister’s Question Time but is rewarded in accordance with the expectations of the Members of the House and the overhearing audience” (2001: 466). These findings indicate that this is equally true of the Irish setting as it is of the British setting.
7.11.2 Positive politeness strategies in QT

Having examined FTAs during QT in both Ireland and Britain, a categorisation of positive politeness strategies aimed at the opposing side of the house was also drawn up. These are tables 7.3 and 7.4, below.

**Table 7.3**

Usage of positive politeness strategies by questioners in Dáil Eireann and Westminster QT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gives thanks to Minister</td>
<td>M, O, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments Minister's personal face</td>
<td>B, D,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signals co-operation/common ground with government</td>
<td>D, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments government action</td>
<td>E,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 7.4**

Usage of positive politeness strategies by ministers in Dáil Eireann and Westminster QT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ireland</th>
<th>Britain</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Compliments questioner</td>
<td>D, N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compliments opposition proposal/idea</td>
<td>A, D, E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Signals co-operation/common ground with questioner</td>
<td>A, D, E, N, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Praise for questioner’s sincerity/motive</td>
<td>D, M, P, R</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This research appears to indicate a deficiency in previous research concerning politeness in the QT setting. All previous studies have indicated that, in de Ayala’s words (2001: 163), “face-work in the chamber has as its main purpose to attack and threaten the opponent’s public face [. . .] there is consensus to threaten the public face of the adversary, because FTAs are at the very heart of the genre”. Although de Ayala does note that politicians can distinguish between public and private face, (which enables robust exchanges to take place during QT without personal offence being taken, in her view), this study has indicated that facework during QT is a more complex phenomenon than previously indicated. Some of the most significant positive politeness strategies identified here include

- claiming common ground with the opposition’s point of view
- compliments/jokes aimed at expressing personal solidarity
- acknowledging good work by opposing side

This research indicates that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory is still a helpful framework for examining politeness during QT; however, there is little doubt that this theory needs to be supplemented with other frameworks, to account for the numerous FTAs which are common in the parliamentary setting.

Of significance to this research, however, is the fact that there is a large difference to be seen between the two settings when one examines positive politeness strategies aimed at the opposing side of the house. There are more than three times as many of these in the Irish setting as in the British setting, and this is common to both opposition speech turns and ministerial speech turns. It is notable that of the 12 British exchanges examined in detail, only 2 feature a positive politeness strategy aimed at the face of the government. In exchange J, the opposition MP welcomes a Bill generally (a gesture towards the government’s positive face), before noting some concerns she has with the Bill. Similarly, in exchange L, the opposition MP’s reply thanks the Minister for his ‘comprehensive’ reply, before acknowledging common ground with the Minister; “the ineffectiveness of short custodial sentences, which we both agree about”. This gesture, however, is mitigated by the remainder of the reply, which goes on to criticise the government – “[This] is not remedied by . . .”. There are no unambiguous, unmitigated gestures towards the positive face of the government by the opposition in the twelve British exchanges examined here. In the Irish exchanges, in contrast, there are many more positive politeness strategies utilised by the opposition, and
although these gestures are often mitigated and qualified (exchanges D, E, R), there are also a
number of unambiguous compliments aimed at the government (exchanges B, D, R).

A similar pattern can be observed in the positive politeness strategies employed by ministers – there are many more such strategies in the Irish setting than the British one. In particular, paying compliments to the ideas of the opposition occurs 3 times in the Irish setting, yet not at all in Westminster. In exchange A, for example, despite a very hostile speech turn from the opposition, the minister in question notes that there is value in the opposition’s proposals, and acknowledges the work of the opposition in this area. Similarly, in exchange D, there is notable warmth in the minister’s words towards the opposition; “I have not seen Deputy Costello’s Bill but I will have it examined. I am aware of his experience, which is similar to my own in drugs task force areas, and that would inform some of our thinking [ . . . ] If Deputy Wall is aware of measures in the draft Bill that can inform, advise and strengthen the legislation I wish to advance, he should bring them to my attention and I will take them on board”. The signalling of common ground with the opposition is also much more common in the Irish data, and is entirely unambiguous. In the British data, one of the three occasions where the minister acknowledges common ground with the opposition is somewhat qualified (exchange H, where the Minister notes “I am very happy to look into any real concerns the hon. Gentleman has”, italics added). In addition, in extract K, whether the Minister is genuinely concerned with the dental needs of his opponent is perhaps questionable. Chapter 3 of this thesis also noted a tendency in Irish English towards greater consensus building than in other varieties of English, again possibly due to a post-colonial heritage and sense of shared enterprise. There is some evidence for this tendency in the exchanges analysed here. One of the Irish extracts (extract B) includes some affectionate, jocular remarks about the opposing TD, while one of the Irish extracts (extract D) involves a number of personal compliments aimed at anointing the face of the opposing TD (these compliments emanate from both government and opposition). In contrast, there are no such unambiguous expressions of personal warmth in the British exchanges (notwithstanding the ostensible concern for his opponent’s dental needs expressed by the Minister in extract K). In fact, two of the British extracts (extract J, L) feature unsolicited FTAs by Ministers in response to non-face-threatening remarks from the opposition – a feature that is entirely absent from the Irish extracts.

When seeking to account for the difference in positive politeness strategies between the two settings, again a CoP approach may be useful. As Harris noted in her 2001 paper on QT,
viewing parliamentary discourse through a CoP approach takes into account the historical continuity and background of the discourse event. Some of the historical differences between Dáil Éireann and Westminster may explain the differences in positive politeness strategies noted here. Bayley (2004: 14) points out that the political system, the shape, size and functions of the national parliament, and the voting system of a particular country cannot be ignored when examining the linguistic behaviour of politicians in that country. This may well partly explain the frequency of positive politeness strategies in the Irish setting. As noted in section 1.2 of this thesis, Ireland has a relatively unique system of voting, PR-STV, which tends to lead to coalition governments; Ireland has not had a single-party government since the early 1980s. Together with the lack of clear ideological differences between the main Irish political parties (as noted in section 1.2 and section 5.4), this may account for the greater frequency of positive politeness strategies in the Irish setting.

Another factor which has to be borne in mind is the smaller size of the Irish parliament, which has 166 TDs, compared with more than 600 MPs in Westminster. Although this doesn’t appear to cause any differences in the frequency or type of FTAs seen in the two settings examined here, it may lead to Irish politicians seeking to make gestures towards the positive face of their interlocutor, since they are more likely to have a personal relationship with their opponent. Many visitors to Dáil Éireann (including this researcher, when interviewing Dáil Éireann editors for this research) have noted the small size of Leinster House, and the clubbable atmosphere in the corridors around the parliamentary chamber in Ireland. As noted in section 2.1, Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory holds that one of the key variables which people consider when selecting politeness strategies is social distance. In the Irish setting, politicians may perceive social distance as being less than British politicians at Westminster do. This may well be a factor influencing Irish politicians to use positive politeness strategies during QT. Thus, although both Dáil Éireann and the House of Commons have many similarities as CoPs, there are also differences in the historical background to QT in both settings, which may account for some of differing discourse practices which occur in these settings.

### 7.12 Conclusion

The research discussed in this chapter has revealed that facework during QT is a complex and multi-faceted phenomenon. It is certainly true that FTAs are central to this particular
discourse event, and it appears that FTAs are not used in a notably different way in the Irish setting to the British setting. However, there is strong evidence that positive politeness strategies (aimed at the opposing side of the house) are much more common in the Irish setting. As noted in previous chapters, the difference in format between Dáil Eireann and Westminster cannot be overlooked. In Dáil Eireann, six minutes are allocated per question; in Britain, two minutes per question are allowed. This strict time limit in Westminster unquestionably has a constraining effect on discourse practices in that setting, while the longer time allowed per question in the Irish setting allows for a certain freedom of expression which may manifest itself in veering off-topic (hence Ceann Comhairle interjections) and, on occasion, multiple questions occurring in a speech turn. It is possible, therefore, that the longer time allocated per question in the Irish setting (6 minutes as opposed to 2 minutes) allows for a greater spread of politeness strategies to be used. This may well account for some of the difference noted here between the two settings - although it should also be noted that this structural difference doesn’t appear to lead to any difference in the number of FTAs performed, which is virtually identical in both settings.

This research, then, offers some support to previous studies in the fields of politeness and parliamentary discourse – it supports the findings of Harris (2001), Fenton-Smith (2008), and Bull and Wells (2011) that face aggravation and FTAs are a significant feature of QT. This chapter also indicates that their research is somewhat incomplete, however, as they primarily focus on FTAs, and do not fully examine positive politeness strategies. This research has indicated that there are interesting findings to be discovered when one examines positive politeness in the parliamentary setting. This research, then, indicates that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory may still be of value when analysing discourse, even in a setting such as QT, where it might be expected to be of limited value.
Chapter 8 – Conclusion

Within the discourse types studied here [QT], polite phraseologies, while superficially expressing distance and deference, are seen to perform a variety of overlapping functions including: showing awareness of the discourse norms, allowing the participant to be “consciously aggressive in acceptable way” (Locher 2004: 90), demonstrating that the participant can ‘handle it’ (Mullany 2002), and marking sections of the interaction for attention (Taylor, 2011: 32)

Question Time is a face-threatening genre, with a high frequency of FTAs, counterbalanced by a high production of politeness strategies (de Ayala, 2001: 165)

8.1 Summary

As noted in the opening section of this thesis, the three broad aims of this research were as follows;

1. To reveal whether a corpus compiled from the Official Report of Dáil Eireann is a suitable resource for linguistic research and to investigate the potential usefulness of corpus approaches to politeness in an institutional context.
2. To reveal how the linguistic tokens (a) ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ are used during Dáil Eireann QT, and how this differs from House of Commons QT
3. To investigate facework during Dáil Eireann QT by focusing on FTAs and positive politeness strategies (which feature the same tokens as mentioned in the previous aim) in this setting, and by comparing findings with similar exchanges in the British setting.
The opening chapter of this thesis outlined the broad structure of this thesis, defined the primary and secondary research questions which guide this research, and introduced and described the Question Time Corpora (QTC). Chapters 2 and 3 situated this research in the fields of politeness studies, Irish English, political discourse and corpus linguistics, and described related literature in these fields which has informed this research. Chapter 4 described a preliminary study undertaken with the aim of examining the linguistic accuracy of the Official Report, and hence reveal whether the Official Report can be used as a resource by the corpus linguist. Chapters 5 and 6 examined the QTC in some detail for the politeness tokens ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, as well as the tokens ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to yes/no questions. Chapter 7 extended the research further by examining these tokens in specific exchanges, and examining these exchanges for some aspects of facework (specifically FTAs and positive politeness strategies) during these exchanges. This chapter brings together the findings from these chapters, and revisits the research questions guiding this investigation. As seen in section 1.1.1 of this thesis, the research questions guiding this study are comprised of five primary research questions, as well as some secondary research questions. Each of these will be discussed individually in this concluding chapter, in the following section.

8.1.1 The research questions revisited

The first question posed in this research was;

“How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary discourse?”

A number of secondary questions (from section 1.1.1) are also related to this question;

“Are the official Irish parliamentary transcripts a suitable resource for the corpus linguist? Are biases evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors, as has been found to be the case with the British Hansard? How does this affect the final product in Ireland?”

These questions have primarily been answered in chapter 4. This investigation (in its entirety, not merely the preliminary study focused on transcription) appears to answer the primary research question in the affirmative; it does indeed appear to be feasible to investigate politeness strategies in this context through a corpus linguistics framework, provided the
caveats noted in chapter 4 are noted and taken into account. As such, findings from this study replicate almost exactly the findings from a very recent study in the same area;

With reference to the secondary aim of exploring the interrelationship between (im)politeness studies and corpus linguistics, corpus study offers a relevant input which goes beyond functioning as a resource bank. Corpus-assisted discourse study may contribute not only to facilitating the identification of patterns of usage in specified contexts, but also to offering a less researcher-centred identification of potential (im)politeness events. However, the importance of combining the qualitative and quantitative aspects cannot be underestimated and there is still much research to be done in this area.

(Taylor, 2011; 32).

This study has also combined qualitative and quantitative aspects, by focusing first on corpus findings before examining lengthy extracts selected at random from the QTC, and identifying politeness strategies utilised during these exchanges. In tandem with the investigation of transcription issues in the Irish setting, it is clear that a corpus built from Official Report transcripts can indeed be a useful resource for the corpus linguist, provided the researcher is aware of the inconsistent nature of the Official Report, and the researcher balances qualitative and quantitative approaches successfully. It is also suggested that the corpus researcher speaks to those responsible for the production of the parliamentary transcripts, if possible. This enables the corpus researcher to have a fuller understanding of the production values behind the transcripts. The answer to the primary research question, then, is that in Ireland the Official Report is somewhat suitable for corpus linguistics research, but with some significant qualifications. The investigation carried out for this research led to findings for the Irish setting which essentially replicate findings from previous research in the British setting; orality features and some grammatical features (such as modal verbs, pronouns and terms of address) are not recorded accurately in official parliamentary transcripts. It appears that lexical features (nouns and main verbs) are essentially unchanged. There appears to be a tendency in this Irish study to formalise language, by following some rather prescriptive rules, such as a preference for single-word verbs to phrasal verbs. An inconsistent approach to the transcription of pronouns was noted. This investigation also revealed that the tokens focused on in this study (‘please’, ‘thank you’, ‘yes’ and ‘no’) appear to recorded faithfully in the Official Report.

The secondary research questions related to the subject of transcription and the production of the Official Report has shown that Dáil Eireann reporters appear to possess similar biases to
reporters in other countries, particularly Britain. Results from this investigation replicate exactly the findings of Mollin (2007) and Slembrouck (1992); reporters attempt to “clean up” the performance characteristics of spoken language, and bring language closer to an idealised, formal British English. This study has gone further than previous studies in this field, by interviewing a Dáil Eireann editor, and by examining recruitment material and training documents utilised by Dáil Eireann reporters. This additional research has confirmed that Dáil Eireann reporters do deliberately change language on occasion; “In terms of what Members say, nothing is deleted aside from excess or repetitive verbiage. We stay true to the speaker’s style, applying our style guidelines and ensuring correct grammatical and syntactical presentation.” (Appendix A, page xvi). This has answered the secondary research question, by confirming that there is a bias towards one particular form of English (what might be called ‘standard British English’) among Dáil Eireann reporters – a bias which is similar to that shown by their British counterparts.

Observing that Dáil Eireann reporters do make changes to the language used in the parliamentary setting is not intended as a criticism of these reporters, of course; as noted in chapter 4, these reporters are not linguists and are primarily concerned with the historical record rather than absolute linguistic accuracy. However, on at least one occasion there has been controversy related to the transcription of language used in Dáil Eireann. An Irish Times story in May 2011 related an episode which occurred in Dáil Eireann in 1984, when U.S. President Ronald Reagan was about to address the Dáil. Before President Reagan spoke, a backbench TD stood up (without being called by the Ceann Comhairle), and made very specific allegations about Ronald Reagan’s foreign policy, “which were clearly audible to all in the chamber” (Daly, 2011). This short speech by the parliamentarian is described in the Official Report as “interruptions”; the Irish Times questioned why the specific words of the TD were not recorded, and suggested that this may be due to political bias on the part of Dáil Eireann reporters and editors. This episode illustrates that there is further work to be done on the question of transcription policy in Dáil Eireann; in particular, there may be scope for a further study into political biases on the part of reporters in this setting.

The second primary research question guiding this research was;

“What does a corpus-based analysis of certain politeness markers (‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and ‘yes’ and ‘no’ in response to yes/no interrogatives) during QT in Dáil Eireann reveal, when compared to a similar setting, QT in the House of Commons in England?”
This question has been comprehensively answered in chapters 5 and 6 of this thesis. These chapters have confirmed the differing conventions which have built up in both settings over time, and have confirmed that there is much greater use of formal language in the British setting – for example, the use of ‘please’ to keep order in the Irish setting (rather than ‘order’), the occasional use of ‘thank you’ to the Ceann Comhairle in the Irish setting, and the frequent use of ‘I am grateful to [the honorary member]’ in the British setting rather than ‘I thank the deputy’ in Dáil Éireann. The relative degree of informality in Irish English when compared with British English has been noted by many researchers, of course (Kallen, 2005; Hickey, 2007; Amador-Moreno, 2010; Murphy and Farr, 2012), and it is evident to even the casual observer of parliamentary discourse that there is a much greater degree of formal language use in Westminster than in Dáil Éireann. This is still a significant finding from this study, however; as noted in the literature review of this thesis (chapter 2), one of the advantages of corpus linguistics is that this methodology can provide ‘scientific’ proof, since corpus findings are open to objective verification. As such, this study has shown that, even in the institutional setting of Ireland’s national parliament, there is much less use of formal language structures than there is in the British parliament. There are also other findings from the corpus dimension of this research which are evident to the casual observer, but which have not been objectively confirmed until now; the occasional use of the Irish language (in this case, go raibh maith agat) as an in-group identity marker, and, in the British setting, the finding that ‘friendly’ questions (from the same side of the House) lead overwhelmingly to ‘yes’ responses while ‘friendly’ questions never lead to ‘no’ responses. In the Irish setting, there is occasional use of single-word ‘yes’ and ‘no’ responses, which appears to be face-threatening in this context, since there is an expectation in Irish settings that one-word ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answers may be somewhat insufficient, at least when compared to other varieties of English. Finally, corpus findings from this investigation have revealed that the topic under discussion is also central to how language is used in both settings. Ideological differences seem to lead to face-threatening language in the British setting (for example, on European affairs), whereas in the Irish setting face-threatening language is more likely to occur on issues related to day-to-day management and competence. Again, this finding confirms what has long been suspected, but up until now had yet to be objectively proven.

The third primary research question guiding this research was;

“Are there differences in politeness strategies employed during exchanges which include the linguistic tokens (a) ‘please’ and ‘thank you’, and (b) ‘yes’ and ‘no’ during Dáil Éireann QT,
and to investigate how these politeness strategies differ in exchanges during House of Commons Question Time?“.

Some of the secondary research questions are closely related to this question;

“Are there similarities and differences between the usage of FTAs in Dáil Éireann and Westminster during Question Time? Are there similarities and differences between positive politeness strategies utilised in these two settings?”

These questions have been addressed in chapter 7 of this thesis, and a number of interesting findings were noted. Face-threatening acts (FTAs) in both settings from both opposition and government were identified and categorised, based in part on previous categorisations from Bull and Wells (2010) and Chilton (2005). It was seen that the type and frequency of FTAs in both settings was virtually identical, confirming the hypothesis that FTAs are central to discourse during QT. This confirms the findings of a number of previous researchers (Harris, 2001, 2003; de Ayala, 2001; Bull and Wells, 2010). It also confirms the central finding of Harris (2001: 466), that FTAs are not just central to QT, they are expected, sanctioned and rewarded in this discourse event. This chapter also examined positive politeness strategies used by government and opposition in both settings. There were significant differences noted here. Positive politeness strategies aimed at the face of the interlocutor are rarely seen in the British setting – in total, there are 7 examples found in this investigation. On the other hand, positive politeness strategies aimed at the interlocutor of the speaker are much more frequent in the Irish setting – there are 22 examples of these found in the exchanges examined here. These include signalling co-operation with the other side of the chamber, offering compliments to the other side, and giving praise to the other side. In the Irish setting, these co-exist side-by-side with FTAs. This is the most significant difference noted in this study between the Irish and the British setting, and clearly indicates differing norms between the two settings.

8.2 Concluding interpretations of the research

The final two primary research questions are particularly significant when concluding this research, and when coming to final conclusions and interpretations of what this research signifies. One of the research questions which this study addressed was;
“Is politeness theory (specifically Brown and Levinson’s terminology of positive and negative face, and face-threatening acts) a useful analytical framework for examining language use in Dáil Éireann? Does impoliteness research have a role to play in examining language use in this setting?”

It is clear that Brown and Levinson’s politeness theory has much to offer the linguist examining discourse during QT. This is evident from the number of studies in recent years (Taylor, 2011; Bull and Wells, 2011; Ambuyo, et al., 2011; Bull and Fetzer, 2010) which have examined politeness during QT using Brown and Levinson’s terminology of positive and negative face, facework, and FTAs. This research has added to these studies, and has extended this discussion to the Irish context. The description and discussion of positive politeness strategies and FTAs during QT in Ireland and Britain has noted some significant differences between the two settings; clearly this is a useful analytical framework for examining language use in Dáil Éireann.

Findings from both chapters indicate that Link and Kreuz’ theory of ‘ostensible mitigation’ (2005) is useful when examining language in this setting; ‘please’ and ‘thank you’ are often used both to draw attention to the unsatisfactory nature of the interlocutor’s response, as well as simultaneously mitigating a request, or acknowledging an answer. This is clear when one examines the hostile language that often follows ‘I thank’, and when one sees that ‘please’ is often used to make a question more forceful, and to draw attention to the question form. Similarly, when ‘yes’ is used in response to an opposition question (in both settings), it is often followed by hostile language. This finding echoes findings from a recent study in the same area of discourse; “in certain contexts some ‘polite’ phraseologies have become so conventionalised that, like Hacker, most competent English speakers would be primed, in Hoey’s sense (2005), to treat them as discourse markers indicating that a (possibly avoidable) face threat is about to follow” (Taylor, 2011: 2). It is suggested that Karen Tracy’s terminology of ‘reasonable hostility’ can help to account for how language is used during QT in both Ireland and Britain, and the exchanges examined in this study fulfil the criteria which Tracy identified as necessary for language use to be considered as ‘reasonably hostile’ (Tracy, 2008).

It is also clear that impoliteness research has a role to play in examining linguistic behaviour during QT, both in Ireland and in Britain. As noted in chapter 7 of this thesis, this research clearly substantiates the findings of previous researchers (Harris, 2001; Fenton-Smith, 2008;
Bull and Wells, 2011) that face aggravation is a significant feature of QT. As Bull and Wells (2011: 15) point out, QT “may be regarded as another exemplar of situations described by Culpeper in which impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but central to the interaction that takes place”. Harris, similarly, notes that “systematic impoliteness is not only sanctioned in Prime Minister’s QT but is rewarded in accordance with the expectations of the Members of the House and the overhearing audience” (2001: 466). Once this is taken into account, it is clear that although impoliteness research has a role to play in examining language use during QT, the fact that FTAs are sanctioned, expected and (occasionally) rewarded in this setting indicates that impoliteness theory needs to be supplemented by other theories when examining language use during QT. However, there are certainly occasions during QT when impoliteness seems to appear; this takes the form of heightened language use. For instance, in the Irish exchanges examined in chapter 7, there are phrases such as “The Minister should stop putting up straw men” (exchange C), and “They really amounted to tinkering with the system” (exchange N). The fact that this language does not lead to any breakdown in communication (the language is not even commented on) indicates again that a certain amount of ‘face-attack’ is sanctioned and expected during QT. It is often difficult to assess, of course, whether offence is taken to such language, since this thesis is based on a corpus, and doesn’t have access to other paralinguistic information.

Concluding interpretations of the research are closely related to the final primary research question;

“where differences occur in the use of politeness tokens and politeness strategies between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?”

It is clear that this study has revealed differences between the Irish and British settings, in the use of politeness tokens and politeness strategies. Accounting for these differences is, by its very nature, speculative, and any conclusions need to be treated with caution. Nevertheless, there are some possible reasons for the differences noted here. Before attempting to interpret these differences, one must again bear in mind some of the structural differences between the two settings; in particular, the shorter time allocated to questions in the British setting (2 minutes as opposed to 6 minutes) must be remembered, as must the factor of ‘friendly’ questions from the government’s own party, which are a significant feature in the British setting (although these ‘friendly’ questions have been omitted from the politeness strategies analysis contained in this study). These structural differences have been highlighted in a
small-scale preliminary study which is discussed in the opening chapter of this thesis. Two possible reasons for differences between the Irish and the British setting include;

- Greater use of formal language in the British setting has been noted, as well as greater flexibility of speech turns, speech lengths and language in the Irish setting – there appears to be a greater tolerance of rule-breaking and disregard of convention in the Irish setting. As seen in chapter 3 of this thesis, Ireland’s complex history with England and the English language has informed the Irish use of English in many ways. This post-colonial heritage has also been posited as a reason for Ireland’s seemingly greater tolerance of flexibility, occasional rule-breaking and a greater likelihood of challenging or subverting authority. Perhaps Ireland’s post-colonial heritage should be considered as a possible reason for the greater flexibility and apparent rule-breaking, as well as the greater informality seen during QT in Ireland when compared to QT in Britain. An examination of the post-colonial nature of Irish society is much beyond the scope of this work, of course; indeed, there is much recent debate as to whether Ireland can even be considered a post-colonial nation (Hickey, 2007; Amador-Moreno, 2010). This factor should still be borne in mind by the linguist examining language in the Irish setting, however.

- As noted in chapter 2 of this thesis, the most significant study of politeness in Ireland (‘Politeness in Ireland’, by Jeffrey Kallen) indicated a strong preference by Irish speakers for positive politeness strategies aimed at the face of their interlocutor. This has been supported by the findings of this research. Findings from both the corpus research and the investigation into politeness strategies also support the argument of Coakley (2010: 55), who identifies what he calls ‘personalism’ as a central and defining feature of Irish political culture. As noted in chapter 1 of this thesis (section 1.2), Coakley describes this personalism as a pattern of social relations where people are valued for who they are and whom they know, rather than being valued for the position they hold or the qualifications they may have. The central aspects of this personalism are a closely integrated pattern of social and political relationships, and often lead to brokerage politics – not always with positive consequences, of course (Coakley, 2010: 55). Again, this may well account for the greater preponderance of positive politeness strategies in the Irish setting, as well as the more informal use of language, and the occasional use of the Irish language (in the case of *go raibh maith agat*) which are to be found in Dáil Éireann.
This study has suggested (chapter 7) that viewing Dáil Eireann and Westminster as a community of practice can help to account for some of the differences noted in language use between the two settings. It is suggested in chapter 7 that a CoP approach marks the smaller size of the Irish parliament and the greater likelihood of coalition governments in the Irish setting as significant background features which can impact upon language use in that setting. This study suggests that utilising a CoP approach can help to identify what is acceptable linguistic behaviour during QT, and when these expectations are violated.

8.3 Future research

This research has clarified how certain politeness tokens and certain politeness strategies are used in Dáil Eireann during QT. It has been seen that there are significant differences in politeness strategies between Dáil Eireann and Westminster, at least during QT. This study has raised issues for consideration in the fields of politeness, Irish English, political discourse and corpus-based discourse studies. This study has examined certain specific politeness tokens, and certain specific politeness strategies during QT. Further research could extend this further, and examine in more detail other politeness tokens, or other politeness strategies during QT. For instance, Taylor (2011) has examined negative politeness forms during Prime Minister’s QT in Britain, including markers for negative politeness, such as phrases like ‘with respect’. An investigation into tokens such as these would be suitable for corpus-based analysis, perhaps in a framework similar to this study (which first examines quantitative results for the tokens, before examining the tokens in context). The accuracy of the parliamentary transcripts must always be borne in mind, however; Taylor’s study, which is based on a corpus built from the official Hansard transcript in Britain, also focuses in part on vocatives and terms of address – this research, and earlier studies in this field (Mollin, 2007; Slemrouck, 1992) clearly indicates that such a study may well be based on flawed data.

This research has focused only on QT in Dáil Eireann, partly because of the large number of previous studies focused on politeness during QT in other countries. It would, however, be interesting and instructive to compare politeness norms and strategies across a range of discourse events in the same legislative setting. Although a study on politeness in parliamentary debates is likely to provide limited material to the linguist (due to lengthy, scripted, speech turns and the relative lack of interactivity between speakers), a comparison
between QT and Dáil Eireann committee work may be instructive. Bayley (2004: 2) notes that
discourse in the parliamentary chamber may be more adversarial than discourse in
committees, which are more likely to be co-operative, in part because the public at large (and
the media) are less likely to pay significant attention to committee work. This may well
reveal information about whether politeness strategies during QT are aimed at the face of the
wider audience, rather than that of the interlocutor of the speaker.

Two relatively recent technological developments may influence future research in studies of
this type. Firstly, it is interesting to note that the great majority of historical Dáil Eireann
debates (including QT) are now online. These historical archives are freely available to view
online, and should prove to be an invaluable resource to the corpus linguist. One question
relating to politeness and QT which would be fascinating to investigate relates to the move to
broadcasting parliamentary procedures on RTE television during the 1990s. Did this move to
broadcasting change the discourse patterns and the politeness norms during QT? It has been
observed anecdotally (Paxman, 2002) that once Prime Minister’s QT began to be broadcast
on national television in Britain during the 1990s, this discourse event became notably more
aggressive – a factor that Paxman claims is due to politicians ‘performing’ for the television
cameras and the wider audience. This has also been noted (of British political discourse) by
observation about the Irish parliament. Thanks to the nature of corpus linguistics, these
observations are now open to verifiable proof or refutation. This is an example of where
historical corpus linguistics can meet current parliamentary discourse, opening up a new field
of study and potentially very interesting findings.

A second technological development (in very recent times), which may prove of significance
to the corpus linguist and which is directly related to the question of building a corpus from
parliamentary transcripts, is the development of Oireachtas TV, a satellite television channel
which began broadcasting in November 2011. At the time of writing, this satellite channel
had more than 20,000 unique subscribers (Slattery, 2012), making it a somewhat surprising
success. This channel broadcasts all Oireachtas activity, including Seanad debates and
committee sittings, which of course makes it a wonderful resource for the corpus linguist who
is concerned about the accuracy of the Official Report. In future, it should be possible to
make a large-scale transcription study of activity in Dáil Eireann (not merely QT), and the
future corpus linguist should be able to make definitive judgements on the linguistic
reliability of the Official Report. It should also be noted here that the investigation contained
in chapter 4 of this thesis indicates that there is much scope for further research in this area, and it is hoped that this study can lead to further research in the area of transcription and political reporting in the Republic of Ireland.

There is one further (relatively) recent political development which may prove of interest to linguists in Ireland who are interested in the area of parliamentary discourse. The Northern Ireland Assembly was set up in 1998 as part of the Good Friday Agreement. It is the devolved legislature for Northern Ireland, which appoints the Northern Ireland Executive, which can legislate for a wide range of areas in Northern Ireland. As with Dáil Eireann and Westminster, there is a public, free-to-view record of all meetings of the Northern Ireland Assembly available on the internet. This thesis has compared politeness norms in Dáil Eireann with those of Westminster, but a future study may well involve a comparative study with the Northern Ireland Assembly, in order to investigate linguistic similarities and differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. It would be particularly interesting to compare the linguistic behaviour of Unionist politicians in Northern Ireland with their counterparts from across the border. As Hickey (2007) has pointed out, the English of this community has notably different influences (primarily from Scottish English) to the English spoken in the Republic of Ireland, and this variety of English is also less likely to be influenced by sub-stratal contact from the Irish language. Whether this would have any effect on politeness tokens or politeness strategies in the two settings would be fascinating to discover. Of course, because Northern Ireland is very much a post-conflict setting, an investigation into politeness norms in the Assembly (between two communities who have a particularly hostile relationship) would be of particular interest. Because the Northern Ireland Assembly is a very young institution, it would also be interesting to see whether and how linguistic conventions have built up in that setting, and whether and how these conventions are flouted by speakers over time. The SPICE-Ireland project has already shown some of the possibilities for comparing the language of Northern Ireland politicians and Republic of Ireland politicians. The SPICE-Ireland material on ‘parliamentary debates’ was compiled from Dáil Eireann debates and material from the Northern Ireland Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, with half of the ‘parliamentary debates’ material in SPICE-Ireland coming from the Northern setting, thus enabling comparisons to be made quite easily between the two settings.

Ultimately, however, perhaps the most useful suggestion for future research possibilities with this thesis lies in the very compilation and creation of the QTC for this research. These
corpora contain a large amount of material which has yet to be examined. Future research possibilities are closely related to the question of annotation. As noted in chapter 1, the QTC have been very basically annotated, with speaker tags only. More detailed annotation of these corpora opens the door to a large number of questions being addressed; how do male and female politicians differ in their language choices?; is there a significant difference between the linguistic behaviour of rural and urban politicians?; do independent TDs/MPs differ in their linguistic behaviour from politicians belonging to a particular party?; It is hoped that this study can lead to further examination of the language choices of Irish politicians, and can lead to the further development of this nascent field in the future.
Bibliography


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Appendix A
Transcripts

The Official Report is reproduced exactly here (indented, and in a different font), followed immediately by the transcript made by the author.

Exchange A (Tuesday, June 26th, 2007).

An Ceann Comhairle: I remind the House that Standing Order 27 allows for a brief question on a matter of topical public importance from the leaders of the Fine Gael and Labour parties.

Deputy Enda Kenny: Did I indicate at any stage——

An Ceann Comhairle: If I may finish, the situation is quite clear. The Standing Order provides that the question from the leader of Fine Gael may last two minutes, that the reply by the Taoiseach may last three minutes, that the supplementary question from the leader of Fine Gael may last one minute and that the final reply by the Taoiseach will be of one minute’s duration. The same facility and courtesy will be extended to the leader of Fine Gael. That is the Standing Order and it is only fair to other Members of the House that the Standing Orders should be enforced.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I am sure you, a Cheann Comhairle, will also want to know what Deputy Healy-Rae got

An Ceann Comhairle: I remind the Deputy——

Deputy Enda Kenny: Quiet now, you are new in the job.

An Ceann Comhairle: You will not say “quiet” to me, Sir.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: I remind the Deputy that he may not under any circumstances——

Deputy Enda Kenny: This is Dáil Éireann.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy will be seated when the Chair is standing.
Deputy Enda Kenny: I will.

An Ceann Comhairle: He should show that much courtesy.

Deputy Charles Flanagan: Zero tolerance.

An Ceann Comhairle; I will, I will remind the house that under Standing Order 27, the standing order allows for a brief question on a matter of, ah, [interruption] topical public importance from the leaders of the Fine Gael and Labour parties.

Deputy Enda Kenny; And did I say, did I, did I indicate at any stage . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; If I may finish, deputy if I may finish [interruption], if I, if I may finish [interruption] if I may, if I, deputy if I may finish, deputy . . .

Deputy Enda Kenny; Well, I’m sure you want to know what Healy-Rae got as well yourself, and I suppose . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; The deputy, I will remind the deputy . . .

Deputy Enda Kenny; And I suppose the perception is you don’t have any . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; I will remind the deputy, I will remind the deputy

Deputy Enda Kenny; Quiet now, you are new in the job . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; You won’t say quiet to me, sir! You will remind, I will remind, I will remind the deputy, I will remind the deputy, I will remind the deputy, I will remind, that he may not under any circumstances – the deputy will be seated when the chair is standing

Deputy Enda Kenny; I will

An Ceann Comhairle; Show that much courtesy. I will remind, I will remind . . .

Exchange B

Deputy Enda Kenny: The perception in Kerry, a Cheann Comhairle, is that you now have no power down there and you want to use your power up here.
Deputy Johnny Brady: The Deputy is a disgrace.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is not entitled——

Deputy Enda Kenny: I am entitled.

An Ceann Comhairle: I will not tolerate it, Sir. The Deputy is not entitled to——

Deputy Enda Kenny: If the Ceann Comhairle wants to continue this——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should be seated while the Chair is standing. The Deputy is not entitled to drag the Chair onto the floor of the House in matters of public controversy and he is not entitled to breach Standing Orders. That is all I am saying.

Deputy Enda Kenny: I recall your own previous life.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may not mention whatever happened previously either.

(Interruptions).

An Ceann Comhairle: I am merely enforcing the rules of the House. The rules of the House will be enforced.

Deputy Enda Kenny; Well, a Ceann Comhairle, the perception in Kerry is that you now have no power down there and you want to use your power up here . . .

An Ceann Comhairle: You are not entitled, you are not entitled and I will not tolerate this sir . . .

Deputy Enda Kenny; I am entitled . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; You are not entitled, you are not entitled . . .

Deputy Enda Kenny; I am entitled, if you want to continue this row, Ceann Comhairle . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; Be seated! Be seated while the chair is standing. You are not entitled, you are not entitled, you are not entitled to drag the chair onto the house in matters of public controversy and you are not entitled to breach standing orders. That is all I am saying, Deputy.
Deputy Enda Kenny; Well, I recall, I recall your own ah, previous life . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; You may not mention whatever happened previously either [loud, prolonged interruptions and bell-ringing]

Exchange C

Deputy Arthur Morgan: A Cheann Comhairle——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may not stand while the Chair is standing.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: A Cheann Comhairle——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may not do that. “No” is the answer. It is completely out of order. I call Deputy Ferris.

Deputy Brian Cowen: The Deputy should stop.

An Ceann Comhairle: Is Deputy Ferris offering? Deputy Morgan may not stand while the Chair is standing.

Deputy Brian Cowen: Throw him out.

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask Deputy Morgan to please sit. If he does not sit I will have to ask him to leave the House for the rest of the day. I ask the Deputy to sit.

Deputy Arthur Morgan: I am asking——

Deputy Arthur Morgan; A Cheann Comhairle . . .

An Ceann Comhairle; The chair has made a ruling – you may not stand, you may not stand, you . . .

Deputy Arthur Morgan; A Cheann Comhairle . . .
An Ceann Comhairle; You may not do that. You may not do that. You may not do that.

Deputy Brian Cowen; The Deputy should stop.

An Ceann Comhairle; You may not stand while the chair is standing Deputy Morgan. You may not do that.

Deputy Brian Cowen; Throw him out.

An Ceann Comhairle; I’m asking you, I’m asking you please to sit down. If you do not sit down, I will have to ask you to leave the house for the rest of the day.

Exchange D

An Ceann Comhairle: ① Q  Standing Orders provides for notice to be given and that is the ruling of the Chair.

Deputy Michael Ring: ① Q  You are making it up as you go along.

An Ceann Comhairle: ① Q  Deputy Ring will withdraw that statement.

Deputy Michael Ring: ① Q  I will not withdraw it.

An Ceann Comhairle: ① Q  If the Deputy will not withdraw that statement, he will leave the House.

Deputy Michael Ring: ① Q  You are making up the rules as you go along. I will not withdraw it.

An Ceann Comhairle: ① Q  Then Deputy Ring, you will leave the House.

Deputy Michael Ring: ① Q  I will not leave the House. You may put me out, but I will not leave the House. I am elected to this House and not selected like you are.

An Ceann Comhairle: ① Q  You must withdraw the statement you have made.

Deputy Michael Ring: ① Q  I will not withdraw the statement. You are making up the rules as you go along.
An Ceann Comhairle: That is a disgraceful statement and completely untrue.

An Ceann Comhairle; Standing Orders provide for notice to be given and that is the ruling of the Chair. It is the ruling of the Chair.

Deputy Michael Ring; You are making it up as you go along

An Ceann Comhairle; You will withdraw that. You will withdraw that, you will withdraw that statement Deputy Ring.

Deputy Ring; I won’t withdraw it.

An Ceann Comhairle; You will withdraw that statement. You will withdraw that statement. You will withdraw it. You will withdraw that statement.

Deputy Michael Ring; I won’t withdraw it. I won’t withdraw it.

An Ceann Comhairle; You will withdraw it. Well then, if you don’t withdraw that statement, Deputy Ring, you will leave the house.

Deputy Michael Ring; You’re making up the rules as you go along. I won’t withdraw it

An Ceann Comhairle; You will leave the house or you will withdraw that statement. You will [interruptions]

Exchange E (April 14th, 2011)

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: At last.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy has already been on his feet for five minutes. He cannot be jumping up and down every five minutes.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I have a direct question for the Tánaiste.

(Interruptions).
An Ceann Comhairle: Are you looking after this man?

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Well the Ceann Comhairle is not. That is for sure.

An Ceann Comhairle: I ask the Deputy to withdraw that remark.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I withdraw it.

On the minimum wage——

An Ceann Comhairle: Thank you. This is Parliament, not a county council.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Indeed. On the minimum wage, can I ask the Tánaiste a direct question?

An Ceann Comhairle: No, the Deputy cannot. We are on the Order of Business.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Are the IMF and the European Union demanding an input into draft legislation——

An Ceann Comhairle: I have already told the Deputy.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: ——or demanding legislation on JLCs?

An Ceann Comhairle: Tánaiste, please do not——

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: My second question is on the Order of Business. I ask the Tánaiste to comment on the second document mentioned on the Order Paper on a Council decision to conclude an agreement between the European Union and the Palestinian Authority of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

An Ceann Comhairle: That is not in order.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: It is included in the Order Paper. I ask the Tánaiste to say a word about exactly what the agreement is and whether the liberalisation of trade with the West Bank and Gaza regarding the Palestinian Authority——

An Ceann Comhairle: Does the Deputy have any respect for the Chair?

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: It is on the Order Paper.
An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy knows he is not allowed to make ongoing statements——

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: It is a question.

An Ceann Comhairle: on a continual basis.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: It is a question.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is abusing the House. Will he, please, learn the rules?

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I am asking a question.

Deputy Bernard J. Durkan: This is not Question Time.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy may ask a question, but he is not entitled to make a statement.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I am asking for an explanation——

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy is not entitled to ask for one.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Can I not ask about what is on the Order Paper?

An Ceann Comhairle: No.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I am not allowed ask about what is on the Order Paper.

An Ceann Comhairle: It is a document which has been laid before the House.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I am not allowed to ask what it is about.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should read it.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: I have——

An Ceann Comhairle: Then he should not be asking questions about it here.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: ——and I am looking for an explanation.

An Ceann Comhairle: The Deputy should table a parliamentary question. Will he, please, show some respect for the Chair?
**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** It is on the Order Paper and we are on the Order of Business.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I know it is on the Order Paper which is coloured green in case the Deputy——

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** Am I not allowed ask about the Order Paper on the Order of Business?

**Deputy Lucinda Creighton:** No.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** I ask the Deputy to resume his seat and try to respect the Chair.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** Will the Tánaiste respond and explain——

**An Ceann Comhairle:** He will not explain anything. He will answer questions.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** ——whether the agreement extends to the elected authorities on the Gaza Strip?

**Deputy Pat Rabbitte:** The Minister must obey the Chair.

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** It is bizarre.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** The Deputy does not like the Order of Business. It is not a question of making ongoing statements every single morning. Will he, please, respect the Chair?

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** I am asking a question about the Order Paper.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** There are other Deputies in the Chamber. Tánaiste, is this a matter for the Order of Business and if so, will you, please, answer the question?

**The Tánaiste:** It is not. It is about a document that has been laid before the House.

**An Ceann Comhairle:** Absolutely.

**The Tánaiste:** In order to be helpful to Deputy Boyd Barrett, again this is something I would have thought he would have welcomed. It is a proposal for an agreement——

**Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett:** I just asked the question.
An Ceann Comhairle: Will the Deputy, please, let the Tánaiste answer?

The Tánaiste: Let me give the Deputy the answer. It is a proposal for an agreement between the European Union and the Palestinian Authority, providing for the liberalisation of trade between the European Union and the Palestinian Authority. I would have thought this is something he would have warmly welcomed.

An Ceann Comhairle: I call Deputy Ellis.

Deputy Richard Boyd Barrett: Does it extend to——

An Ceann Comhairle: I will be asking the Deputy to leave the House shortly if he continues to behave like this. He will have to learn to respect the Chair.

CEANN COMHAIRLE.; deputy Boyd Barrett

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; at last, at last

CEANN COMHAIRLE; well you’ve already been up for 5 minutes, so I mean, you can’t be jumping up and down every five minutes

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; Tánaiste, Tánaiste, a direct question

CEANN COMHAIRLE; are you looking after this man, are you?

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; in relation to, in relation to, well you’re not, Ceann Comhairle, that’s for sure. I withdraw it, I withdraw it
RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; Tánaiste, in relation to the minimum wage

CEANN COMHAIRLE; this is a parliament you know, it’s not a county council

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; indeed, indeed, Ceann Comhairle. In relation to the minimum wage legislation, ah, can I just ask a direct question to the tanaiste, are the EU/IMF demanding input

CEANN COMHAIRLE; no, you cannot. This is the order of business, I’ve already told you. Tánaiste, please don’t answer

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; and a second question is on the order of business, Ceann Comhairle, could I just ask the Tánaiste to comment on point 2 of the order paper in relation to a council decision to conclude an agreement between the European union and the Palestinian authority of the west bank and the gaza strip

CEANN COMHAIRLE; that is not on the order paper

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; it’s on the order paper; it is on the order paper, it’s point two on the order paper, Ceann Comhairle

CEANN COMHAIRLE; look, have you any respect for the chair, have you? You know you’re not allowed make ongoing statements on an continuous basis
RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; it’s a question, it’s a question

CEANN COMHAIRLE; you’re abusing this house

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; Ceann Comhairle, sorry, this is a question I’m asking

CEANN COMHAIRLE; will you please learn the rules

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; this is a question I’m asking

CEANN COMHAIRLE; well ask a question but you’re not entitled to make, to make a statement

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; I’m asking for an explanation of a point on the order paper

CEANN COMHAIRLE; well you’re not entitled to ask for an explanation

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; to ask what’s on the order paper?

LUCINDA CREIGHTON; No
CEANN COMHAIRLE; You’re not entitled, that’s a document laid, that’s a document laid before the house

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; I’m not allowed to ask what’s on the order paper? And I’m not allowed to ask what’s on the order paper?

CEANN COMHAIRLE; well, if you go down and read it

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; I’ve read it, I’ve read it and I’m looking for an explanation

CEANN COMHAIRLE; well, then don’t be asking questions here about it. Put down a parliamentary question, please. Will you show some respect for the chair, please?

RICHARD BOYD BARRETT; This is the order paper, and this is the order of business. So I’m not allowed to ask about the order paper on the order of business

CEANN COMHAIRLE; I know it’s the order paper. I’ll be asking you to leave the house now shortly if you continue to behave like that. You’ll have to learn to respect the chair.
Interview with Official Report Editor

List of questions e-mailed to the assistant editor with replies

1) Is the process of producing the Official Report an organised and systematic activity?

Yes, the production of the report occurs under the auspices of the Debates Office which is responsible for reporting of Dáil, Seanad and committee proceedings. A team of parliamentary reporters, editors and ancillary staff (complement currently 57) works to produce the debates to deadline for publication on the Oireachtas website and in hard copy.

2) Please describe the process of producing the Official Report.

Parliamentary reporters are rostered to cover plenary sittings of Dáil, Seanad and committee proceedings. For the Houses, reporters typically do a ten minute “take” in the Chamber during which they take a written log of that section of the debate. They have approximately two hours to report and edit this from a digital recording and their notes. When it is finished, it is signed off and marked for the attention of the editors. The unedited work is available within two hours on the office Intranet which is accessible by Members and others throughout the Leinster House network and in Government Departments. Edited takes are published incrementally throughout each sitting day on the Oireachtas website.

Due to resource allocation in terms of available manpower and the volume of committee meetings, priority is accorded to the Dáil and Seanad and committee work is often reported on non-sitting (non-plenary) days, currently Monday and Friday.

3) Are there ‘house rules’ or a style guide which editors follow when producing the Official Report?

Yes, there is a comprehensive house style guide - the Editors Book - which includes detail on procedural and stylistic matters. This is updated regularly and any obsolete material removed. The overarching principle behind the production of the debates is to ensure accuracy of reporting and consistency in matters of style.
4) Please describe these ‘house rules’. E.g. What is deleted/added to the Official Report?

Nothing is added other than procedural formulae on Bills, motions, etc. The debates fit into a daily template under various headings - Leaders Questions, Order of Business, Questions, Private Member’ business etc. In terms of what Members say, nothing is deleted aside from excess or repetitive verbiage. We stay true to the speaker's style, applying our style guidelines and ensuring correct grammatical and syntactical presentation.

5) Where do these ‘house rules’ come from? Are you aware of any similarities or differences between the transcription process used in Ireland and the transcription process used in other settings?

They have been built up over time and would have been influenced by the UK Hansard system. There are major similarities in terms of how different Legislatures treat procedural matters but variations in individual house styles. We are a member of the British Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association; matters of house style, technological developments etc are discussed at an annual conference in July each year hosted on a rotating basis by the membership. Dublin is hosting this year's conference. You can check the website of the organisation at [www.bipra.org](http://www.bipra.org)

6) Is the implementation of these ‘house rules’ systematic and consistent? Are there any monitoring or checking mechanisms? How do you ensure consistency across transcribers, editors and time?

Yes. Reporters are closely monitored when they first start the job; detailed training and feedback are provided. A team of editors, all of whom have worked as reporters prior to promotion, ensures consistency across the board. Regular meetings and communications allow for exchange of ideas and feedback.

7) Please tell me about the professional background and qualifications of Official Report editors. Are they linguists/historians or from another academic background?

Staff are drawn from a wide range of academic disciplines - humanities, sciences etc. A significant number hold postgraduate qualifications. Some are historians, some English graduates, some teachers, some ex journalists - the list is endless. I will give you a ‘job profile’ sheet and list of tasks (attached, see appendix C) which we use here when we look for
new staff. It is imperative that anyone working as a reporter or editor understands the context in which parliamentary debate occurs. This requires them to have an interest in and knowledge of current affairs and wider international developments in order that they can identify terminology and understand references. Their language skills and knowledge of public affairs etc are tested during the recruitment campaign through a combination of psychometric testing, written exam and detailed interview. If successful, they receive further on the job training.

Recruitment campaigns are conducted under the auspices of the Public Appointments Service with major input from editorial staff due to the specialised nature of the job. For example, we draft and correct the written exam and an editor also sits on the interview panel. For our most recent recruitment campaign, applicants were expected to have a 2.1 degree – again, see the attached ‘job profile’ sheet and list of tasks (appendix C).

8)  Have there been any issues/complaints/problems about the production of the Official Report? If so, could you tell me about these?

Very few. Members and other users of the report are on the whole extremely positive about the job we do. Some people have accused us of making people sound too good but the same rules apply to all speakers; no one speaker receives preferential treatment and we do not alter the substantive content of Members’ contributions. (We can discuss this face-to-face, Declan). The job is demanding, requiring great attention to detail and an ability to work long hours during busy periods in the parliamentary calendar, but staff of the Debates Office are conscious of the importance of their work in compiling the record of parliamentary proceedings and take pride in the independent and professional service offered to Members and others within the public service, the media, professional bodies, interest groups and the wider public.

9)  What do you personally see as the purpose of the Official Report? How do you see the role of parliamentary reporter/editor?

For me, the main purpose of the Official Report lies in its importance as a historical record of parliamentary debate and, as such, a detailed record of the development of the State and its various apparatuses - education, health, legal etc. It is also accepted as prima facie evidence in a court of law so its importance cannot be overstated.
The role of the parliamentary reporter and editor is to deliver an independent, unbiased, accurate record of speakers' contributions in clear, concise and correct English or Irish if this is the language spoken on the floor. A limited number of reporters who are proficient in Irish report Irish language contributions. We report in the language spoken on the floor of the House, i.e. we do not translate the Irish into English.

**Follow-up interview with assistant editor**

Researcher; You say that nothing is deleted apart from ‘excessive or repetitive verbiage’. Can you tell me some phrases that you don’t use?

Assistant Editor; For example, ‘in relation to’, ‘in regard to’, ‘in the context of’. We allow ‘in the context of’ occasionally, this will make more sense to you when you see the process in action. I’ll show you a sound file and we’ll see what’s excised by the Reporter. A good Reporter, it will be so instinctive after a while that they won’t even hear them, they will filter those extraneous features, those superfluous terms, they won’t even hear them. Well, they’ll hear them and they will automatically discard them.

R; When you say that some Reporters are more instinctive than others, obviously some people are better at it than others?

AE; There are people who have a natural talent for it, we have one particular member of staff who after a month – it can take people up to a year or two years to be very competent, most people can be competent after six months but it takes a long time, it takes a lot of practice on the job, it takes a lot of your work to be edited and given back to you to show you where you’re going wrong. Obviously, when I say ‘wrong’, I mean ‘wrong’ in terms of our style guidelines, it’s not that you’re telling people that their style is objectionable or their vocabulary is wrong, we’re saying that this is not how we do it in terms of our house style. Our style guideline database is called ‘The Editor’s Book’. It has a glossary of terms, spellings, alphabeticalized listings, foreign terms, newspaper titles, and so on. It’s not exhaustive, but it is quite thorough. If we have enquiries that come up, such as the Ferns Enquiry, we want to get the correct name of that enquiry in the Report. We make sure that everything like that is right.
R; Is the Editor’s Book available to Reporters or just editorial staff?

AE; It’s available to everybody that works with us.

R; I noticed that Reporters write longhand in the Chamber?

AE; Yes, Reporters in the Chamber take a longhand log, and really they needn’t take any log at all because it’s all recorded now. It’s on an audio file on computer. What the Reporters in the chamber do now is take a running order of the speakers, and they also take note of any interruptions or interjections that aren’t miked. Anybody who interjects and who hasn’t been called by the Chair, the Reporter takes that down on their log, that’s their primary purpose as a presence in the Chamber nowadays. We’ve found that a lot of parliaments now, the Reporter is in a remote booth, for example in Wales and Scotland they don’t sit in the Chamber anymore. We here argue very strongly that we need a presence. The only forum here where that doesn’t occur is in the Committee meetings; because there are so many of them we simply don’t have the staff to do it live on the day, so with the committees we rely on a team of two people to log the proceedings – I mean they take an electronic log of the Joint Committees and the Select Committees – and those logs are then available on the system for Reporters to access. The Reporters do those takes ‘cold’, they don’t have a physical presence at the committee meetings. The benefit of our system, of having Reporters in the Chamber, is that if you’re actually there, in addition to what you actually here on the audio file, you also get a sense from the body language in the room of the context of the exchanges, should you need it.

R; So after the Reporter has done their ten-minute ‘take’, they return to their desk immediately to do the transcription?

AE; Yes, immediately. They open up the sound file, open up an ordinary MS Word document in our database and do their transcription. When they’re finished, they click on a box to indicate they have finished that take, and incrementally during the day these documents appear on our [editors] computers. We then access it and edit it, and after a while there are a batch ready for publication.

R; Essentially, then, there are two stages to the process in Ireland; editing by the Reporter and editing by the Assistant Editor?
AE; Yes, that’s right. In essence, the Reporter also has an editorial function. They’re not expected to simply type in what is said, they also edit what is said and make sure the procedure is right. We expect them to follow the Editor’s Book. For good Reporters, the Assistant Editor should have little or anything left to do. What the Editor does, when the material comes through, is make sure the takes run together cohesively, that there is no overlap between takes, that the names are correct and the procedure is right. A good Reporter will have done a thorough job, we’ll check it for consistency, we’ll check it for context, if something jumps out at you and we feel that it may not be exactly right, those may have been the words the Deputy uttered but the Reporter may not have understood the context, we may need to tweak it slightly. Our battle cry all the time is that this is for a readership not a listenership. We want it to read clearly and for the most part eliminate ambiguity, unless of course that ambiguity is there deliberately. I know that sounds slightly contradictory, but there are certain speakers, for example the Sinn Fein speakers choose their words very carefully, particularly when talking about things to do with the North. They will always refer to the North as ‘the Six Counties’, and that might seem a small thing to somebody who isn’t aware of the context or the background. A new Reporter might think, ‘he means the North’ and put Northern Ireland into the Report. That’s an example of why we insist on a strong political awareness among all Reporters, they need to understand why politicians use the words they do, and that what seems inadvertent is often very deliberate. Sometimes politicians won’t finish a sentence, and it may be that they’ve forgotten what they were going to say, but it may be that they are alluding to something that they don’t wish to specify. Then you have a speaker like the former Taoiseach Bertie Ahern, who is well known for his lack of clarity in speech, which some would consider one of his great strengths in some ways, he was difficult to pin down and he could make a thing mean whatever he wanted it to mean. But our role, we have to make his words readable and try to make it properly structured in terms of sentences and clauses. We leave unfinished sentences if somebody is interrupted, but not in the body of a paragraph. For example, if you have the floor, and I interrupt to disagree with something you say, we indicate that I have interrupted you by using five dashes at the end of your contribution. If you carry on with your sentence, we’ll use the five dashes again to finish it. If you start from a new sentence we’ll just start from a new sentence.

R; With regard to interjections and interruptions from the floor, what’s your policy? Is it a case of whoever shouts the loudest gets recorded?
AE; We do have a very sophisticated audio system here, so the person who has the floor will certainly be miked, anybody who interjects will be caught on an ambient microphone, we have surround microphones, but sometimes if everybody is shouting together and you can’t isolate a comment or identify the speaker. We have a fall-back if you can identify the comment but not the speaker, we use ‘a deputy’ in the transcript. If you can’t isolate the comment but it’s very controversial and the Taoiseach for example responds and there is general uproar among the benches we have a generic ‘interruptions’. This is included in the transcript, not because it adds to the debate in any way, but it does indicate to the reader that there is a break in transmission, so to speak. If somebody says something that we haven’t been able to catch but that the person on mike responds to, we don’t leave out that response just because it doesn’t tie up nicely, we have to indicate that there was a lacuna in the debate, so we use ‘interruptions’.

R; Do you ever go back to a Deputy and say, ‘what did you say there? We couldn’t catch that’.

AE; No, never. We might go back to double-check and say to a Deputy, ‘this is what I think you said, can you confirm for me this is the word you used?’ But we try to minimise our interaction with Deputies in that we are there to report what they say, we are not there to polish up what they say or to be at their beck-and-call if they are unhappy with what they said or if they think better later about what they said. We are clear that our relationship is not one where they can have a second think about things. It’s very important for us to maintain independence. But some of the members are very approachable, and there might be the odd one who we might approach quietly and say, ‘look, this is sensitive and I just want to be sure about what you said’. In that situation, the Reporter would flag it to an Assistant Editor if there is something in their take that they’re not sure about. In that case, they will flag the issue and leave the call to the Assistant Editor. Reporters are told ‘when in doubt, don’t leave it out, but above all don’t ascribe comments incorrectly’.

R; What’s the Head Editor’s role?

AE; A lot of the Head Editor’s role is administrative. The current Head was a Reporter and then an Assistant Editor, she’s worked up through the system. She has a lot of meetings about strategy and office-wide developments. She also has the final call about what goes into the debate. There are three Deputy Editors, one for the Dáil, one for the Seanad and one for Committees. They have an oversight function, they essentially do the same job as the
Assistant Editors, it’s a final oversight I suppose. All Assistant Editors and Deputy Editors here come up through the ranks, we’ve all been Reporters at one stage. That helps, I think, we all know what the job entails, we know what to expect and what to be on the lookout for. I suppose that gives us a certain sympathy with what Reporters do. In other contexts, editors tend to criticise reporters, they don’t have the same sympathy.

R; What about staff numbers? What is the breakdown there?

AE; We have a staff of approximately sixty. That breaks down as forty Reporters, ten Deputy and Assistant Editors, and an administrative staff of about ten, who take care of printing and other administrative details and clerical stuff. During a typical Dáil debate, there are twelve Reporters working in ten-minute takes, and then of course an editor as well. It’s a busy working week, we have unusual working hours.
Debates Office Official Documents

These documents were given to the researcher by the assistant editor, with permission to include them in this PhD thesis. Both documents are given to staff members upon joining the Debates Office, and they are also used at various other times, for example during recruitment campaigns. Document 1 is called ‘Job Profile’, and document 2 is called ‘Parliamentary Reporter activities/tasks’. Both documents are presented here as received by the researcher.

Document 1.

Job Profile

Title of Position: Parliamentary Reporter in the Houses of the Oireachtas

Employing Authority: Office of the Houses of the Oireachtas

Location: Kildare Street, Dublin

1. Background information on the position:

(a) Describe the work of the organisation in which the vacancy exists

The Houses of the Oireachtas are charged under the Constitution with the task of electing a Government, debating and passing legislation, sanctioning public expenditure
and holding the Executive to account. Standing Orders provide for an official report of proceedings.

Following is the definition of the Official Report:

_The Official Report is a full report in the first person, of all speakers alike, a full report being defined as one which, though not strictly verbatim, is substantially a verbatim report, with repetitions and redundancies omitted and with obvious mistakes corrected, but which on the other hand leaves out nothing that adds to the meaning of the speech or illustrates the argument._

It will be noted that the Official Report is not verbatim. This imposes a duty on parliamentary reporters to observe the conventions of parliamentary reporting by making judgments as to what should be included or excluded from the record. The primary obligation is to represent the meaning of the speaker. This may include the addition of words or phrases not actually spoken. Following is an example:

Speaker: The Chair has personal experience of drug abuse. _[sic]_

Speaker: The Chair as a medical practitioner has had personal experience of the effects of drug abuse. _[Official Report]_

Members present in the Chamber for this debate understood perfectly what the speaker meant; that meaning might not suggest itself to readers of the historical record. The Official Report is compiled for a readership rather than a listenership. The skill of parliamentary reporting is to convert the spoken word into an accurate and readable record of parliamentary proceedings.
(b) State the basic function/role of the post to be filled

Parliamentary reporters work in the Debates Office, which is responsible for the publication of the Official Report, the authoritative record of proceedings of the Houses of the Oireachtas and parliamentary committees.

Staff of the Debates Office are conscious of the importance of their work in compiling the record of parliamentary proceedings and take pride in the independent and professional service offered to Members and others within the public service, the media, professional bodies, interest groups and the wider public. Their unedited work is available within two hours on the office intranet which is accessible by Members and others throughout the Leinster House network and in Government Departments. It should require minimal editing.

The current staff are graduates in a wide range of disciplines and many have postgraduate degrees. They are required to have excellent language skills and a sound knowledge of public affairs, both national and international. Their job is demanding, requiring great attention to detail and an ability to work long hours during busy periods in the parliamentary calendar.

The debates of both Dáil and Seanad are available to the general public the following day on the Oireachtas website. Since becoming available on the Internet, the readership of the Official Report has greatly increased. The office regularly receives correspondence from people all over the world who have accessed the debates on the
Oireachtas website. The volume of correspondence has grown significantly since the launch on the website of the historical project, the debates of both Houses of the Oireachtas since 1919. This provides an invaluable source of information on the issues and attitudes of the political establishment since the first Dáil.

2. Please identify the educational requirements necessary

Essential qualifications:

Primary degree at 2.1 honours level. This will enable the office to recruit staff of proven intellectual calibre, sufficient to the requirements of parliamentary reporting

An excellent knowledge of the English language, writing/editorial skills

Knowledge of current affairs, national and international*

Knowledge of contemporary Irish politics*
Knowledge of modern Irish history*

*To be tested at interview

Desirable qualifications:

Keyboard skills
IT skills

3. Please identify any experience requirements necessary:

Relevant employment/academic experience, which should ideally involve published work, production of reports, theses, etc.

3. **TASKS:**

• Attending the Chambers of both Houses of the Oireachtas and parliamentary committees;

• Logging, reporting and editing the proceedings of the Dáil, Seanad and committees and special inquiries, to publication standard;
• Obtaining and checking original documentation where necessary, e.g. Acts, Bills, reports, letters, etc.;

• Understanding the legislative process and reporting it accurately;

• Observing style and procedural guidelines;

• Producing high quality copy within tight deadlines;

• Processing parliamentary questions;

• Revising of Official Report for publication in bound volumes;

• Preparation of indices for bound volumes;

• Dealing with Members, Oireachtas and departmental staff;

• Using increasingly complex technology. The Oireachtas website is currently changing from HTML to XML, which will require parliamentary reporters to perform tasks heretofore carried out by printers.

Offsite activities: Attendance at major EU conferences in Dublin Castle and production of report of proceedings. Attendance at meetings of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body, liaising with Members and secretariat and production of the official report.

Representing the Oireachtas at meetings of the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association, both in this country and outside the jurisdiction.

4. **SKILLS INDICATORS**

A. Communication skills:
- Ability to write grammatically and concisely

- Ability to use spoken language clearly, concisely and cogently

- Ability to exercise sound editorial judgment

- Attention to detail - willingness to research source documentation, check references, style guidelines, etc.

B. Confidence

- Willingness to accept responsibility for personal input to the Official Report

- Ability to work under pressure and in public view

- Willingness to exercise editorial judgment

- Ability to accept feedback in a professional manner

C. Commitment

- Determination to complete tasks to high standard
- Completion of tasks within set timeframe

- Reliability and punctuality

- Flexibility to deal with variations in working hours and changing work practices

D. Knowledge-based/research skills

- In-depth knowledge of public affairs, domestic and international

Demonstrated by a recognition and understanding of political developments at all levels and of the nuances of political debate; familiarity with current issues in public affairs and institutions

- Knowledge of modern Irish history

Demonstrated by an understanding of historical references to persons and events, e.g. Dr. Noel Browne, the mother and child scheme; the Minister for External Affairs, Mr. Aiken.

- Ability to recognise and reproduce accurately a wide range of allusions. Recent examples include the following:
Quotations from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* and *Macbeth*

Quotations from Irish poetry

References to novels by Joyce - the Circe episode in *Ulysses*; Dickens - Dotheboys Hall, Mrs. Gamp, Fagin; Orwell, *1984, Animal Farm*, etc.

Scientific references in respect of topics such as the nuclear and chemical industries, the genome project, eutrophication of water bodies, pelagic fish species, agricultural and aquacultural terms, technological terms

Legal terminology - Latin phrases regularly occur, e.g. *ignorantia legis neminen excusat*, *iustum generis*, *ultra vires*, *actus non reum facit nisi mens rea sit*, *quis custodiet ipsos custodes?*

Foreign language phrases, mainly Latin and French but also German, Spanish, etc. - *timeo Danaos et dona ferrentes*, *force majeure*, *droit de suite*, *honi soi qui mal y pense*, *weltanschauung*

Business and financial terminology, e.g. Bretton Woods Agreement, gold standard

E. Interpersonal skills:

- Ability to work as part of a team

- Ability to communicate formally and informally with managers, Members and others
- Ability to remain calm under pressure

5. WORKING RELATIONSHIPS

1. Within organisation:

A reporter must be able to work in very close co-operation with other members of the parliamentary reporting team, with assistant editors, deputy editors and the Editor of Debates.

Reporters must approach Members when checking references, quotations, etc.

Reporters also deal with staff within the wider organisation, the Bills Office, the Questions Office, the Journal Office, the Committee Secretariat. They liaise too with ministerial and departmental offices.

2. Outside organisation:

Reporters are sent twice yearly to conferences of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Association, a body composed of Members of Parliament from the Dáil and Seanad, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, the Scottish Parliament and the Welsh Assembly. These meetings are held at various locations within these islands. Reporters work with staff from these bodies to produce the record of proceedings. They also socialise informally with Members.
Reporters represent the Oireachtas at the annual conference of the British-Irish Parliamentary Reporting Association, which considers developments in parliamentary reporting and common problems such as the recruitment of suitable personnel.

An interparliamentary staff exchange scheme was initiated this year under which one of our reporting staff spent four weeks working in the Scottish Parliament, while his counterpart worked in the Oireachtas.

6. **FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS**

The basic task of the parliamentary reporter, i.e. to produce the Official Report of parliamentary proceedings, will remain unchanged. However, it is anticipated that reporters will use increasingly sophisticated technology to fulfil this task. The methodologies employed have been subject to constant change, particularly during the past five years. Digital audio technology was introduced last year and the Debates Office is currently adapting to XML, a new computer language. These changes will continue to impose new demands and responsibilities on reporters.

It is hoped to develop the staff exchange scheme with other parliaments. This is a useful means of comparing systems and practices. It also has a positive impact on staff morale.
Parliamentary Reporter activities/tasks:

• Attendance in Chambers and committee rooms to log takes. A log is a guide to the debate detailing speakers' identities, noting any unusual references etc. "Take" refers to a five minute or ten minute part of a debate for which a reporter is responsible. A ten minute take would typically take up to two hours to report. Reporters work on a roster system.

• The production of accurate, procedurally correct transcripts of proceedings from sound files to deadline in accordance with style guidelines.

• Co-ordination of the distribution of parliamentary questions for written reply and the collation and proofreading of resultant takes. Four reporters are responsible for this task on a rotating basis.

• Allocated parliamentary questions and replies collated and formatted into takes and edited in accordance with guidelines for inclusion in daily Official Report.

• Accurate, comprehensive committee logs produced, accompanied, where appropriate, by relevant documentation - speeches, amendment lists, witness lists, etc.

• Allocation of unrevised Official Report columns proofread to ensure accuracy - procedural, spelling etc. - and conformity with Editor's Book (our style guideline database).

• XML inputting of amendments to unrevised Official Report.

• Trialling of new technologies, e.g. voice recognition software.

• Reporting of Irish by those reporters with proficiency in the language.

• On the job training and coaching/mentoring facilitated for new staff.

• Familiarity with and understanding of rosters to ensure prompt and punctual attendance in chambers and committee rooms.
• Sources of procedural knowledge and other research materials identified and used for learning purposes.

• Completion of PMDS meetings at appropriate intervals throughout the year with managers.

• Participation in exchange programmes with other parliaments.

• Involvement in internal or office-wide project work where this arises.

• Representing Debates Office at national and international conferences and other fora.
Appendix B
Corpus Index for Irish QTC

January 19th
Word count; 20,304
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen (Taoiseach), Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Mary Hanafin (Minister for Social and Family affairs), Olwyn Enright

January 20th
Word count; 22,461
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Willie O’Dea (Minister for Defence), Jimmy Denihan

January 21st
Word count; 10,569
Primary interlocutors; John Gormley (Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government), Phil Hogan

January 26th
Word count; 18,315
Primary interlocutors; Pat Carey, Mary Coughlan (Tánaiste), Eamon Ryan (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources), Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin

January 27th
Word count; 14,684
Primary interlocutors; Mary Coughlan, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Brendan Smith (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Sean Sherlock

January 28th
Word count; 13,070
Primary interlocutors; Batt O’Keefe (Minister for Education and Science), Brian Hayes

February 2nd
Word count; 17,994
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Coughlan (Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment), Leo Varadkar
February 3rd

Word count; 21,023

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, Brian Lenihan (Minister for Finance), Richard Bruton

February 4th

Word count; 11,781

Primary interlocutors; Dermot Ahern (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform), Charles Flanagan

February 9th

Word count; 2,932

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore

February 10th

Word count; 20,099

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, Noel Dempsey (Minister for Transport), Thomas P Broughan

February 11th

Word count; 13,020

Primary interlocutors; Mary Harney (Minister for Health and Children), James Reilly

February 16th

Word count; 19,138

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, Micheal Martin (Minister for Foreign Affairs), Billy Timmons, Michael D Higgins

February 17th

Word count; 23,224

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, Martin Cullen (Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism), Olivia Mitchell, John O’Mahony

February 18th

Word count; 11,202

Primary interlocutors; Eamon O’Cuiv (Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), Michael Ring
February 23rd
Word count; 17,773
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Hanafin (Minister for Social and Family affairs), Olwyn Enright

February 24th
Word count; 20,465
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Pat Carey (Minister for State of Defence), Jimmy Denihan

February 25th
Word count; 11,486
Primary interlocutors; John Gormley (Minister for Environment, Heritage and Local Government), Phil Hogan

March 2nd
Word count; 18,812
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon Ryan (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources ), Simon Coveney

March 3rd
Word count; 23,669
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Harney (Minister for Health and Children), James Reilly

March 4th
Word count; 11,004
Primary interlocutors; Batt O’Keefe (Minister for Education and Science), Brian Hayes

March 9th
Word count; 18,433
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Coughlan (Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Employment ), Leo Varadkar

March 10th
Word count; 31,790
March 11th

Word count; 11,322

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Brian Lenihan (Minister for Finance), Richard Bruton

March 24th

Word count; 24,465

Primary interlocutors; Brendan Smith (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Michael Creed, Sean Sherlock

March 25th

Word count; 11,864

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Noel Dempsey (Minister for Transport), Thomas P Broghan

March 30th

Word count; 16,684

Primary interlocutors; Dermot Ahern (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform), Charles Flanagan

March 31st

Word count; 26,827

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Micheal Martin (Minister for Foreign Affairs), Billy Timmons

April 1st

Word count; 7,663

Primary interlocutors; Pat Carey (Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), Michael Ring

April 20th

Word count; 22,677

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon O’Cuiv (Minister for Social and Family Affairs), Roisin Shortall, Olwyn Enright

April 21st

Word Count; 20,995
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Tony Killeen (Minister for Defence), Jimmy Denihan

April 22nd
Word count; 10,191
Primary interlocutors; John Gormley (Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government), Phil Hogan

April 27th
Word count; 17,422
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon Ryan (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources), Simon Coveney

April 28th
Word count; 19,661
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Brian Lenihan (Minister for Finance), Richard Bruton

April 29th
Word count; 11,319
Primary interlocutors; Brendan Smith (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Michael Creed, Sean Sherlock

May 5th
Word count; 18,687
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Noel Dempsey (Minister for Transport), Fergus O’Dowd, Thomas P Broghan

May 6th
Word count; 12,070
Primary interlocutors; Mary Coughlan (Minister for Education and Skills), Ruairí Quinn, Brian Hayes

May 11th
Word count; 17,559
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Pat Carey (Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs), Michael Ring

May 12th
Word count; 21,392
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Batt O’Keefe (Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation), Leo Varadkar

**May 13th**

Word count; 11,165

Primary interlocutors; Dermot Ahern (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform), Charles Flanagan

**May 18th**

Word count; 20,237

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Harney (Minister for Health and Children), James Reilly

**May 19th**

Word count; 20,132

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Hanafin (Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism), Olivia Mitchell

**May 20th**

Word count; 10,022

Primary interlocutors; Micheal Martin (Minister for Foreign Affairs), Billy Timmons, Michael D Higgins

**May 25th**

Word count; 18,800

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon O’Cuiv (Minister for Social Protection), Olivia Mitchell

**May 26th**

Word count; 22,918

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin, Brendan Smith (Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food), Michael Creed, Sean Sherlock

**May 27th**

Word count; 11,306

Primary interlocutors; John Gormley (Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government), Phil Hogan

**June 1st**

Word count; 16,908
Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon Ryan (Minister for Communications, Energy and Natural Resources), Simon Coveney

**June 2nd**

Word count; 19,006

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Tony Kileen (Minister for Defence), Jimmy Denihan

**June 3rd**

Word count; 11,797

Primary interlocutors; Mary Coughlan (Minister for Education and Skills), Ruairí Quinn, Brian Hayes

**June 16th**

Word count; 20,385

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Batt O'Keefe (Minister for Enterprise, Trade and Innovation), Leo Varadkar

**June 17th**

Word count; 9,648

Primary interlocutors; Brian Lenihan (Minister for Finance), Richard Bruton, Joan Burton

**June 22nd**

Word count; 18,136

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Mary Harney (Minister for Health and Children), James Reilly

**June 23rd**

Word count; 17,569

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Noel Dempsey (Minister for Transport), Fergus O’Dowd, Thomas P Brogan

**June 24th**

Word count; 10,968

Primary interlocutors; Mary Hanafin (Minister for Arts, Sports and Tourism), Olivia Mitchell

**June 29th**

Word count; 16,844

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caomhghín Ó Caoláin, Eamon O’Cuiv (Minister for Social Protection), Olivia Mitchell
June 30th

Word count; 19,978

Primary interlocutors; Brian Cowen, Enda Kenny, Eamon Gilmore, Caoimhghin Ó Caoláin, Dermot Ahern (Minister for Justice, Equality and Law Reform), Charles Flanagan

TOTALS

936865 words

56 Question Times

Approx 81 hours of speaking time
Corpus index for British QTC

January 5th
Word count; 9031
Secretary of State for Justice; Jack Straw

January 6th
Word count; 9784
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

January 7th
Word count; 15337
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change; Ed Miliband

January 11th
Word count; 8803
Secretary of State for Defence; Bob Ainsworth

January 12th
Word count; 10087
Secretary of State for Health; Andy Burnham

January 13th
Word count; 10382
Secretary of State for Scotland; Jim Murphy
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

January 14th
Word count; 9512
Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills; Peter Mandelson

January 18th
Word count; 8961
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; Ben Bradshaw
January 19th

Word count; 10974

Foreign Secretary; David Miliband

January 20th

Word count; 9962

Secretary of State for International Development; Douglas Alexander

Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

January 21st

Word count; 12990

Solicitor-General; Vera Baird

January 25th

Word count; 10239

Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families; Ed Balls

January 26th

Word count; 9272

Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; John Denham

January 27th

Word count; 8840

Secretary of State for the Cabinet Office; Tessa Jowell

Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

January 28th

Word count; 9637

Secretary of State for Transport, Secretary of State for Women and Equality; Harriet Harman

February 1st

Word count; 9046

Secretary of State for Work and Pensions; Yvette Cooper
February 2nd

Word count; 9982
Chancellor of the Exchequer; Alistair Darling

February 3rd

Word count; 9246
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Shaun Woodward
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

February 4th

Word count; 10342
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Hilary Benn

February 8th

Word count; 8989
Secretary of State for Home Department; Alan Johnson

February 9th

Word count; 9503
Secretary of State for Justice; Jack Straw

February 10th

Word count; 9408
Secretary of State for Wales; Peter Hain
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

February 22nd

Word count; 10382
Secretary of State for Defence; Bob Ainsworth

February 23rd

Word count; 9894
Secretary of State for Health; Andy Burnham
February 24th
Word count; 9403
Secretary of State for Scotland; Jim Murphy
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

February 25th
Word count; 9729
Secretary of State for Energy and Climate Change; Ed Miliband

March 1st
Word count; 9513
Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport; Ben Bradshaw
Secretary of State for Olympics; Tessa Jowell

March 2nd
Word count; 9962
Foreign Secretary; David Miliband

March 3rd
Word count; 8730
Secretary of State for International Development; Douglas Alexander
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

March 4th
Word count; 9143
Secretary of State for Innovation, Business and Skills; Pat McFadden

March 8th
Word count; 13394
Secretary of State for Children, Schools and Families; Ed Balls

March 9th
Word count; 9243
Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government; John Denham
March 10th
Word count; 8951
Secretary of State for Cabinet Office; Tessa Jowell
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

March 11th
Word count; 8676
Solicitor-General; Vera Baird

March 15th
Word count; 8778
Secretary of State for Work and Pensions; Yvette Cooper

March 16th
Word count; 12596
Chancellor of the Exchequer; Alistair Darling

March 17th
Word count; 9059
Secretary of State for Wales; Peter Hain
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

March 18th
Word count; 9201
Secretary of State for Transport; Lord Adonis
Secretary of State for Women and Equality; Harriet Harman

March 22nd
Word count; 9948
Secretary of State for Home Department; Alan Johnson

March 23rd
Word count; 9627
Secretary of State for Justice; Jack Straw
March 24th
Word count; 8873
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; Shaun Woodward
Prime Minister; Gordon Brown

March 25th
Word count; 9951
Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs; Hilary Benn

March 29th
Word count; 8920
Secretary of State for Defence; Bob Ainsworth

March 30th
Word count; 13941
Secretary of State for Health; Andy Burnham

Totals

44 Question Times
Total Word count; 429252
Glossary of terms related to the Irish political system and context

Ceann Comhairle; Speaker of the House in Dáil Éireann

Dáil Éireann; Lower House (and dominant branch) of the Oireachtas

Fianna Fáil; Irish political party. In power at the time the QTC was compiled.

Fine Gael; Irish political party. In opposition at the time the QTC was compiled

Gaeltacht; Irish-speaking areas of Ireland.

Leas Ceann Comhairle; Deputy Speaker of the House in Dáil Éireann

Oireachtas; National Parliament of Ireland

Seanad Éireann; Upper House of the Oireachtas

Sinn Féin; Irish Republican political party. Historically associated with the provisional IRA

Taoiseach; Head of government (Prime Minister)

Tánaiste; Deputy head of government

Teachta Dála (TD); Member of Parliament

Frequent speakers in the Irish QTC, January – June 2010

Brian Cowen; Taoiseach, Leader of Fianna Fáil

Enda Kenny; Leader of Fine Gael, leader of the opposition

Eamon Gilmore; Leader of the Labour Party, 2nd largest opposition party

Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin; Leader of Sinn Féin in Dáil Éireann;

John Gormley; Leader of the Green Party, Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government

Mary Coughlan; Tánaiste
Appendix C
E-mail 1

From: Declan.ODonnell  
Sent: 26 February 2010 11:06  
To: Michael.J.Griffin  
Subject: ethical issues in PhD research

Hi Michael,

I’m a PhD research student in Applied Linguistics, and I am investigating the language used by politicians in Dail Eireann. In the coming weeks, I will interview some people involved in the production of the parliamentary transcripts in this setting, namely a stenographer and an editor.

My supervisor is David Atkinson, and he asked me to send you a quick e-mail just to confirm that there are no major ethical issues involved in conducting these interviews. I do not anticipate any problems, since the participants are adults who are willing and available to be interviewed. I will record these interviews, anonymize the participants in the final PhD study, and ensure they sign a permission form before the interview.

Thanks in advance for your help,

Declan (O’Donnell).

E-mail 2

From: Michael.J.Griffin  
Sent: 26 February 2010 13:32  
To: Declan.ODonnell  
Subject: RE: ethical issues in PhD research

Declan,

You will have to fill out the attached FAHSS form. If you answer yes to any of the questions on the checklist, you will have to do the full ULREC form. I’m afraid you will not be able to do any of the proposed research until it has been cleared by the ethics committee.

Dr Michael Griffin, Lecturer in English Studies  
Course Director, MA in Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies  
School of Languages, Literature, Culture and Communication  
University of Limerick  

Telephone: 061-213170  
Office: Millstream Building MC1-001  
Office Hours, Spring Semester: Monday 3pm-6pm
FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CHECKLIST

All applicants must fill in this checklist. If you answer “No” to all the questions, please then fill in the application form. If you answer “Yes” to any of these questions, you must also fill in the Advanced Ethics Application Form (Appendix C) which is specifically designed with social research methodologies in mind. All applications must be accompanied by an Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendices A+B)

1. Does this application involve research with:
   a. People under the age of 18
   b. People with psychological impairments
   c. People under the control or influence of others (eg, people in care, prisoners)
   d. People with learning difficulties
   e. Relatives or parents of sick people
   f. People who only have a basic knowledge of English
   g. Students with whom the researcher has a teaching or supervisory relationship

2. Does this application deal with:
   a. Personally sensitive issues, such as suicide, bereavement, gender identity, sexuality, fertility, abortion, gambling, financial arrangements
   b. Illegal activities, illicit drug taking substance abuse, engaging in criminal behaviour
   c. Any act that might diminish self-respect or cause shame, embarrassment or regret?
   d. Research into politically sensitive and/or racially/ethically and/or commercially sensitive areas?
   e. Issues which might otherwise give rise to a risk of loss of employment for the participant?

3. Does the proposed research procedures involve:
   a. Use of personal records without consent
   b. Deception of participants or use of placebos
   c. The offer of inducements to participate
   d. Audio or visual recording without consent
   e. Invasive physical interventions or treatment
   f. Research that might put researchers or participants at substantial risk?
   g. Storage of data for less than 7 years?
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<tr>
<td>h. Revealing the identity of participants?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>i. Dealing with topics, using methodologies, or reporting of findings in a way that is likely to cause pain, discomfort, embarrassment, or changes of lifestyle for the participant?</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM

All applicants must complete this form and include an information sheet and consent form with their application. If you have ticked “yes” to any question on the checklist, please complete this form and the “Advanced Ethics Application Form”.

For Office Use Only: Application No.: ____________

Applicant Details:
Name:
ID Number:
E-mail Address:
Department/Programme of Study:
Type of Project (FYP/MA/PhD/Faculty):
Funding Body (where appropriate):
Project:
Supervisor/Other Investigators:

Signature of Applicant ____________________________  Date
Signature of Supervisor/HoD _______________________ Date

Project Details:
1. Research Plan: (100-200 words)

2. Research Purpose (100-200 words)

3. Research Methodology (100-200 words)

Ethical Considerations for the Proposed Research:
1. Who will your informants be?

2. How do you plan to gain access to/contact/approach your potential informants?

3. What arrangements have you made for anonymity or confidentiality (if appropriate)?

4. What, if any, is the particular vulnerability of your informants?

5. What arrangements are in place to ensure that informants know the purpose of the research and what their part in the research will be?
6. How will you ensure that informants are aware of their **right to refuse** to participate or **withdraw** at any time?

7. What are the psychological and/or physical **safety issues** for the researcher and/or the informant (if any) that arise from the research, and how will you deal with them?

8. How do you propose to **store** the information, and for how long?

**E-mail 3**

*From:* Declan.ODonnell  
*Sent:* 26 February 2010 14:11  
*To:* Michael.J.Griffin  
*Subject:* RE: ethical issues in PhD research

Thank you very much for that. I will fill out the form and send it to Carol Noonan immediately. The answer to all questions on the checklist is ‘no’ so I don’t believe I need to do the full ULREC form.

Thanks again for your time,

Declan

**E-mail 4**

*From:* Declan.ODonnell  
*Sent:* 22 March 2010 14:47  
*To:* Michael.J.Griffin; Carol.Noonan; David.Atkinson; ‘declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk’  
*Subject:* FAO research ethics committee

Hi Carol,

Please find attached a FAHSSREC Application form and a research plan for my PhD in Applied Linguistics. As the answers to all questions on the checklist are ‘no’, I don’t believe I need to fill out the full application form. I am going to send you a paper copy of both documents today also.

If you need to contact me in the coming months, I would be grateful if you could use my personal email address, declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk, as I will be away from UL for the next couple of months. I am also sending this mail to Michael Griffin and my supervisor David Atkinson; I am grateful to both of them for their help and advice in this matter.

Thanks in advance,

Declan O’Donnell

**Attachment**
Applicant Details:
Name: Declan O’Donnell
ID Number: 0620459
E-mail Address: declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk
Department/Programme of Study: LCS Faculty
Type of Project (FYP/MA/PhD/Faculty): Research PhD
Funding Body (where appropriate):
Project: Politeness in Irish English Political Language
Supervisor/Other Investigators: David Atkinson

Signature of Applicant ____________________________  Date
Signature of Supervisor/HoD _______________________ Date

Project Details:
1. Research Plan: (100-200 words)

2. Research Purpose (100-200 words)

3. Research Methodology (100-200 words)

Ethical Considerations for the Proposed Research:
1. Who will your informants be? An editor and a stenographer in Dail Eireann

2. How do you plan to gain access to/contact/approach your potential informants? E-mail

3. What arrangements have you made for anonymity or confidentiality (if appropriate)? Both the stenographer and editor will be anonymous in the final PhD thesis. All information gathered from interviews will be treated as confidential and solely used for this PhD research

4. What, if any, is the particular vulnerability of your informants? No particular vulnerability

5. What arrangements are in place to ensure that informants know the purpose of the research and what their part in the research will be? Both participants will be informed fully in advance of the purpose of the research and their part in the research.

6. How will you ensure that informants are aware of their right to refuse to participate or withdraw at any time? Participants will be made aware of these rights both verbally and in the information sheet.
7. What are the psychological and/or physical **safety issues** for the researcher and/or the informant (if any) that arise from the research, and how will you deal with them? None.

8. How do you propose to **store** the information, and for how long? Interviews will be recorded by the researcher, and stored as computer files for seven years.
Research Plan

In the first year of research, the researcher intends to do as much background reading as possible, as well as a pilot study in order to investigate the feasibility of investigating politeness in a parliamentary setting through a corpus-based approach. In addition, a pilot study to investigate the accuracy of transcription in the parliamentary record will be carried out. At this stage, the author hopes to interview an editor and a reporter from Dáil Eireann. In the second year of research the author hopes to compile the corpus based on the parliamentary record, as well as continuing background reading. In the third year of research, the author intends to analyse results from the corpus, and write the bulk of the PhD thesis. It may be necessary during this year to interview selected politicians to investigate their linguistic awareness, and to investigate how overtly they use linguistic politeness strategies in Dáil Eireann.

Research Purpose

The following higher order research questions have been formulated to direct the present research.

1. How suitable are the official Irish parliamentary transcripts as a corpus linguistic resource?
2. Are there differences in the use of certain politeness strategies (the use of “please” and “thank you”, and the use of “yes” and “no”) in Dáil Eireann when compared to a similar setting, the House of Commons in England?

Secondary research questions include:

3. How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary debates?
4. In the process of compiling the official parliamentary record, what biases are evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors? How does this affect the final product?
5. How consciously and overtly do Irish politicians use linguistic politeness strategies in the setting of the national parliament?
6. Where differences occur in the use of certain politeness strategies between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?
7. What does this study reveal about the nature of Irish English, and the differences which may occur between the language variety used in Ireland and what may be called Standard Formal English usage?

Research Methodology

The primary resource which the researcher intends to use is a corpus based on the Parliamentary Report. The Parliamentary Report is available free to view on the internet at http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebates.aspx?Dail=30&type=DAL This material is a matter of public record which is available to any members of the public, including researchers. The
corpus based on this Report will be compiled by the researcher and only used for the purpose of this PhD. In addition to this primary data, it is hoped to obtain secondary data about the compiling of the Parliamentary Report by interviewing a Dáil editor and reporter during the second year of research. It may also be necessary during the third year of research to interview politicians, in order to gain further secondary data and in order to add qualitative data to the quantitative data obtained from the corpus.

E-mail 5

From: Carol.Noonan
Sent: 22 March 2010 15:11
To: Declan.ODonnell; Michael.J.Griffin; David.Atkinson; 'declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk'
Subject: RE: FAO research ethics committee

Declan

Many thanks for your application. However we are missing some information. Please see attached the full FAHSS Ethics application form. You have sent me the basic application form filled out. You also need to complete the checklist, the information sheet and consent form. If you have ticked 'yes' to any of the checklist questions, you must also fill in Appendix C.

If you have any questions or queries, please do not hesitate to give me a shout. Our next meeting is this Thursday, so if you could get the missing information to me as soon as possible, I would appreciate it.

Also I will need a hard copy of the completed application form signed by you and your supervisor. I understand from your email, you will be off campus for a significant period of time. No mad hurry for this one, whenever you can get it to me will be fine.

Regards

Carol

Attachment

UNIVERSITY of LIMERICK
Guidelines for Research on Human Persons by Faculty or Students

Introduction
These guidelines relate to all research activities across FAHSS, including research by faculty, students and others. The fundamental principle underlying the guidelines is that all research activities involving the use of human beings participating in research must be reviewed and approved by FAHSSREC. Researchers may not solicit participation or begin data collection until they have received ethical approval from the REC. What follows are guidelines, not rules, and they can be adapted according to the research requirements of individuals.

All research must be performed “as written”, that is, that the investigators do not make substantive changes in the research design, the selection of participants, the informed consent process, or the instrumentation during the course of the study. If substantive changes are necessary, re-application is required.

Stages of Application Process
1. Fill in Application form(s), with supervisor where necessary. All applications must be accompanied by an Information Sheet and Consent Form. Where required, the Advanced Ethics Application Form should also be used.
2. Submit form to FAHSS REC (or Department/School Representative for FYP and Taught MA/LLM students)
3. Committee/Representative review application and give applicant feedback
4. Where necessary, applicant revises application and returns to Chairperson, FAHSS REC
5. Applicant is given formal ethical approval by Committee
6. Applicant contacts research participants with Information Sheet seeking consent to participate in research project
7. Applicant conducts research

NB No applications should be sent to ULREG (formerly ULREC). All applications are dealt with at a Faculty Level.

Application Procedure
All applicants must complete the checklist attached. The purpose of this checklist is to establish if the applicant needs to submit the Advanced Ethics Application Form (Appendix C), or the shorter FAHSSREC application form.

If the answer to all questions is “No” then the FAHSSREC Application Form should be completed and submitted. If the answer to any question is “Yes” then the Advanced Ethics Application Form should be completed and submitted, along with an Information Sheet and a Consent Form (see Appendices). These forms should be submitted both electronically and in hard copy (with all relevant signatures) to Carol Noonan at carol.noonan@ul.ie, Room FG-013, School of Law.
Where the research involves patients in hospital or employees of the HSE, ethical approval must be sought from the HSE REC rather than the University. All applications should include an information sheet and a consent form.

All applications must be typed: handwritten applications will not be accepted. Please ensure that all relevant signatures and accompanying documentation are included with the application: the application will be returned without consideration if it is not complete.

Upon applying for REC approval, your application will be reviewed at the next FAHSSREC meeting. These are held once every month, though in the summer months, they are not held as frequently. Applicants should, therefore, strive to submit an application between Sept-May.

You can contact your faculty representative for your department for advice on completing this form. These are Brendan Halpin (Sociology), Michael Griffin (LLCC), Tom Lodge (Politics), Ruan O’Donnell (History) Jane Edwards (Irish World Academy) and Jennifer Schweppe (Law).

Faculty, PhD, Research Masters and Research Associates
It is the duty of all faculty, PhD students, Research Masters students and Research Associates to ensure that their project is ethically sound. Where the research involves human participants, all researchers must in the FAHSSREC Application form, and make the relevant application depending on their answers to the checklist (ie, if they answer “No” to all questions, the FAHSSREC Form is completed, if they answer “Yes” to any question, the Advanced Ethics Application Form should be completed). Once the form is completed, it should be forwarded to the FAHSS REC Administrator, Carol Noonan (carol.noonan@ul.ie) and it will be considered at the next FAHSS REC meeting.

FYP and Taught Masters Research
It is the duty of all students to ensure that their project is ethically sound. Where the research does not involve human participants, this will be done as part of the Author’s Declaration, which should include a statement to the effect that “I understand the ethical implications of my research, and this work meets the requirements of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee.”

Where the research involves human participants, FYP and Taught Masters students must fill in the FAHSSREC Application form, preferably with their supervisor, and make the relevant application depending on their answers to the checklist (ie, if they answer “No” to all questions, the FAHSSREC Form is completed, if they answer “Yes” to any question, the Advanced Ethics Application Form should be completed). These applications should be forwarded to the FAHSSREC representative in their department for tentative approval, who will subsequently commend the application to the Committee for their final approval. Where the representative is not willing to approve the proposal for any reason, they will send it back to the applicant who should, upon review, forward it to the FAHSS REC Administrator, Carol Noonan (carol.noonan@ul.ie) and it will be considered at the next FAHSS REC meeting. Students intending to carry out research involving human participants should be aware of the following deadlines: FYPs – Friday Week 3 First Semester; Taught Masters – Friday week 6 Second Semester. The form is available from your supervisor, the representative in your Department, Jennifer Schweppe or Carol Noonan.
Where students have sought and received ethical approval, they should include evidence of this (such as an email from the Committee) in their thesis.

If any student conducts research on human participants without ethical approval, this could be a disciplinary matter, and may have an impact on the grade received. The actual decision will be made on a case by case basis and decided by the relevant course board.

**Guidelines for Applicants**

The main principle of the research ethics policy of the University of Limerick is that informants participating in any research are provided with information on the project they may be participating in, (including details of what is expected of them, arrangements for confidentiality, how the information collected will be used and their rights as informants) and give their consent to participate by signing a consent form or by providing an indication of consent on the questionnaire itself.

What follows are some brief guidelines on particular aspects of research. It is important to note that these are guidelines: the Committee will in fact deal with each application on a case by case basis.

**Research involving participants under the age of 18**

There are three tiers of research that can be done on participants under the age of 18:

- Research in schools related to schooling
- Research in schools not related to schooling
- Research on under 18s which is not done in a school environment.

For all categories of research of this type, applicants should fill in the Child Protection Guidelines and have Garda Clearance. The signed Child Protection Declaration should be included with the application form.

For research done in schools it is vital that the school give informed consent to the research being carried out. The teacher involved with the particular student group may also need to give their informed consent. For this type of research, we recommend that an “opt-out” letter be sent to parents, where they are given an Information sheet on the research which is carried out, indicating that if they do not want their child involved in the research, they can opt out of the project. Where the subject matter of the research is particularly sensitive or contentious, it may be necessary to get the express permission of parents to conduct the research, even in schools, and in these circumstances, an “opt-in” letter should be sent to parents.

Where research is being carried out on participants under the age of 18 outside a school environment, an opt-in consent form is vital. It may also be necessary to have an independent observer present at the time the research is being carried out to safeguard the welfare of the participants.

Sometimes research is carried out in a classroom which does not involve direct communication with the students themselves. In these circumstances, it is advisable to inform parents that the research is being carried out, by way of an “opt-out” letter.

In all cases involving research on participants under the age of 18, reference should be made to the University of Limerick Child Protection Guidelines (available at
www.ul.ie/researchethics) and the acceptance of these guidelines should be indicated through the Child Protection form (also available at www.ul.ie/researchethics).

Guidelines for research involving University Students
Surveys are often carried out on students for the purposes of evaluating teaching. Students should always be made aware that they do not have to participate in the research, and anonymity should always be respected. It is suggested that, where possible, an external individual should conduct the research (such as the Centre for Teaching and Learning, or an independent faculty member) and that the anonymised data should be presented to the researcher. These are general guidelines, however, and it is accepted that there may be exceptions to these general principles. Where a researcher intends to depart from these general principles, reasons should be given why. Researchers should ensure that no participant in the study is under the age of 18.

Guidelines on the re-use of State or University Data
Data can be collected by the University or a State Department for one purpose, and re-analysed by a researcher for a completely different research question (for example, data on Sulis, Online Student Records etc). Where a researcher proposes to do this, informed consent should be obtained the from body who has ownership of the data. The data received should be made anonymous where appropriate, and the research cannot go beyond the boundaries of the consent agreement. Researchers should always be aware of the terms of the Data Protection Act 2003 when conducting this type of research.

Guidelines where identity is being revealed
On occasion, it will be impossible to produce meaningful research while protecting the identity of the research participant(s). Where this is the case, interviewees should be told about the general purpose of the research before the interview begins, which is best done through a preliminary, independent contact so that the interviewee has time to reflect on any concerns they may have about the topic under investigation.

If guarantees of anonymity are given these should always be respected (ideally, though, key research findings should not be supported only by non-attributable anonymous interviews - at the very least permission should be sought to identify informant's position, occupation, or whatever other descriptive information might give their testimony authority).

Permission for direction quotation needs to be obtained (such permission should indicate the context of quotation - whether it is for publication or merely for inclusion in an unpublished dissertation). The researcher should establish whether the permission for quotation has a time limit.

The informant should be offered the opportunity to review the transcript; if the interview has not been tape recorded but instead the researcher has reconstructed the conversation from notes or shorthand then the review of the transcript is essential. If the interview is used extensively for a published work the informant should be sent a copy of the final publication (or at least a photocopy of the sections in which their own words appear).

Generally speaking interview testimony should not be used to discredit the participant or in way that might cause them embarrassment; this is an issue for judgement - well known personalities in public life who are used to journalistic commentary may constitute an exception to this rule. If information is given by the informant for background only, and not
for attribution, this should be respected. The same moral ethics about confidentiality apply to academic researchers as those which apply to journalists.

The researcher should establish whether they can make the transcript available to other researchers, and if so what any conditions of access and use may be.

**Guidelines regarding research in other jurisdictions**
Where research is being carried out in a jurisdiction other than Ireland, efforts should be made to secure ethical approval from a local research ethics committee. Where this is not possible, ethical approval should be sought from the FAHSSREC.

**Guidelines regarding email surveys and consent**
Oftentimes, surveys will be sent out by email, where participants are asked to click a link and fill in the survey at an online resource, such as surveymonkey or similar. Where this is the case, it can be counter-productive to ask for a signed consent form. If this is the case, along with the Information Sheet contained in the email, the issues relating to Consent should also be included, along with a statement to the effect that by clicking the link, the participant is deemed to consent, though he or she can withdraw at any time.

**Guidelines regarding the storage of information**
Information should be stored in a secure place, such as a locked cabinet in an office, and/or on password protected/encrypted files. All data must be kept for seven years after collection.

**Guidelines regarding Information Sheets and Consent Forms**
All information sheets and consent forms should have the official UL logo at the top of the page. They should also include contact details of the primary investigator, the researcher and ULREG. Where the researcher is a student, contact details of their supervisor should also be included.
The Information Sheet to be provided to participants should include the following:

1. Brief description of topic and method – interview/group discussion etc. The description should briefly explain what a participant will be expected to do.
2. Amount of time involved for participant.
3. Where the research will take place- will participant have any say in this?
4. Any risks or benefits to participant.
5. Explanation of participant’s right to anonymity. (Do not promise anonymity unless it can be guaranteed)
6. Rights of participant not to answer questions and withdraw at any time. Also right to contact ULREG if have any concerns about participating in the research.
7. Contact information: name of researcher/supervisor and Chair of ULREG Include e-mail addresses and phone numbers for researcher and supervisor, where appropriate, as well as for ULREG. Details for ULREG are as follows:
Chairperson of ULREG, c/o Anne O’Dwyer, Castletroy, Limerick. Email: Anne.ODwyer@ul.ie or phone at 061 202672
Consent Section:
I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled “Name of Research Project”.

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video/audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details.

______________________________________         __________________________
Signature of participant                                               Date
APPENDIX C – ADVANCED ETHICS APPLICATION FORM

Please attach your completed Faculty Ethics Form to this application and answer the following questions where relevant, with a maximum of 300 words per question.

You must answer the following questions:

1. What are the ethical issues involved in your research?

2. Explain why the use of human participants is essential to your research project.

3. How will you ensure that informed consent is freely given by participants?

Answer the following questions where relevant to your research project (you must answer at least one):

4. How will you ensure that vulnerable research participants are protected? (Please state clearly if you abide by the Child Protection Guidelines and/or have Garda Clearance where necessary) (You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 1 of the checklist)

5. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive issues? (You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 2 of the checklist)

6. How will you protect participants if your research deals with sensitive research procedures? (You must answer this question if you have ticked “yes” to any question in Part 3 of the checklist)

7. Outline how you intend to comply with any established procedures which have been approved by ULREG for your research.

8. How will you manage data protection issues?
From: Declan.ODonnell
Sent: 22 March 2010 15:47
To: Carol.Noonan; Michael.J.Griffin; David.Atkinson; 'declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk'
Subject: RE: FAO research ethics committee

Thanks Carol,

And sorry! I had those extra documents saved elsewhere. My mistake, please find them attached here. I’m just putting the hard copy into the post for you now.

Thanks again,
Declan

Attachment

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
CHECKLIST

All applicants must fill in this checklist. If you answer “No” to all the questions, please then fill in the application form. If you answer “Yes” to any of these questions, you must also fill in the Advanced Ethics Application Form (Appendix C) which is specifically designed with social research methodologies in mind. All applications must be accompanied by an Information Sheet and Consent Form (Appendices A+B)

4. Does this application involve research with:
   a. People under the age of 18 No
   b. People with psychological impairments No
   c. People under the control or influence of others (eg, people in care, prisoners) No
   d. People with learning difficulties No
   e. Relatives or parents of sick people No
   f. People who only have a basic knowledge of English No
   g. Students with whom the researcher has a teaching or supervisory relationship No

5. Does this application deal with:
a. Personally sensitive issues, such as suicide, bereavement, gender identity, sexuality, fertility, abortion, gambling, financial arrangements  
   b. Illegal activities, illicit drug taking substance abuse, engaging in criminal behaviour  
   c. Any act that might diminish self-respect or cause shame, embarrassment or regret?  
   d. Research into politically sensitive and/or racially/ethically and/or commercially sensitive areas?  
   e. Issues which might otherwise give rise to a risk of loss of employment for the participant?  

6. Does the proposed research procedures involve:  
   a. Use of personal records without consent  
   b. Deception of participants or use of placebos  
   c. The offer of inducements to participate  
   d. Audio or visual recording without consent  
   e. Invasive physical interventions or treatment  
   f. Research that might put researchers or participants at substantial risk?  
   g. Storage of data for less than 7 years?  
   h. Revealing the identity of participants?  
   i. Dealing with topics, using methodologies, or reporting of findings in a way that is likely to cause pain, discomfort, embarrassment, or changes of lifestyle for the participant?
8. This PhD research involves investigating some aspects of facework used in Dáil Eireann through a corpus compiled from data in the Parliamentary Report. Although not the primary purpose of the research, the researcher wants to gain information about how the Parliamentary Report is compiled, and this is the purpose of interviews with a Dáil editor and reporter.

9. These interviews should take between 20 minutes and 40 minutes each.

10. The researcher will travel to Dublin and interview participants in their offices. It is possible that clarification may later be sought by e-mail.

11. Participants’ anonymity is fully guaranteed.

12. It is within the rights of participants not to answer questions and withdraw at any time. Participants may also contact ULREG if they have any concerns about participating in the research.

13. Contact information: Researcher; Declan O’Donnell (email declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk).

Supervisor; David Atkinson (email david.atkinson@ul.ie)

Chairperson of ULREG, c/o Anne O’Dwyer, Castletroy, Limerick. Email: Anne.ODwyer@ul.ie or phone at 061 202672
FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPENDIX B – CONSENT FORM

Consent Section:
I, the undersigned, declare that I am willing to take part in research for the project entitled “Politeness in Irish English Political Language”

- I declare that I have been fully briefed on the nature of this study and my role in it and have been given the opportunity to ask questions before agreeing to participate.
- The nature of my participation has been explained to me and I have full knowledge of how the information collected will be used.
- I am also aware that my participation in this study may be recorded (video/audio) and I agree to this. However, should I feel uncomfortable at any time I can request that the recording equipment be switched off. I am entitled to copies of all recordings made and am fully informed as to what will happen to these recordings once the study is completed.
- I fully understand that there is no obligation on me to participate in this study.
- I fully understand that I am free to withdraw my participation at any time without having to explain or give a reason.
- I am also entitled to full confidentiality in terms of my participation and personal details.

______________________________________         __________________________
Signature of participant                                               Date
Dear Declan,

Thank you for your application to the FAHSS Research Ethics Committee, reference number FAHSS_REC176. Before approving your application, the Committee would ask you to address the following issues:

1. Use UL email address on all correspondence
2. Complete "Project Details" part of application form
3. Clarify if permission is required from your participants' superiors to take part in your research project

Best wishes,

Jennifer

______________________________
Jennifer Schweppe  
Lecturer in law  
University of Limerick  
Ireland  
www.law.ul.ie

Email: Jennifer.Schweppe@ul.ie  
Office: +353 (0)61 213150  
Fax: +353 (0)61 202417
Hi Jennifer,

Thank you for your mail this morning. Please find your concerns addressed below.

1) My UL email address is declan.odonnell@ul.ie
2) Please find attached the ethics form including ‘project details’. I had included this in a separate file previously – apologies for any confusion.
3) Permission is not required from participants’ supervisors to take part in this research. Participants are middle/high ranking civil servants with a large degree of autonomy in the workplace.

Thanks again for your time, and apologies for any confusion.

Best,

Declan

Attachment

FACULTY OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
APPLICATION FORM

**Applicant Details:**
Name: Declan O’Donnell  
ID Number: 0620459  
E-mail Address: declan.odonnell@yahoo.co.uk
Department/Programme of Study: LCS Faculty
Type of Project (FYP/MA/PhD/Faculty): Research PhD
Funding Body (where appropriate):
Project: Politeness in Irish English Political Language
Supervisor/Other Investigators: David Atkinson

Signature of Applicant ____________________________  Date
Signature of Supervisor/HoD _______________________ Date

**Project Details:**
1. Research Plan: (100-200 words)
In the first year of research, the researcher intends to do as much background reading as possible, as well as a pilot study in order to investigate the feasibility of investigating politeness in a parliamentary setting through a corpus-based approach. In addition, a pilot study to investigate the accuracy of transcription in the parliamentary record will be carried out. At this stage, the author hopes to interview an editor and a reporter from Dáil Eireann. In the second year of research the author hopes to compile the corpus based on the parliamentary record, as well as continuing background reading. In the third year of research, the author intends to analyse results from the corpus, and write the bulk of the PhD thesis. It may be necessary during this year to interview selected politicians to investigate their linguistic awareness, and to investigate how overtly they use linguistic politeness strategies in Dáil Eireann.

2. Research Purpose (100-200 words)
The following higher order research questions have been formulated to direct the present research.

8. How suitable are the official Irish parliamentary transcripts as a corpus linguistic resource?
9. Are there differences in the use of certain politeness strategies (the use of “please” and “thank you”, and the use of “yes” and “no”) in Dáil Eireann when compared to a similar setting, the House of Commons in England?

Secondary research questions include;

10. How feasible is it to study politeness strategies through a corpus linguistics framework, particularly in the context of parliamentary debates?
11. In the process of compiling the official parliamentary record, what biases are evident (both deliberate and unconscious) in the work of Dáil stenographers and editors? How does this affect the final product?
12. How consciously and overtly do Irish politicians use linguistic politeness strategies in the setting of the national parliament?
13. Where differences occur in the use of certain politeness strategies between the parliamentary settings in Ireland and England, what may account for these differences?
14. What does this study reveal about the nature of Irish English, and the differences which may occur between the language variety used in Ireland and what may be called Standard Formal English usage?

10. Research Methodology (100-200 words)
The primary resource which the researcher intends to use is a corpus based on the Parliamentary Report. The Parliamentary Report is available free to view on the internet at http://debates.oireachtas.ie/DDebates.aspx?Dail=30&type=DAL. This material is a matter of public record which is available to any members of the public, including researchers. The corpus based on this Report will be compiled by the researcher and only used for the purpose of this PhD. In addition to this primary data, it is hoped to obtain secondary data about the
compiling of the Parliamentary Report by interviewing a Dáil editor and reporter during the second year of research. It may also be necessary during the third year of research to interview politicians, in order to gain further secondary data and in order to add qualitative data to the quantitative data obtained from the corpus.

**Ethical Considerations for the Proposed Research:**
1. **Who** will your informants be? An editor and a stenographer in Dail Eireann

2. How do you plan to **gain access to/contact/approach** your potential informants? E-mail

3. What arrangements have you made for **anonymity or confidentiality** (if appropriate)? Both the stenographer and editor will be anonymous in the final PhD thesis. All information gathered from interviews will be treated as confidential and solely used for this PhD research

4. What, if any, is the **particular vulnerability of your informants**?
   No particular vulnerability

5. What arrangements are in place to ensure that informants know the **purpose of the research** and what their part in the research will be?
   Both participants will be informed fully in advance of the purpose of the research and their part in the research.

6. How will you ensure that informants are aware of their **right to refuse** to participate or **withdraw** at any time?
   Participants will be made aware of these rights both verbally and in the information sheet.

7. What are the psychological and/or physical **safety issues** for the researcher and/or the informant (if any) that arise from the research, and how will you deal with them?
   None.

8. How do you propose to **store** the information, and for how long?
   Interviews will be recorded by the researcher, and stored as computer files for seven years.

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**E-mail 9**

**From:** Jennifer.Schweppe  
**Sent:** Mon 3/29/2010 1:41 PM  
**To:** Declan.ODonnell  
**Subject:** RE: Ethics committee

Dear Declan,

Thank you for your email. While your participants are high ranking civil servants, they are still bound by the terms of the Official Secrets Act etc. Can you confirm that they have the capacity to be part of your research project?

Best wishes,
Jennifer

**E-mail 10**

*From:* Declan.ODonnell  
*Sent:* 12 April 2010 05:13  
*To:* Jennifer.Schweppe  
*Subject:* RE: Ethics committee

Hi Jennifer,

Apologies for the delay in getting back to you. I e-mailed my contact in Dail Eireann about your concern, and I attach her reply below, underneath my signature. I've removed her name to protect her confidentiality. I hope this addresses your concerns.

Best,

Declan

From: "*************@oireachtas.ie" <*************@oireachtas.ie>  
Add sender to Contacts  
To: "Declan ODonnell" <declanteacher@yahoo.co.uk>

Hi Declan,

I can confirm my co-operation and participation in this interview/information-giving process is not contrary to my contract terms and conditions. Purely as a matter of courtesy, I have informally discussed the matter with my manager and received full approval. I am delighted to be of whatever help I can to you, and look forward to scheduling an interview with you soon.

Regards, **** **********.  
Assistant Editor of Debates

**E-mail 11**

*From:* Jennifer.Schweppe  
*Sent:* 12 April 2010 12.25 PM  
*To:* Declan.ODonnell  
*Subject:* RE: Ethics committee

Dear Declan,
Thank you for your clarification. Your project has now been granted ethical approval from the FAHSS Research Ethics Committee.

Good luck with your project, which sounds both interesting and valuable.

Best wishes,

Jennifer