

Questioning and Debating in UK and Ghanaian Parliamentary Discourse

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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Abstract

This study examines UK and Ghanaian parliamentary questions and debates. Using a corpus-assisted discourse studies approach, it investigates questions from transitivity (process types) and debates from evaluatory perspectives. We explore similarities and differences between UK and Ghanaian parliamentary questions and find that, while question forms in the two parliaments are similar, there are significant differences as well. For example, indirect *yes/no* interrogatives in the Ghanaian data are a major difference between the two. Also, while Ghanaian MPs mark politeness directly by linguistic/word forms, such as the use of modal past, UK MPs mark politeness indirectly. The differences appear to be largely influenced by Ghanaian language interference and cultural differences. From a transitivity standpoint, in both parliaments, mental process interrogatives are the most frequent, followed by verbal, relational and then material processes. We therefore conclude that parliamentary politics can be represented through *think, tell, evaluate* and *do* (TTED) processes. Analyses of the debates show that MPs' concern for the needs of the people becomes a focal point in the debates. Whereas government MPs think that people's socio-economic conditions are better, opposition MPs think they are worse. This leads us to the conclusion that evaluation in parliamentary debates could be described as a rectangle (drawing on van Dijk's ideological *square*), since there is disproportionateness between MPs' praise and/or criticism for their governments' policies, which reflects the MPs' ideological biases. In describing the circumstances of the people, UK MPs use more complex intensifying adverbs and adjectives than their Ghanaian counterparts, a variation which we attribute to first and second language differences. There appears to be a disparity between MPs' show of concern for the needs of the people and the public perception that MPs care only about their personal interests. MPs construct themselves as agents of the people, and tactically hide behind it their ideological biases.

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

By analysing the forms and linguistic patterns of questions and debates, this study tries to unpack what holds parliamentarians' (MPs') attention in the course of their professional engagements as representatives of the people. We argue that, for MPs questioning Prime Ministers and ministers in the United Kingdom (UK) and Ghanaian parliaments respectively, questions mean offering directives (e.g. commanding, ordering, requesting, suggesting) and asserting (e.g. praising, criticising, accusing, challenging, expressing doubt) rather than simply seeking information or confirmation, as is usual for questions. The proposition is that to consider parliamentary questions in their ordinary sense is unhelpful. Further, in the parliamentary context where MPs deliberate government policies, debating could be seen as a politically- and ideologically-oriented evaluation of the concerns of the people, whereby MPs 'offer an account or critique of the existing order', undertake to 'provide a model of a desired future' and outline why the status quo should be maintained or 'how [and why] political change can and should be brought about' (Haywood 2000: 22). To this end, questioning and debating become a demonstration of mind games and a struggle for psychological one-upmanship and power. In other words, MPs show psychologically manipulative behaviour intended to take advantage over each other. Pragmatically speaking, therefore, we contend that, to be able to interpret what MPs say, one needs to go 'beyond the surface structure', because 'politicians' language does not merely convey the message, but creates for the listener a controlled cognitive environment from which any interpretation is manipulated' (Wilson 1990: 105, 45). Going beyond the surface structure is crucial because parliamentary interaction could be regarded as '*acting*', or simply a performance (Ilie 2010a: 333). Questioning and debating in parliamentary discourse can be understood only within the context in which they are performed. They are performed by MPs, who are engaged in politics in the formal political institution of parliament, where there is 'a struggle for power, between those who seek to assert and maintain their power and those who seek to resist it' (Chilton 2004: 3). There is a struggle for the control, management and distribution of 'social goods', 'anything that a group of people believes to be a source of power, status, or worth' as, for example, 'money, control, possessions, verbal abilities...'

(Gee 2001[1999]: 2). Within parliament, such a struggle exists between government and opposition MPs, when they are engaged in two of the several parliamentary deliberative mechanisms, questions and debates, which are sub-genres of parliamentary discourse. In order to engender an understanding of the different ways MPs construct their messages, the thesis explores questions and debates in UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse.

1.2 Review of relevant literature

The purpose of this section is to discuss a range of studies that have been conducted on parliamentary discourse in general and parliamentary questions and debates, specifically. We try to show the growth of parliamentary discourse research in the West, especially, and compare with the low level of parliamentary discourse research in Africa, generally, and the Ghanaian context, specifically, in order to demonstrate how and where this study fits into the ongoing research on parliamentary discourse.

1.2.1 Parliamentary discourse, questions and debates

Parliamentary discourse is an institutional discourse. Ilie (2010b: 60; see also Ilie 2007) describes it as a ‘norm-regulated interaction which takes place among politically elected representatives for deliberation and decision-making purposes in specific political institutional settings [legislative assemblies or parliaments] and which displays recurrent communication patterns’. Apart from engaging in their constitutionally-mandated legislative, ‘problem solving and decision making’ function (Ilie 2010c: 1), MPs also engage in image-enhancing oratorical deliberation, which usually leads to adversarial encounters among them.

Due to its practical importance, studying parliamentary discourse has been recognised as crucial. Ilie (2010c: 1) succinctly states the significance of and motivation for studying parliamentary discourses, thus:

[i]n a period of increasing social paradigm shifts and political polarisations it becomes necessary to examine the underlying negotiation processes and participants’ deeper motivations, as well as the ways in which political agendas are institutionally represented, as well as misrepresented, in national parliaments. If we are to understand the role of parliamentary practices in identifying, defining and articulating deliberation issues we need to explore the recurring linguistic patterns and rhetorical strategies preferred by Members of Parliament (MPs), which help to reveal their hidden agendas and ideological, or tactical, bias.

By studying MPs' patterns of questioning and debating, the current study attempts to illuminate the motivations of the MPs and the extent to which they are concerned with what affects the citizenry. In this sense, studying parliamentary discourse is a means of contributing to socio-politico-economic development because 'the discourse of parliament results in ... concrete action in the outside world, establishing regulations as to what must, may and may not be done in a given society' (Bayley 2004: 12). One of the ways of ensuring the realisation of such tangibility is to study parliamentary discourse to uncover the interest and commitment of parliamentarians as representatives of their constituents.

In the last decade or so, scholarly research in parliamentary practice and discourse has grown exponentially in linguistics, political science and sociology, with an interdisciplinary approach (Ilie 2010c: 5; Bayley 2004a: 8). This is quite revealing, considering that by 2004 'little attention had been paid to the language of parliament' (Bayley 2004a: 9). Apart from specific articles and journals (e.g. *Parliamentary Affairs*, *Journal of Parliamentary Studies*, *Journal of Legislative Studies*, *Journal of constitutional and Parliamentary Studies*), three recent edited books, Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu's (2012) *Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures*, Ilie's *European Parliaments under Scrutiny* (2010) and Bayley's *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse* (2004b), exemplify the extent of scholarly research in parliamentary discourse and practice in Europe in particular and the United States. The articles in these books cover expansive areas of parliamentary discourse.

As its name suggests, Bayley's *Cross-Cultural Perspectives on Parliamentary Discourse* contains articles that do comparative studies of some European parliaments (eight of the ten articles in the book do a comparative study of at least two of the parliaments of Britain, Sweden, Italy, Germany and Spain). The specific areas covered include parliamentary interactional rules and regulations and how MPs circuit them for specific purposes; similarities and differences in parliamentary debates; and methodological models for parliamentary discourse studies, including the use of critical discourse analysis and corpus linguistics.

In her introduction to *European Parliaments under Scrutiny* (2010) (which contains 11 articles), Ilie (2010c) discusses various features of parliamentary discourse, including parliamentary sub-genres (ministerial statements, parliamentary speeches, debates, interpolation/short debate and question time), parliamentary questioning, and parliamentary identities and roles. The thematic areas of the book centre on

‘parliamentary roles and identities’, ‘ritualised strategies of parliamentary confrontation’, ‘procedural, discursive and rhetorical particularities of post-Communist parliaments’ and ‘contrastive studies of parliamentary rhetoric and argumentation’ (e.g. the Dutch and European, and the British and Spanish parliaments).

Consisting of 17 selected ‘papers presented at the International Conference on the parliamentary discourse held on Bucharest, on September 23-24, 2011’ (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2012: 1), the four-part volume of *Parliamentary Discourses across Cultures* (2012) touches on thematic areas of parliamentary discourse in various national parliaments (the British, Finnish, Australian, Canadian, European, Portuguese, Bulgarian and Romanian parliaments), namely: ‘Some Concepts in Parliamentary Debates’, ‘Topics and Attitudes’ in parliamentary debates, ‘Linguistic and Pragma-Rhetorical Approaches’ and ‘Tradition and Modernity in the Romanian Parliamentary Discourse’. According to Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu (2012: 2), the authors base their research ‘on flexible, interdisciplinary, and multi-layered methodologies [and] are able to offer an image of the multifaceted manifestations of the parliamentary debate’.

The articles in these books highlight the fact that eclectic and multilayered methods can illuminate parliamentary discourse studies. The authors tackle parliamentary discourse from a number of angles: pragma-linguistic and pragma-rhetorical, macro- and micro-linguistic perspectives and corpus-based approaches. For example, Ilie’s (2010a) *Identity co-construction in parliamentary discourse practices* employs a pragma-rhetorical approach to examine parliamentary interpersonal confrontation, parliamentary identities and parliamentary positioning among MPs in the UK parliament, concluding that MPs manage two forms of identities – both personal and institutional – during parliamentary interactions. Marques (2012) employs the same approach to study emotions and argumentation in the Portuguese parliament and says that emotions are a fundamental part of parliamentary discourse. The current study employs a multilevel methodology, using a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach, with inputs from corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches (see section 2.5). It contributes to and offers additional insights into how combinatory approaches can reveal the complexities and equivocations of political language and parliamentary discourse (specifically, parliamentary questions and debates).

In addition to indicating culture-specific differences in parliamentary discourses and practices, the articles point to significant similarities and commonalities in parliamentary practices among the various parliaments studied, which perhaps indicate

that nations are becoming more and more similar in governance practices. The differences also point to the fact that national, social and cultural differences affect the way different groups of people understand world phenomena (for example, governance). To have significant differences in the discursive practices of, for example, national parliaments in Europe may attest to ideological differences between nations of the world. This makes it more crucial to study other parliaments, like the Ghanaian parliament, which hitherto have received little or no such discourse studies. As Ilie (2010d: 883) notes, ‘in order to identify and understand the common, as well as the distinctive features of various parliamentary practices in national parliaments, more cross-cultural studies will have to be carried out’. Thus, the current study contributes to such understanding of parliamentary practices by examining aspects of parliamentary questions and debates.

Parliamentary questions offer MPs an opportunity to hold the executive accountable for their political performance, ‘intentions, statements, and actions [and/or inactions]’ (Ilie 2006: 192). The questions can be written or oral. Written questions are mostly given in advance through parliamentary formal procedures. However, oral questions are usually spontaneous. This study is interested in oral questions. Oral questions are spoken requests for information. In the UK and Ghanaian parliaments, these questions are not supposed to seek or express opinions, contain arguments, inferences, imputations and offensive expressions (Jack 2011: 358-359; Rogers and Walters 2006: 312; The Parliament of Ghana 2000; Campion and Cocks 1950: 342-343). Ilie (2006: 191) states that ‘parliamentary questioning strategies are not intended to elicit particular answers, but rather to embarrass and/or to challenge the respondent to make uncomfortable or revealing declarations’. Ilie (2015: 9; 2006: 191) further states that it appears oral questions are asked mainly for publicity purposes, ‘whereas written questions are asked when the primary goal is to obtain information’, adding that the question is ‘usually a pretext to attack or praise the government and involves information that is already known’. This research explores Prime Minister’s questions (PMQs) in the House of Commons (the Commons), and Ghanaian Minister’s questions (GMQs).

According to Ilie (2006: 192), in the Commons, questions are asked in an order that ‘is previously established by a process of random selection’ and it is the Speaker who calls up MPs to ask questions, the first of which is always about the Prime Minister’s engagements. After the first question, MPs have the opportunity to ask ‘supplementary questions, which are the really tricky ones for the Prime Minister, as well as for the other responding Ministers, who have to be prepared for all kinds of unexpected questions’ (Ilie

2006: 192). Questions in the Ghanaian parliament are predetermined and submitted in written form, but MPs have the opportunity to ask supplementary questions which are spontaneous, even though the supplementary questions should be about the subject with which the initial question was concerned. It is in these supplementary questions that this study is interested. Even though oral questions in the Commons are in principle not predetermined, there is evidence that they are mostly planted for political purposes (*Inside the Commons – Lifting the Lid* 2015; Parkinson 2014). Ilie (2006: 192) has stated that ‘Question Time becomes particularly confrontational when the questioning is carried out by members of the Opposition’; for which reason it ‘has been described as “a face-threatening genre”’ [and] ‘that the high frequency of face-threatening acts is counterbalanced by a wide range of politeness strategies’. Parliamentary questions follow question-response sequences which represent the default adjacency pairs (Ilie 2016). Wilson (1990: 146) has found that that *yes/no* interrogatives are the most frequent type of interrogatives in parliamentary question. This is corroborated by Harris (2001: 457) and adds that *yes/no* interrogatives in Prime Minister’s questions are usually designed in such a way that they are followed by a ‘proposition oriented in a broad sense either to information or ... to action’, as for example: *will the Prime Minister send + a proposition*. Harris (2001: 457) further states that, sometimes, the questions ‘seek expressions of opinion’ in contravention of the parliamentary rules of questioning. In the context of parliamentary questions, such propositions are very significant, as they affect the meaning and implication of the question and sometimes indirectly make the question appear as offering information.

Generally speaking, debates are a ‘discussion that takes place in parliament’ (House of Commons 2013b: 1). The debates are a means by which MPs appraise government policies, criticize or justify policy proposals, prior to their adoption or rejection normally by voting. MPs take turns to express their views on a particular subject that is being debated. Ilie (2006: 191) describes parliamentary debates as:

a formal discussion on a particular topic that is strictly controlled by an institutional set of rules and presided over by the Speaker of the House. ...
 “the style of debate in the House has traditionally been based on cut-and-thrust: listening to other Members’ speeches and intervening in them in spontaneous reaction to opponents’ views.”

For van Dijk (2004: 339) parliamentary debate is principally defined by the fact that the people who are engaged in it ‘are Members of Parliament (MPs), that the debates take place in the political institution of Parliament, and that the MPs are “doing politics” or

“doing legislation” among contextual features’. ‘Doing politics’ means that the debate involves not only arguments and deliberation over policy decisions, but also struggle over power to control the affairs and resources of the country, leading to confrontation between government and opposition MPs in a polarised manner. Parliamentary debates are said to be the most confrontational of all the parliamentary sub-genres (Ilie 2006: 191).

Having described what questions and debates are, we will explore further ways in which parliamentary questions and debates have been studied, including pragmatic and rhetorical, pragma-dialectical and corpus linguistic approaches.

1.2.2 Pragmatic and rhetorical studies on parliamentary questions and debates

Being adversarial in nature, parliamentary questions and debates have been investigated from pragmatic perspectives such as politeness and speech acts, face and face-threatening acts (FTAs) (Bull and Wells 2012; Murphy 2014; 2012a, 2012b; 2012c; Ilie 2006; Ilie 2004; Harris 2001). FTAs are ‘acts that by their nature run contrary to the face wants [i.e. the need to be approved of and unimpeded] of the addressee and/or of the speaker’ (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65). David, Govindasamy and Mohana (2009) investigate levels of politeness in Malaysian parliamentary discourse, and assert that intra-party FTAs are more containable than inter-party ones in the Malaysian parliament. They aver that cultural factors are key in reducing and defusing FTAs and confrontation during debates. Murphy’s (2014) study of how (im)politeness can be applied to both questions and answers during UK Prime Ministers questions is equally significant. Speech acts and politeness (see sections 2.4.1 and 2.4.3) partly inform the current study as it explores parliamentary questions and debates, which exhibit high levels of adversariality between government and opposition MPs.

We view parliamentary questions and debates as performing actions, as Ilie (2010a: 333) puts it: ‘for parliamentarians who participate in the political decision-making process by interacting and debating, *speaking is acting*’. Ilie (2015: 9-10) also states that ‘in parliamentary interaction ... speech act sequences allow interlocutors to negotiate not only the pros and cons of topic-related issues, but also the MPs’ status, roles, and power positions’. Roibu and Constantinescu (2010: 363) have stated that in Romanian parliamentary debates, the indirect speech form ‘is more offending and conveys a more aggressive attack’. Valk (2003: 317, 326) finds significant use of

‘indirect language use’, including ‘indirect accusation’ as ‘part of a strategy of impression management, aimed at legitimizing the standpoints of the Right and by implication delegitimizing the Left’ in French parliamentary discourse. According to van Dijk (2000: 100), in their debates, when MPs

want to restrict the power or resources of refugees or minorities, they will tend to engage in a series of acts that attribute negative properties to the outgroup ... often in an indirect or mitigated way in order to avoid counter-accusations of racism or intolerance.

The analysis in the current study shows that MPs habitually employ indirect speech acts, especially in their questions, where the questions usually function as assertions, offering opinions, criticising and praising rather than seeking information. These functions have significant implications for face and (im)politeness.

Harris (2001: 451) extends politeness theory to the study of ‘adversarial political discourse’, with specific reference to parliamentary data (Prime Minister’s questions). She finds intentional and explicit face-threatening and face-preserving acts, negative politeness strategies and systematic impoliteness features in the data. Ilie (2004) studies ‘insulting as (un)parliamentary practice in the British and Swedish Parliaments’. In her ‘Parliamentary discourses’, Ilie (2006: 194) states that ‘parliamentary debates involve systematic face-threatening acts marked by unparliamentary language and behaviour’. Murphy (2012c) explores (im)politeness in political discourse, with specific reference to UK PMQs, stating that MPs use various mitigating strategies to minimise face threats, and recommends face-based approaches to the study of parliamentary discourse. Bull and Wells (2012) discuss how MPs manage adversarial discourse during UK PMQs. They identify six ways by which the leader of the opposition performs FTAs, namely:

- i. preface – a statement or series of propositions made before a question is asked;
- ii. detailed question – ‘a question which contains a request for highly specific information, which the PM may not have to hand, or may not wish to publicise’ (p.37);
- iii. contentious presupposition – e.g. embedding insults in a presupposition;
- iv. conflictual questions – questions whose all possible replies are negative;
- v. invitation to perform a face-damaging response – e.g. asking the PM to apologise or to admit a wrongdoing; and
- vi. aside – e.g. departing from a question to respond to an interruption.

Almost all the questions we identify in our data (see section 4.2) are constructed with prefaces, midscripts (statements made between sub-questions in the same question turn) and postscripts (statements made after the question). These statements usually contain contextualising propositions that either promote or undermine the image of the (Prime) Ministers. Bull and Well (2012) further identify five ways in which the Prime Minister, on the other hand, counters FTAs: talk up positive face, rebut, attack, ignore and self-justify. Talking up a positive face means presenting a positive view of the government when an MP has negatively judged a government policy or action. There is an instance of rebutting when the (Prime) expressly refutes a claim. For example, in our Example 2 (section 3.2.1), when Mr Mackey alleges that Mr Brown as a Chancellor was not cooperative with the then Prime Minister, he refutes the allegation: '[t]he information that the right hon. Gentleman has is completely wrong', and goes on to talk up a positive face: 'it is because of co-operation in government that we are the Government who have created more stability than any Government in the history of this country'. What this means is that depending on what the FTA in the question is, the Prime Minister adopts different strategies to neutralise the FTA. We find in our analysis that usually when there is an attack, a criticism or an accusation in a question, the (Prime) Ministers counter-attack, counter-criticise or counter-accuse the MP who asked the question.

In examining politeness in parliamentary discourse, we need to be circumspect since parliamentary discourse is highly stylised and ritualised. The fact that some markers of politeness, for example, address terms, are conventionally institutionalised in parliamentary interactions makes it difficult to appreciate the extent to which Members of Parliament and (Prime) Ministers are deliberately polite when they address each other. For instance, to what extent do they not engage in 'mock politeness', 'the use of politeness strategies that are obviously insincere, and thus remain surface realizations'? (Kienpointner 2008:249). In this sense, it is essential to appreciate Harris' (2001: 451) view that, in the PMQs, for example, face-threat, confrontation and 'systematic impoliteness' are 'not only sanctioned but rewarded in accordance with the expectations of Members of the House by an adversarial and confrontational political process'. This is important because it appears that to rely on the usual conventionalised (im)politeness formula (e.g. address terms) to make judgements about the presence or absence of politeness may be misleading.

From a rhetorical perspective, Ilie (2013: 501) examines ways 'in which the rules, procedures and practices of parliamentary interaction are being transgressed in mixed-

gender encounters' in the UK parliament and Swedish Riksdag. She finds that both female and male MPs employ five context-specific suppression techniques to enact and reinforce their own power position as well as challenge and undermine authority and credibility of their opponents. The study indicates the ways in which rule violation, and different reactions to disorderly discursive behaviour manifest in different parliaments.

The Pragma-rhetorical approach was introduced by Ilie and provides a useful cross-fertilisation of pragmatics and rhetoric (Ilie 2010-2012: no pagination). Ilie (2004) employs this approach to study features and functions of parliamentary abusive language in the British and Swedish parliaments. She identifies attention-getting, which lures the target MP to react emotionally in order to reveal some aspects of his/her personality, political responsibility and/or moral profile. Thus, the insults perform two main functions: to emotionally engage the target of the insult, and to please and entertain the audience as a whole. According to Ilie (2004: 56) MPs in both parliaments employ three strategies to mitigate the directness and strength of the insults:

- i. the juxtaposition of opposite notions, i.e. contempt vs. respect;
- ii. the formulation of insults as questions rather than as statements;
and
- iii. the attribution of transfer strategy, i.e. the use of indirect attribution strategies to avoid responsibility for it.

Ilie (2010) explores the strategic uses of address forms in the UK and Swedish parliaments and finds some differences in the use of address forms in the two parliaments. For example, she finds that the uses of address terms in the Swedish parliament reflect the principle of parliamentary inter-group adversariality and in-group solidarity. Ilie (2010: 909) states that, in the UK parliament, violations of conventionalised forms of address are tactfully tolerated.

It could be deduced from the foregoing that, whereas pragmatic studies look at micro-level features of parliamentary discourse (e.g. speech acts, questioning-answering strategies), rhetorical studies examine macro-level features such as confrontation and violation of institutional rules. The two approaches can be combined to examine an interrelationship between the micro- and macro-levels at the same time. The current study employs aspects of the pragmatic approach (see section 1.2.5 below). Apart from the above-mentioned, there are other approaches to the study of parliamentary discourse, including pragma-dialectic/argumentation and corpus approaches. These are discussed in the following sections.

1.2.3 Pragma-dialectic studies on parliamentary questions and debates

Parliamentary debates and questions have been studied from a pragma-dialectic approach. Mohammed (2009) does a pragma-dialectical study of accusation by Prime Ministers as a response to questions from parliamentarians during UK Prime Minister's questions. Mohammed (2009: 159) describes accusations in response to questions as a 'confrontational strategic manoeuvring' and considers such 'responses as attempts from the Prime Minister to get his adversaries to retract their critical standpoints on the in-principle fair ground that one cannot hold two mutually inconsistent commitments simultaneously'. Accusations as a response to questions can be described as evasion in the form of attacks (Rasiah 2010: 673). Plug (2010: 305) has examined personal attacks in the Dutch and European parliaments, and explores 'how politicians attempt to manoeuvre strategically in parliamentary debates when staging personal attacks'. He finds that when Dutch MPs attack others personally, there are procedures through which the attack can be brought to attention, and the attacker runs the risk of being severely criticised and expelled. In the European parliament, procedural rules allow an MP to reveal and counter a personal attack at the tail end of debates, which appears to be a way of reducing interruptions in the course of the debates. From a pragma-dialectical perspective, Plug (2010: 325) submits that direct personal attacks in parliamentary argumentation 'should be considered as a derailment of strategic manoeuvring'.

Ihnen Jory (2012: 1) has studied parliamentary debates from a pragmatic argumentation standpoint, that is, argumentation for or against a course of action considering the desirable or undesirable consequences of the course of action. According to Ihnen Jory (2012), the UK House of Commons debate on the Terrorism Bill in 2005 involved pragmatic argumentation, as the government argued for the bill on the basis of the desired consequences, whereas the opposition argued against it on its potentially unwanted consequences.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012) have examined parliamentary debates from argumentation perspective; for example, parliamentary debate on tuition fees in the House of Commons. Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 200-234; see also I. Fairclough 2016: 58) propose that from a practical argumentation perspective, parliamentary debates follow a structure which involves a relationship between 'circumstances', 'goals' and a 'means-goal', where:

An agent is in circumstances C.

The agent has a goal G (generated by a particular normative source.)

Generally speaking, if the agent does A in C, then G will be achieved.

Therefore, the agent ought to do A.

So, for instance, we could say that parliamentary debates are critical examination of proposals which identify *circumstances* that need changing. The government (agent) proposes a *goal* that will change the current circumstances, but only by taking some course of *action*. Thus, parliamentary debates are concerned with making critical choices.

Considering European parliamentary debates from a pragma-dialectic perspective, van Eemeren and Garssen (2009: 1-2) study strategic manoeuvring and how it is preconditioned by the specific conventionalization of the debates and ‘the participants’ dualistic position regarding Europe and their home countries’. [V]an Eemeren and Garssen (2009: 5, 11) identify four stages of the European parliamentary debates, namely:

- i. *Confrontation stage*: initial situation: characteristically mixed or exceptionally non-mixed disagreement on policy issue; decision up to a usually non-interactive and heterogeneous audience.
- ii. *Opening stage*: procedural and material starting points: explicit or implicit rules of debate; explicit and implicit (pre-eminently value-related) concessions on both sides.
- iii. *Argumentation stage*: argumentative means and criticisms: argumentation and criticisms regarding the standpoints at issue in critical exchanges.
- iv. *Concluding stage*: possible outcome: settlement of disagreement or resolution for parts of the audience.

While the pragma-dialectic/argumentation approach to parliamentary discourse offers a strong standpoint for the study of parliamentary questions and debates, we do not employ it in this study. We have presented an overview of how it has been employed in parliamentary questions and debates only to the extent of demonstrating one of the approaches available to parliamentary discourse studies.

1.2.4 Corpus-based/corpus-driven studies on parliamentary debates

Baker (2006) examines keywords in the House of Commons 2002 and 2003 debate on fox hunting in the UK. Using concordance analyses, he attempts to identify different discourses that speakers access in order to persuade others of their standpoints. He further explores ways in which keyness can be used to find salient language differences. He concludes that a keyword list is useful for identifying lexical differences between texts. Also, using a corpus-driven approach, Bachmann (2011: 77) studies the language of the civil partnership debates in both Houses of the UK Parliament. By grouping keywords thematically and analysing them ‘in context, scrutinising collocations and concordance lines in order to see how (recurrent) uses of language construct gay and lesbian relationships’, Bachmann (2011: 77) states that ‘[d]ifferent, rather contradicting, discourses are drawn on by different parties in the debates ... [and] that discourses are often used to frame a line of argumentation’. Bachmann (2011: 77) further argues that the best approach to doing such a study is by comparing the whole data with a reference corpus (see section 3.4.1), since ‘different keyword lists can be calculated by comparing different data sets’.

Employing a corpus-linguistic approach, Bayley, Bevitori and Zoni (2004) investigate lexical choices used by English, German and Italian MPs to communicate fear and reaction to fear in parliamentary debates. They find that all three groups of MPs have the propensity to express the fears of other people; and speak of fear in relation to ‘propensity’ and ‘stability’. Whereas the UK MPs see integration as an external threat, the German and Italian MPs fear the failure of integration. Linguistically, Italian MPs are said to use low-intensity words to evoke danger and fear.

Bayley and Vicente (2004) employ a corpus approach to analyse how UK and Spanish MPs talk about work. The study deploys concordance tools to examine how collocation patterns characterise ‘work’ and ‘to see whether there are any divergences and/or convergences between English and Spanish’ (Bayley and Vicente 2004: 240). They conclude that:

concordancing software used together with relatively large collections of text is capable of identifying the regularities that seem to be inherent in language use in a way that would not be possible, or would be very time-consuming, with the naked eye.

(Bayley and Vicente 2004: 240)

They also state that the distribution of the lexis of ‘work’ in British and Spanish parliamentary discourse is very similar, even though the idea of work as ‘a “commodity” ... realised through such collocations as *work force*, *labour market*, *labour costs* and *cheap labour* are far more frequent in the British parliament than in the Spanish’ parliament (Bayley and Vicente 2004: 266). They further state that British ‘MPs rarely talk about the relationships between employers and employees ... or the trade unions that represent them, nor of a mediating role of government between the two’, which seems to suggest a disappearance of ‘the idea of a social contract’ from British political practice and parliamentary discourse (Bayley and Vicente 2004: 266). There is a significant link between the paper and the current study, which also employs keywords and concordance tools in doing a comparative and contrastive study of UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse. Specifically, in Chapter 6, we analyse how MPs make references to people’s concerns, which include unemployment among young people, work and wages among workers.

1.2.5 Justifying the current study

The literature so far largely demonstrates the growth of scholarly research in parliamentary discourse and practice, particularly in the West. However, in the African, and Ghanaian context in particular, parliamentary discourse research has not yet seen the same robustness of exploration, in spite of various attempts by some scholars. Using parliamentary debates and speeches in parliament as well as newspaper reports of such debates and speeches, Jakaza (2013) employs a multifaceted theoretical approach (appraisal theory, pragma-dialectic theory of argumentation and controversy) to study the linguistic manipulation of debates in the Zimbabwean parliament. Jakaza (2013: 245) concludes that, depending on the kind of debate, speech or newspaper article, ‘attitudinal values of affect, judgement and appreciation vary in density, nature and the way they manifest’. Similarly, using the issue-specific frame theory (see de Vreese 2010), Mchakulu (2011) does a comparative analysis of parliamentary rhetoric and newspaper editorials in Malawi to establish whether or not there are parallels in the way political issues are presented. In Ghana, Appartaim (2009) studies parliamentary discourse from a phonological perspective. She employs the concept of ‘nativisation’, that is, the idea that English in second language situations is ‘norm-developing’ with ‘a status and dynamic of its own’ (Crystal 2003: 359; see also Owusu-Ansah 1991). Using Ghanaian

parliamentary debates as data, she examines ‘prominence’ and ‘rhythm’ and finds that Ghanaian parliamentarians achieve prominence by means of pitch and intensity, and duration and intensity. She adds that context accounts for the rhythm used by the Ghanaian parliamentarians, and that the rhythm, to some extent, could be said to be peculiarly Ghanaian. From the perspective of nativisation, Imbea (2010) examines the emergence of a parliamentary English register in Ghana, describing linguistic innovation that characterises Ghanaian parliamentary discourse. The current study is substantially different from the above-mentioned ones for its focus on two parliaments and two parliamentary sub-genres of parliamentary discourse, and deployment of multilevel theoretical and methodological orientations: a corpus-assisted discourse analysis, drawing on corpus-based and corpus-driven principles, systemic functional linguistics – transitivity, and speech acts.

Against this backdrop, the current research is a modest contribution to studies in parliamentary discourse, in general, and to African studies, in particular. More importantly it compares and contrasts a fairly new (Ghanaian) parliamentary democratic practice and a very old (UK) one. It explores parliamentary questions and debates in order to investigate what (and how) MPs ‘talk about’, by ‘making corpus comparisons’, ‘analysing sets of linguistic features’ and ‘keywords’ that mark questions and debates (Ädel 2010: 595). Duguid (2010: 191) has underscored the contribution a corpus-assisted approach can make ‘to research into socio-cultural and political language’. Parliamentary questions are examined through transitivity processes (material, relational, verbal and mental processes) in order to uncover how MPs, through their questions (particularly, *yes/no* interrogatives), translate into reality their political interests, experiences, attitudes and the interest of the citizenry. The analysis is complemented by the use of speech act theory. Debates are studied through evaluation (in simple terms, statements about desirability or what is good and undesirability or what is bad), including deictics and indexicals (referring expressions – see section 3.4.4) to unearth the extent to which MPs perceive the concerns of the people. The analysis also seeks to identify significant similarities and differences (both linguistic and non-linguistic) that underlie UK and Ghanaian parliamentarians’ questioning and debating practices. Thus, the study attempts to respond to the research questions below.

1.3 Research questions

While parliamentary questions are primarily meant to call the government to account for its (in)actions and policies, and debates are for scrutinising and challenging government policies, among others, MPs often engage in personal attacks, promote their own and party interests, and so on, to the detriment of their core functions. We, therefore, examine the linguistic choices of MPs in order to observe what they talk about in their questions and debates. We also envisage that studying the linguistic patterns of MPs in the two parliaments will offer insights into some socio-cultural practices that inform their ways of questioning and debating. From a transitivity perspective, the processes (e.g. material and mental processes) in which a person is cast reveal attitudes of not only that person, but also the speaker. Again, the construction of meaning through speech acts has significant implications for relationships and interactions. Thus, the study has both linguistic and non-linguistic focus. The study, therefore, seeks to respond to the following research questions:

- i. What are the linguistic and non-linguistic similarities and differences between UK Prime Minister's questions and Ghanaian Minister's questions? Can such similarities and differences be also found between UK Queen's Address and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates? What accounts for such similarities and differences?
- ii. What do the patterns of transitivity used to construct *yes/no* interrogatives tell us about the MPs, and UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse?
- iii. What speech act functions do MPs' questions perform?
- iv. How do government and opposition MPs evaluate government policies and what do they focus on in such debates?
- v. Are there any socio-cultural factors which underpin how MPs question and debate? And what are the social and political implications of the MPs' manner of questioning and debating in the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse?

1.4 Rationale for the research

Parliaments (and parliamentary institutions) are an important pillar in democratic societies around the world. They are the foundation and lifeline upon which democracies survive, making them a key and indispensable partner in the modern development agenda.

It is, thus, necessary to study parliamentary functions and practices, including their linguistic and rhetorical practices, to inform our understanding of their discourse practices. As Gastil (1992: 471) puts it:

Political talk plays a vital role in shaping and transforming political reality, and as the interest of the world has recently turned toward democracy, discourse analysts might do well to make explicit the connections between their research and the pursuit of the democratic ideal.

This background informs my studying a central aspect of the linguistic practices of the Ghanaian and UK parliaments: what parliamentarians (MPs) do with their language when they are engaged in their professional work.

Ghanaian MPs have often been accused of strong partisanship to the neglect of important national developmental issues, with the Majority MPs ‘blindly defend[ing] the Government’ (CDD-Ghana 2008: 108, 131), while the Minority oppose issues all the time. According to Mensah (2015), a survey conducted by the National Commission for Civic Education (NCCE) in September 2014 among a cross-section of Ghanaians indicated that ‘62% of Ghanaians’ ‘did not trust parliamentarians, and thought that MPs were in parliament to enrich themselves’. UK MPs have similarly been accused of ‘not taking the issues that affect their [people’s] lives seriously enough’ (BBC 2014b) and that ‘the idea of the general good had been forgotten’ (*Question Time* 2014). Whether this is the case or not is a question that is pondered by the general public. By studying the language of MPs, we shall know more about who MPs are and what they stand for. Such knowledge will help us to rethink the ‘assumptions we project onto political actors [in this case, parliamentarians]’ (Hay 2007: 161) as well as help us to know the extent to which parliamentarians are ‘concerned with the construction and, ideally, the realization of ... the collective good’ (Hay 2007: 2). This is important because parliaments do not ‘exist merely to support the government of the day, but ... to contribute to the process of governance by holding public officials accountable for their management of the public’s business’ (CDD-Ghana 2008: 132). This research is, therefore, significant in a number of ways.

1.5 Significance of the research

The research has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it contributes to the ongoing scholarship in political discourse generally and parliamentary discourse specifically at a cross-cultural level. The strength of this research lies in its employment of a multilayered approach, which allows for interrelated kinds of multilevel contextual analysis (Adolphs 2008: 4), namely: corpus-assisted, pragmatic, discourse, and functional-grammar perspectives (see section 3.4.1 for detailed discussion of these). The multilevel approach will not only offer us the opportunity to see the linguistic choices of parliamentarians, but also the socio-cultural, power and ideological underpinnings of such linguistic choices, as it delves into an institutional practice and structure through its use of language. It will illuminate the complexity of and offer insights into parliamentary discourse.

The practical significance of the research is three-fold. First, it offers insights into English language use in parliament as an institution in two different settings: a native speaker setting (UK) and English as a second language setting (Ghana). The former has more ‘discourse and pragmatic control’ (Davies 2004: 436) in English than the latter. Second, considering that the fairly young Ghanaian parliament has received very little scholarly attention, it is hoped that this research will contribute to understanding parliamentary institutional structures, relations and rhetorical deliberation practices. The research will inform parliamentary practices in both the UK and Ghana, especially because the two parliaments have different linguistic and socio-cultural backgrounds. The research has the potential to contribute to building an overall effective parliamentary practice by offering suggestions on how to:

- i. build suitable parliamentary interactions that pay close attention to people’s needs and concerns.
- ii. manage rowdiness and personal attacks in parliamentary questions and debates.
- iii. foster effective relationships between the majority and the minority in parliament.

Third, the research may engender a deeper understanding and rethinking of what parliamentarians in particular and politicians in general stand for. Since the research offers some insights into how parliamentarians make significant references to people and their concerns during debates, it may help provoke a reflection over the impressions the

citizenry have about parliamentarians. For example, do MPs' references to the needs of the people mean a real concern for people's needs or are they just for political effect? Answers to these questions may make the general public reposition themselves in terms of their participation in the political and democratic process and agenda.

1.6 The research setting

This research examines parliamentary subgenres of UK Prime Minister's questions (UK PMQs), UK Queen's Address debates (UK QADs), Ghanaian Minister's questions (GMQs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONADs), which are important functions of the UK House of Commons and the Parliament of Ghana. Whereas the UK QADs are a four or five yearly event (after a general election) which 'marks the formal start of the parliamentary year [and] sets out the government's agenda for the coming session' (UK Parliament 2015a), the GH SONADs are held annually. While the UK PMQs are weekly events, the GMQs are conducted as and when MPs procedurally give notice of their questions to ministers (on the average, weekly). We consider both parliaments as a 'community of practice' (CofP) as defined by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992: 464; 1999: 186):

an aggregate of people who come together around a mutual engagement in some common endeavor. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices emerge in the course of this mutual endeavor.

This allows us to see the practices of the two parliaments as having evolved and developed over time to 'give rise to a repertoire of shared practices' (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1999: 185). For example, we can say that the UK PMQs as a parliamentary discourse genre (Myers 2008: 141; Ilie 2006) or an 'activity type' (Levinson 1979) comprises an interconnected series of events and practices both in and outside the House, current and old, in the larger political context. For instance, responding to a question from Huw Irranca-Davies (Labour MP) about the National Health Service, the Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, said:

No wonder Conservative Members are shouting, because on 19 March 1946, the NHS Bill was presented to Parliament to create the NHS, but what did the Conservative party do? It voted against it...

(Hansard: UK 22 Mar 06/Col. 282-3)

This indicates that discourse in the UK PMQs is linked to the wider political context and events. In other words, during parliamentary interactions, MPs usually draw on previous political events that took place both in and outside the House. Also, considering both parliaments as a CofP helps us to regard the participants as engaged in politics, involving power and ideological struggle. Members of both Houses have their shared norms and practices, making the Houses a well-constructed CofP in line with Wenger's (1998: 73) three-feature paradigm of CofP: 'mutual engagement', 'a joint enterprise', and 'a shared repertoire' of communal resources developed over time. The principle of CofP reflects 'context (of situation)', 'the situational moments and cultural contexts of [language] use' (Agar 2009: 111) (see section 2.3.1).

According to Ilie (2006: 190), parliamentary discourse and interaction can be considered as a 'genre', 'a class of communicative events in which language (and/or paralanguage) plays both a significant and indispensable role' and 'the members of which share some set of communicative purposes' (Swales 1998; 1990: 45, 58; cited in Ilie 2006: 190). Thus, parliamentary discourse has particular institutionalised discursive features (e.g. questions, debates, speeches) that mark it out as such. Studying these features offers insights into parliament as an institution and its practices. It is important, therefore, to do an ethno-description of the two parliaments under study.

1.6.1 The UK House of Commons and the Parliament of Ghana

Formed around the 13th century (Ilie 2006: 189), the UK parliament (known as the Westminster parliamentary system) is often regarded as the oldest parliamentary system in the world. According to Ilie (2006: 189), 'the publication of parliamentary debates and regular press reporting became common practice' by the end of the 18th century, even though it acquired its 'central role in the policy-making process' in the 'latter half of the 20th century'. There are records of debates and questions from July 1802 (see UK Parliament website: www.parliament.uk). Harris (2001: 454) states that:

the practice of questioning Ministers in the House seems to have originated in the late 17th or early 18th century, though Prime Minister's Question Time in its present form is a fairly recent innovation dating from the time of Harold Macmillan in 1961.

This shows the extent to which the PMQs has evolved. The study covers the periods 2005 to 2014.

The UK Parliament consists of the Monarch, the House of Lords (made up of more than 750 Members, most of whom are appointed by the Monarch under advice) and the House of Commons (650 elected MPs, each representing a different constituency) (House of Commons 2013b). The House of Commons is a multiparty institution. Its members are elected from four constituent nations: England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland on a proportional basis, even though Scotland has a national parliament, while Wales and Northern Ireland have national assemblies. That means that the Scottish national parliament and Welsh and Northern Irish assemblies have devolved powers: they have powers to make decisions on some national issues such as education and health. This notwithstanding, Westminster has authority over these devolved institutions and has reserved powers, that is, those decisions that remain with Westminster. According to the UK Parliament (2015c), as of the end of the 2010-2015 parliament, the following was the composition of the Commons: Conservative Party (302), Labour Party (256), Liberal Democrats (56), Democratic Unionist Party (8), Scottish National Party (6), Independent MPs (5), Sinn Fein (5), Plaid Cymru (3), Social Democratic and Labour Party (3), UK Independent Party (2), Alliance Party (1), Green Party (1), Respect Party (1) and the Speaker (1). Note that ‘Independent MPs’ belong to no political party.

Modelled largely on the Westminster system, the Ghanaian parliamentary system has gone through a chequered history. After gaining independence from Britain in 1957 and republican status in 1960, Ghana is now practising her fourth republican parliamentary system after three such systems failed amidst military takeovers in 1960-1966, 1969-1970 and 1979-1981 (Parliament of Ghana 2015). The fourth republican parliament has been the most stable and successful of all the parliamentary democracies in Ghana’s history. It was established on 7th January 1993. It is a ‘unicameral legislature’ composed of MPs elected from single-member constituencies (Parliament of Ghana 2015: no pagination). While the UK has a Prime Ministerial system, Ghana elects a president as well as the MPs in presidential and parliamentary polls simultaneously.

Being a multiparty democratic institution, the Parliament of Ghana (PoG) comprises government and opposition MPs. Even though there are a number of political parties in Ghana, including the New Patriotic Party (NPP), the National Democratic Congress (NDC), the Convention People’s Party (CPP), the People’s National Convention (PNC), the Progressive People’s Party (PPP), among others, since 1993, the NDC and the NPP have alternated in power. The NDC, under the leadership of Jerry John Rawlings, was in power from 1993 to 2000; the NPP, under John Agyekum Kufuor, 2001-

2008; and NDC, John Evans Atta-Mills/John Dramani Mahama, 2009-present. John Evans Atta-Mills (President from January 2009) died in July 2012 and John Dramani Mahama, the then Vice-President, took over as President and then won the 2012 general elections. The period considered for this study covers 2005 to 2015. The decision stems from the availability of the data and the fact that the data span two different administrations in the contemporary period. The Ghanaian and UK datasets are comparable as they cover the same period.

1.6.2 Comparing the two parliaments

The House of Commons and the Parliament of Ghana (PoG) are more similar in many respects than different.

- i. Both parliaments use English as the medium of communication. While the Commons' language is a native speaker variety of English, the PoG's is a second language variety, that is, the use of English as an official language for all administrative, educational, legal, media and all other official purposes. In Ghana, English is the medium of instruction from primary through high school to the university. It is also spoken on a daily basis for social interactions. Ghana is a multilingual society with over 60 indigenous languages (Guerini 2007) and English serves as a lingua-franca (common language) between people of different ethnic groups who do not speak and understand each other's language.
- ii. Both parliaments are elected bodies for which members are elected to represent constituencies by the principle of first-past-the-post and hold their seats until the parliament is dissolved every four years or five years for the UK parliament. While the Commons has 650 Members of Parliament (MPs), the number of MPs for the PoG has increased from 200 in 1993 to 230 in 2001 and then 275 since 2012.
- iii. The Parliament of Ghana (2015: no pagination) states that it 'operates very much on the lines of the Parliament of Westminster'. Both parliaments have similar operational and deliberative mechanisms.
- iv. Both parliaments keep the records of their deliberations in the form of Hansards, almost verbatim official reports of parliamentary proceedings.

- v. The work of both parliaments can be grouped into three main functions, namely:
 - a. legislating by ‘debating and passing all laws’: ‘[p]arliament is responsible for approving new laws’ when they are introduced by the government (House of Commons 2013b: no pagination; UK Parliament 2015b: no pagination). According the Parliament of Ghana (2015: no pagination), it makes laws by ‘passing Bills and scrutinizing statutory instruments and deciding whether to annul them or allow them to take effect by the effluxion of time’.
 - b. oversight responsibility over their respective governments by scrutinising the work of the executive through questions to (Prime) Ministers and debating and investigating the work of the government through parliamentary committees (House of Commons 2013b; UK Parliament 2015b; Parliament of Ghana 2015).
 - c. financial control: both parliaments enable their respective governments to raise taxes by passing tax laws as well as monitor and control the expenditure levels of the government (House of Commons 2013b; UK Parliament 2015b; Parliament of Ghana 2015).

The foregoing description of the two parliaments gives us a clear picture of the nature of the institutions and their practices, which gives the context from which the data come, parliamentary questions and debates.

1.7 Synopsis of the thesis

The thesis is divided into seven chapters, this introduction and a further six chapters.

Chapter 2 explores key concepts and theories in order to situate the research within the relevant theoretical context. The chapter looks at institutional discourse and discourse analysis and systemic functional linguistics. It also discusses the pragmatics of political discourse, including speech act theory, face and (im)politeness as well as corpus approaches to discourse analysis.

Chapter 3 is the methodology chapter. It describes the data and the methods of data collection, the pilot study, and the computational tools deployed in the study. It discusses ethical considerations and describes how the data were analysed.

The first two analysis chapters (Chapters 4 and 5) deal with *yes/no* interrogatives in the UK Prime Minister's questions and the Ghanaian Minister's questions, while Chapter 6 deals with debates. Each chapter deals with the UK and Ghanaian data comparatively and contrastively, even though more weight is given to the comparative aspect, as the two datasets are more similar than different.

Chapter 4 is the first of the three analysis chapters. It explores the functions of *yes/no* interrogatives in the two parliaments, including: request for (detailed) information, action, explanation, or function as criticism, accusation, praise, and so on, beyond their usual demand for affirmation/disaffirmation. Through material, relational and verbal processes (Halliday 1995; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004), the chapter examines how, through their questions, MPs: (i) attribute agency/actor roles to (Prime) Ministers; (ii) remind them of their responsibilities; (iii) construct acts of praise and positive recognition or condemnation of the power and authority of (Prime) Ministers; and (iv) reveal the political and power ramifications that come into play in the questions and answers. We focus on *yes/no* interrogatives since they were the most frequent among the question types identified in the two datasets.

Chapter 5 looks at *yes/no* interrogatives involving mental processes, negative *yes/no* interrogatives, their speech act functions as well as their interactional and political implications. It examines how mental process *yes/no*, and negative *yes/no* interrogatives lead to expressions of opinion, requesting of opinion and making of assertions. It further explores how MPs use such interrogatives to force (Prime) Ministers to accept particular thoughts, resulting in argumentation between MPs and (Prime) Ministers.

Chapter 6, the last analysis chapter, focuses on debates. It examines how MPs evaluate government policies and make references to 'people' and people's concerns during UK Queen's Address and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates. As an analytical approach, the chapter employs evaluation, that is, statements about what is good and what is bad (Fairclough 2003: 172; van Leeuwen 2008: 109-110; Thompson and Hunston 1999), and includes the use of deictics and indexicals, that is, person, time and place referencing (Charteris-Black 2014: 60-62; Adetunji 2006: 179; Chilton 2004: 57) in order to observe how government and opposition MPs evaluate government policies and judge them in relation to how they meet the people's concerns. The chapter observes how evaluation of government policies becomes an ideological construct, a demonstration of which party offers the best policy option.

Chapter 7, the concluding chapter, gives a summary of the research by drawing together the findings in the three analysis chapters and indicates how they answer the research questions. It deals with the implications of the research for parliamentary practice and social and political implications. The chapter also provides suggestions for further research.

2 Key concepts and theoretical framework

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to situate this research within the relevant conceptual and theoretical contexts. The chapter describes the key theoretical concepts that underlie the research. It discusses the main principles of institutional discourse and discourse analysis and how they inform the current work. It also looks at the pragmatics of political discourse, including speech act theory, face, (im)politeness and corpus approaches to discourse analysis and their relationship with this study.

2.2 Institutions and institutional discourse

From the perspective of Foucault (1972), discourse is an institutional enterprise (O'Halloran 2013: 446; Roberts 2013: 82; Mayr 2008: 4), with 'a set of sanctioned statements which have some institutionalised force ... [with] a profound influence on the way individuals act and think ...' (Mills 1997: 62). The term 'institution' is defined by Mayr (2008: 4) as '[a]n established organization or foundation, especially one dedicated to education, public service or culture'. Mey (2001: 114) describes it as organs of the state (e.g. the legislative, the executive, the judiciary) and 'the various religious bodies such as faiths and churches; human social institutions such as marriage, the family, the market', including established practices, law, tradition or custom such as chieftaincy.

Our definition of 'institution' in this study concerns 'the public organs of state', as for example, parliament, in which sense, institutional discourse is characteristically 'confined to specialized settings or the execution of particular tasks' (Heritage 2005: 104) and 'discourse that takes place within a professional or work-based setting' (Coulthard and Johnson 2007: 7). Our main focus is on language use in such established institutions because '[i]n all such institutions and bodies, certain human agreements and customs have become legalized, and this legalization has found its symbolic representation in language' (Mey 2001: 115). Language is fundamental to institutionalisation (Philips, Lawrence and Hardy 2004: 635). According to Roberts (2013: 81):

[i]nstitutions are held together by talk and texts both to maintain themselves and to exclude those who do not belong. The study of institutional discourses sheds light on how organisations work, how 'lay' people and experts interact and how knowledge and power get constructed and circulate within the routines, systems and common sense practices of work-related settings.

For Heritage (2005: 106; see also Wooffitt 2005: 57), institutional interaction involves: i) ‘goals that are tied to institution relevant identities’; ii) ‘special constraints on what is an allowable contribution to business at hand’ (see also Philips, Lawrence and Hardy 2004: 637); and iii) ‘special inferences that are particular to specific contexts’.

For Duranti and Goodwin (1992: 292), institutional settings are places where ‘interaction takes place and within which talk acquires meaning for the participants *qua* social actors’. Institutions construct and control interactional rules by which actors and participants interact (Coulthard and Johnson 2007: 15; Philips, Lawrence and Hardy 2004: 637). Accordingly, spanning many areas and reflecting ‘the different theoretical backgrounds of those who have written about institutions’ (Roberts 2013: 81), institutional discourse/language has been the focus of discourse studies (Heritage 2005: 106; McGroarty 2002: 264; Schiffrin, Tannen and Hamilton 2001: 349-536). These include institutions of law (Fărcașiu 2013; Gibbons 2004), medicine (Frohlich, Alexander and Fusco 2013; Liu, Manias and Gerdtz 2013), education (Rogers 2004; Kaplan 2002), media (Alvaro 2013; Gill, Keong, Bolte and Ramiah 2012) and politics (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012; Wodak 2011). These studies show different ways in which discourse is constructed, broached and informed by specific institutional goals, principles and actors. In fact, ‘in many ways, linguistic practices have come to define institutions’ and vice-versa (Bayley 2004: 7). In the current study, our attention is on political and/or parliamentary discourse as an institutional variety of discourse, using a broader discourse analytical approach.

Another view of institutions that bears on this study derives from Searle (2010). According to Searle (2010: 7) ‘[t]he distinctive feature of social reality ... is that humans have the capacity to impose functions on objects and people’. These functions, which he calls *status functions*, cannot be performed by objects and people solely in virtue of their physical structure. The objects/people can only perform such functions only by having a collectively recognised status. For example, a person can perform executive functions as a (Prime) Minister because he/she has been, for example, elected by the people or appointed, and assigned the (Prime) Ministerial responsibility. A parliamentarian is a parliamentarian because he/she is elected to that position and is so recognised. In other words, ‘there must be collective *acceptance* or *recognition*, that is, *collective intentionality*’ for a status function to exist, even though ““recognition” does not imply “approval”” (Searle 2010: 8). Institutional facts come into being by assigning status functions to objects and people. Institutional facts are ‘the facts [that are] dependent on

human agreement' (Searle 1995: 2). According to Searle (1995: 34), 'a very larger number' of institutional facts can be created by the speech act of 'declaration', in which 'the state of affairs represented by the propositional content of the speech act is brought into existence by the successful performance of that very speech act'. These facts require 'collective intentionality', 'assignment of function' and 'language rich enough to enable the creation of Status Function Declaration' (Searle 2010: 100-101). Searle (2010: 8-9) states that status functions 'carry rights, duties, obligations, requirements, permissions, authorizations, entitlements, and so on'. Deontic powers, 'once recognised', 'provide us with reasons for acting that are independent of our inclinations and desires' (Searle 2010: 9). Thus, MPs have reasons to ask (Prime) Ministers questions and hold them to account because MPs have recognised status functions and deontic powers to implore (Prime) Ministers to perform their deontic functions. Parliamentarians have to scrutinise government proposed policy decisions because they have a duty to do so.

To the extent that institutions are created by the speech act of declaration, Searle's institutional theory is relevant to this study as it employs speech acts as one of its theoretical approaches. According to Searle (2010: 106), status functions and deontic powers are created to regulate power relationships. And, arguably, nowhere does power relations exist more than in parliamentary interactions where (Prime) Ministers are held to account and political decisions are made. Since the duties and responsibilities of (Prime) Ministers are deontic functions assigned to them by virtue of collective recognition, when MPs are reminding them of such duties, they are raising issues of legitimacy and urging them into action. Raising issues of legitimacy during parliamentary interactions has significant political ramifications between parliamentarians and (Prime) Ministers.

2.3 Discourse analysis

Discourse is a fuzzy and fluid term (Jaworski and Coupland 2006; Lahlali 2003; Mills 1997; Schiffrin 1987; Brown & Yule 1983; Stubbs 1983), which results from its application in diverse fields of linguistic and non-linguistic inquiry, ranging from everyday mundane (Strazny 2005) through computer-mediated (e.g. telephone conversation, see Sacks 1992) to specialised institutional interactions (Mayr 2008). Relevant definitions of *discourse* include:

- i. language above the sentence or the clause level (Stubbs 1983; Sinclair and Coulthard 1975; Carter and Simpson 1989).
- ii. 'linguistic behaviour, written and spoken, beyond the limits of individual sentences' (Bhatia, Flowerdew and Jones 2008: 1).
- iii. '[a] continuous stretch of spoken language larger than a sentence, often constituting a coherent unit' (Pustejovsky 2006: 2).
- iv. language use in its (social) context (Cook 2013; Brown and Yule 1983; Stubbs 1983: 9).
- v. any utterance or text which has meaning and made in relation to the real world (Mills 1997).
- vi. 'a regulated system of statements which can be analysed not only in terms of its internal rules of formation but also as a set of practices within a social milieu' (Marshall 1992; cited in Lahlali 2003: 16).
- vii. 'what happens when people draw on the knowledge they have about language ... to do things in the world' (Johnstone 2002: 3).
- viii. language as a means for social, political and economic values (Foucault 1972).

Taking the notion of discourse as being above the level of the sentence (definitions i-iii), this study considers questioning and debating moves in parliamentary discourse. Supposing the Prime Minister, David Cameron, said to his Cabinet Ministers, during an argument about which policy decision to take, *I am the Prime Minister*, we are interested in the meaning of the utterance as it relates to the 'world'/'environment', that is, the social context in which it was made (definitions iv-viii). This 'world' would include (but is not limited to): a group of UK politicians, ministers (with age and hierarchical/horizontal power relations), the presence or absence of other person(s), the time of the day, the specific place where such an utterance was made, the mood with which it was said, the tone of voice, the gestures, facial expression, the cultural and social background. So, one may interpret *I am the Prime Minister* to mean that the Prime Minister is upset (if his tone was harsh, for example); that someone has challenged his authority; someone does not agree with him on a certain suggestion; that he is trying to assert his authority; that there is a conflict between him and one or more of the ministers, etc. We arrive at these interpretations by relating the expression to the fact that the ministers know that Cameron is the Prime Minister, and so why would he remind them of that obvious fact? In this

sense, *I am the Prime Minister* has a situated or contextual meaning (Gee and Handford 2013: 1). If Cameron made the utterance on the floor of parliament, we would consider it parliamentary discourse, a particular form of political discourse. This (political/parliamentary discourse or medical discourse, etc.) is what Gee (2011: 28-40) refers to as ‘Discourse(s)’ with a capital *D*. To him Discourse is a marker of socially situated identities and practices. It is the ‘characteristic way of saying, doing, and being’ (Gee 2011: 30). Discourse(s) with a capital *D* is/are socially accepted ‘associations that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group’ (Gee 2011: 30), as, for example, a group of politicians (or parliamentarians). This view of discourse is seen by N. Fairclough (1989: 17; see Foucault 1972, definition viii above) as ‘a social practice determined by social structures’ and whose actualisation is ‘determined by socially constituted *orders of discourse*, sets of conventions associated with social institutions’. On the other hand, Gee (2011: 34) defines ‘discourse’ with a small *d* as ‘language-in-use or stretches of language’ as in the case of a single, particular conversation. The current study investigates parliamentary questions and debates within their social domains of language use (political or parliamentary discourse), which are informed by the beliefs, values, ideological and power orientations of the interactants.

Discourse Analysis (DA) is a term said to have been coined by Zellig Harris in 1952 in his effort to analyse connected speech and writing beyond the sentence level (Coulthard 1985: 3; Strazny 2005: 269; Schiffrin 1987: 2). According to Mills (1997: 135):

[d]iscourse analysis can be seen as a reaction to a more traditional form of linguistics (formal, structural linguistics) which is focused on the constituent units and structure of the sentence and which does not concern itself with an analysis of language in use. Discourse analysis, in contrast to formal linguistics, is concerned with translating the notion of structure from the level of the sentence ... to the level of longer texts.

This view is highlighted by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975) and the Birmingham school, who see discourse analysis from a unit-functional approach. Wooffitt (2005: 14) regards DA as having evolved from sociologists’ attempts, in the 1970s, through the study of the sociology of ‘scientific knowledge’, to challenge scientific views of the world as an objective entity independent of culture, context and human influence. The view of discourse analysis cutting across different disciplines and fields is also seen in the work of other theorists such as Cook (2013), Wood and Kroger (2000), Coupland and Jaworski (1997), Schiffrin (1987), Brown and Yule (1983).

In spite of disciplinary variations, there is some consensus as to the basic assumptions characterising DA. This is reiterated by Trappes-Lomax (2004: 134), viz:

[d]iscourse analysis may, broadly speaking, be defined as the study of language viewed communicatively and/or of communication viewed linguistically. Any more detailed spelling out of such a definition typically involves reference to concepts of language *in use*, language *above or beyond the sentence*, language as meaning *in interaction*, and language in *situational and cultural contexts*. Depending on their particular convictions and affiliations – functionalism, structuralism, social interactionism, etc. – linguists will tend to emphasize one, or some, rather than others in this list.

This definition appears to offer a converging point for the explanations offered by various linguists. For instance, Brown and Yule (1983: 1), from a pragmatic and communication perspective, define DA as ‘necessarily, the analysis of language in use’; while Lahlali (2003: 16), from a ‘critical approach’, sees it as a social phenomenon for the explanation of social and cultural issues that affect language use. Potter (1997: 146) thinks of it as ‘studying discourse as *texts and talk in social practices*’.

In DA, the analyst is influenced by his/her theoretical background and approach, as, for example, linguistics, sociology, anthropology and cultural theory. For instance, to the cultural theorists, language (and discourse) is a reflection of the attitudes, beliefs and values of people, which means that ‘[l]anguage is not a culture-free code, distinct from the way people think and behave, but, rather, it plays a major role in the perpetuation of culture ...’ (Kramsch 1998: 8). Thus, discourse is about language use in relation to culture. This partly informs our analysis as the data show that Ghanaian and UK parliamentarians are influenced by some cultural factors in their language use, as, for example, in the linguistic marking of politeness. If discourse is fundamentally language in use, and ‘[d]iscourse analysis is the study of language in use’ (Gee and Handford 2013: 1; Gee 2011: 8), then the concept of context of situation cannot be overlooked.

2.3.1 Discourse analysis and context of situation

Context (of situation) means that language and meaning are inseparable from ‘the situational moments and cultural contexts of use’ (Agar 2009: 111). The beginning of this term is attributed to the anthropological linguist Malinowski (1923), when he studied the culture of the indigenes of the Trobriand Islands (now Papua New Guinea) (Agar 2009;

Östman and Simon-Vandenberg 2009; Sentf 2009; 2007: 91; Stubbs 1983: 3).

According to Malinowski (1923: 307):

... utterance and situation are bound up inextricably with each other and the context of situation is indispensable for the understanding of the words. Exactly as in the reality of spoken or written languages, a word without *linguistic context* is a mere figment and stands for nothing by itself, so in the reality of a spoken living tongue, the utterance has no meaning except in the *context of situation*.

This means that language use is incomprehensible when it is detached from the context of situation. As we illustrated above (with *I am the Prime Minister*), '[e]ach utterance is essentially bound up with the context of situation' (Malinowski 1923: 310) just as grammar is bound up with the context of words. Malinowski, thus, sees language as part of a social process. From its inception by Malinowski, the term context of situation has been applied, defined and redefined by other linguists, notable among them being Firth (1957; 1950), Hymes (1974; 1972), Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1976).

Firth sought to develop upon the Malinowskian concept of the context of situation, which he (Firth) saw 'as an abstract frame of reference, which the linguist invents' (Östman and Simon-Vandenberg 2009: 141). Thus, according to Östman and Simon-Vandenberg (2009: 141), Firth added to the concept of situation by proposing that the following factors should be considered as part of the context of an utterance, which enables an interpretation to be carried out: 'the relevant features of participants'; 'the verbal actions of participants'; 'their non-verbal actions'; 'relevant objects'; and 'the effect of the verbal action'.

The socially-based concept of language was more forcefully broached by Hymes (1964). As a reaction to the Chomskyan concept of linguistic competence, Hymes introduced the term 'communicative competence', which was explained as 'knowledge of grammatical ... [and] also social and cultural rules of a language, and reflecting the competences of actual speakers, not some idealized norm' (Coupland and Jaworski 1997: 5). To Hymes (1997 [1964]: 15), '[a] "socially constituted" linguistics is concerned with social as well as referential meaning, and with language as part of communicative conduct and social action'. In his famous ethnography of communication, Hymes (1974) elaborates the concept of context of situation by proposing the acronym SPEAKING, a model by which all language use, considered as communicative events (Berlin 2007: 3), can be analysed and interpreted. In the model (see also: Wardhaugh 2010: 259-261;

Keating 2001: 290-291; Jaworski and Coupland 2006: 22; Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter 2000: 95; Eggins and Martin 1997: 240):

- i. *S* stands for setting and scene (place/time, physical and psychological circumstances, overall mood). The setting for this study is the UK House of Commons and the Parliament of Ghanaian. The questions and debates are characterised by seriousness, struggle for power, noises and jeers.
- ii. *P* is participants (people involved in the communication). The participants in our context are members of parliament (MPs), government and opposition MPs.
- iii. *E* is for ends (purpose/goal of event). While questions are a means of holding the government to account, debates are for deliberation and decision-making purposes.
- iv. *A* stands for acts sequence (form of discourse and content, how events unfold) – there is a question-answer sequence and MPs take turns to express their views during debates. The content depends on the particular policy area such as health, education and agriculture.
- v. *K* is key (manner of speaking/tone). The tone of questions and debates is usually confrontational, critical, accusatory or praising.
- vi. *I* refers to instrumentalities (medium of communication – speech, writing, etc.) – the questions and debates are oral/spoken, through English language.
- vii. *N* is norms (norms and rules of interaction). There are rules of questioning and debating, including not asking questions seeking opinion, or which contain arguments or using offensive expressions (Jack 2011: 358-9; Parliament of Ghana 2000). MPs address each other through the third-person singular, ‘he’, by the name of their constituency, or official position, through the Speaker of parliament, and not through their actual names (Ilie 2001: 239-40).
- viii. *G* signifies genre (type of discourse) – we are dealing with questions and debates.

The SPEAKING grid enables analysts to answer such questions as: who is speaking (or writing)? Who is being addressed? What is it that is said and for what purpose? When and how was it said? It is believed that answers to these questions have influence on the

linguistic behaviour of language users. For instance, (Prime) Ministers' responses to questions usually depend on whether the questions are accusatory or praising and/or whether they are asked by government or opposition MPs.

Notwithstanding Hymes' attempt to offer a grid for the context (of situation), pinning down the range of factors that determine context (of situation) has been elusive, since, in the words of Goodwin and Duranti (1992: 6), 'even an observer who has access to a setting and the talk within it may nonetheless not have access to all of the phenomena that participants are utilizing as context for their talk.' Suffice it, therefore, to say that there is always a certain kind of context which provides for interpretation and within which language in interaction can be understood. What is important is to recognise that these factors are not static but dynamic (Mey 2001: 39). Like the chameleon's colour-changing feature, context and participants' identities change from one situation to another and situations change from moment to moment in discourse. Therefore, situations and participants must be considered in respect of each specific encounter; after all, context is only 'mental models of communicative situations and events' (van Dijk 2004: 353).

Finally, in admitting that the concept of context of situation was formulated by Malinowski (1921) and elaborated by Firth (1950), Halliday and Hasan (1976: 21) define context of situation as 'all those extra-linguistic factors which have some bearing on the text itself ... [including] the nature of the audience, the medium, the purpose of the communication and so on'. Coupland and Jaworski (1997: 6) assert that, in challenging Hymes concept of communicative competence:

Halliday argues for studying language as action, or 'doing', in which speakers produce particular forms and meanings by choosing from all those which are potentially available to them. We could say that Halliday's perspective is therefore one which grows out of sociolinguistic assumptions, but moves back into the traditional territory of linguistics – the modelling of grammatical organization at the level of the individual utterance.

In effect, Halliday (1978) and Halliday and Hasan (1985; 1976) built on and enhanced the notion of concept of situation. Halliday and Hasan (1985: 23) suggest that there are 'four components in the semantics of every language', namely: experiential, interpersonal, logical and textual meanings. These meanings are intertwined and interwoven, such that they together offer grounds for the interpretation and understanding of language.

2.3.2 Systemic functional linguistics and transitivity

Through his view of systemic functional linguistics (SFL), Halliday (1978) expressed the view that, as Caffarel, Martin and Matthiessen (2004: 2) put it:

... descriptions of languages are oriented towards context, grounded on discourse and focused on meaning: language itself is interpreted as meaning potential – a meaning potential that embodies three different kinds of meaning (ideational meaning, interpersonal meaning and textual meaning).

Based on this view, Halliday (1978: 143) and Halliday and Hasan (1976: 22) proposed three features of context of situation, namely: field, tenor and mode of discourse (see also Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 33; Hall, Smith and Wicaksono 2011: 82; van Dijk 2004: 340). ‘Field’ refers to the subject matter, the domain of discourse, as for example, legal discourse, political discourse and religious discourse. ‘Tenor’ deals with participants in a discourse situation, considering their relationships such as power and social relations which affect linguistic choices. ‘Mode’ refers to forms of discourse and the medium through which they are carried out (e.g. spoken, written, computer-mediated). For our purpose, for example, we will say that we are dealing with political discourse (field); the participants are parliamentarians (tenor), who are engaged in oral questions and debates (mode). According to Halliday (1978: 143), ‘mode’, ‘tenor’ and ‘field’ correspond with three functional components of meaning, often called metafunctions of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 30-31, 83-85; Halliday 1978: 187), namely:

- i. textual (‘creating relevance to context’, ‘a message, a quantum of information’);
- ii. interpersonal (‘enacting social relationships’, ‘an exchange, a transaction between speaker and listener’, ‘language as action’); and
- iii. ideational (‘meaning as a reflection’ of the world). It comprises ‘experiential’ (‘construing a model of experience’, ‘a representation of some process in ongoing human experience’) and ‘logical’ (‘construing logical relations’).

For our purpose, we are interested in the experiential and interpersonal function (note that we examine interpersonal function through evaluatory and deictics/indexical approach – see section 2.4.4). Experiential meaning models ‘transitivity’, the idea that our ‘experience consists of a flow of events, or “goings-on”’ (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 213). The system of transitivity construes six process types, each of which

represents a particular domain of experience (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 213-215), viz: material, verbal, relational, behavioural and existential processes.

Transitivity is the grammar of experience; it represents the modelling of experience. It is that aspect of systemic functional linguistics which involves ‘the grammar of processes ... and the participants in these processes, and the attendant circumstances’ (Halliday 1976: 30). It ‘shows how speakers encode in language their mental picture of reality and how they account for their experience of the world around them’ (Simpson 1993: 88). We analysed the interrogatives based on the material, relational, verbal and mental processes they contained.

- i. A material process encodes a ‘process of “doing” and happening, which expresses the ‘notion that some entity “does” something’ (Halliday 1994: 102; Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 207; Bloor and Bloor 2013: 112). For example: *Will the Prime Minister come to Harlow so we can show Britain how to lead the economic recovery?* (UK 21 Mar 12/Col. 790), where *come* and *show* are material processes.
- ii. Relational processes generally concern things ‘of being’, with the ‘central meaning ... that something is’ (Halliday 1994: 112) and are ‘typically realized by the verb *be* or some verb of the same class (known as *copular verbs*)’ (Bloor and Bloor 2013: 122). For example: *... is he petrified by indecision?* (UK 5 Dec 07/Col. 820), where *is* is a relational process and *petrified by indecision* is an attributive adjectival phrase.
- iii. Verbal processes refer to the process of saying (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 179-210) and ‘relate to the transfer of messages through language’ (Thompson 2004: 100). For example: *Can the Prime Minister tell us what has changed now?* (UK 14 Jun 06/Col. 764), where *tell* is a verbal process.
- iv. Mental processes concern ‘states of mind or psychological events’ (Bloor and Bloor 2013: 118) and an ‘understanding that people [as sensors] possess beliefs, thoughts and intentions that are part of their internal world, distinct from the world of observable behaviour and physical events’ (Shatz, Wellman and Silber 1983: 301-2; see also Grazzani and Ornaghi 2012: 99). Example: *Does he believe that these business leaders, including members of his own advisory council, were deceived?* (UK 7 Apr 2010/Col. 963).
- v. Behavioural: ‘outer manifestations of inner workings, the acting out of processes of consciousness’ (note we did not consider this in our analysis).

- vi. Existential processes indicate a ‘sense of coming into existence’. They are usually introduced by empty or existential ‘there’. Example: *Is there a good reason why the Prime Minister will not condemn the tax affairs of Tory-supporting Gary Barlow as morally wrong?* (UK 14 May 14/Col. 748). *Is there a good reason* indicates the existence of a good reason.

Based on these principles, I categorised the *yes/no* interrogatives into material, relational, verbal, mental and existential processes (see Table 1).

Table 1: Process types and their frequencies

Process	UK		Ghana	
	Frequency	%	Frequency	%
(i) Material	97	10	19	5
(ii) Relational	186	20	62	15
(iii) Verbal	314	33	146	35
(iv) Mental	316	34	182	43
(v) Existential	28	3	10	2
Total	941	100	419	100

Material, relational and verbal processes are discussed in Chapter 4, while mental processes are examined in Chapter 5. The analysis excludes existential processes because they are so infrequent. Drawing on situational contexts, speech acts and the process types I interpret the questions to determine what MPs do with their questions. Such contextual patterning of the interrogatives also provides a sense of the attitudes of the MPs and (Prime) Ministers in the question-answering dichotomy, attitudes which inform the opinions and biases of the participants. The employment of the process types helps us to examine how MPs model and translate their experience into their professional discourse. It offers us the opportunity to examine how MPs encode in their questions the states, actions, speech and ‘mental picture’ (Simpson 1993: 88) of their political interests, experiences and feelings regarding their roles as representatives of their constituents.

There is another aspect of context that we have not discussed here – the linguistic context or co-text, that is, ‘the set of other words used in the same phrase or sentence’ (Yule 2010: 129). It is the immediate collocational contexts of lexical choices which tell us something about the meanings chosen in lexical selection. The corpus approach we

employ in this study is interested in this kind of context. It looks at words in context through concordances. We discuss this in section 3.4.1.

So far, we have noted that ‘language operates in context’, including socio-cultural contexts (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 32). Institutional discourse, discourse analysis, context of situation and SFL indicate a shift from the study of language as an abstract entity, a code, with rules, which could be studied without reference to cultural, social, contextual and human influence. They embrace the study of language with a focus on the ‘purposes and functions’ which language is designed ‘to serve in human affairs’ (Brown and Yule 1983: 1) and attempt to offer response to real-world, language-related problems. They all embody the view that language use and meaning is contextually conditioned. In other words, meaning is a pragmatic endeavour. In the next section, we will explore the pragmatics of political discourse in order to situate the study in the sub-fields of pragmatics incorporated in the study.

2.4 The pragmatics of political discourse

Political discourse has been variously defined (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 1; Taiwo 2008: 220; van Dijk 1997: 12-15). But, for our purpose, we will consider it as discourse ‘concerned with formal/informal political contexts and political actors ... *inter alia*, politicians, political institutions, governments, political media, and political supporters operating in political environments to achieve political goals’ (Wilson 2001: 398). This study employs aspects of pragmatics, ‘the study of meaning in context’ (Wilson 1990: 16) or ‘speaker meaning’ (Yule 2010: 127). As Tsakona (2013: 190) says: ‘[i]f we view political discourse as an integral part of political procedures and, most importantly, political action, a pragmatic perspective ... seems most relevant and enlightening’. The pragmatic approach to political discourse affords us the opportunity of understanding what politicians mean by what they say and/or how they think and behave politically. For Wilson (1990: 181):

[a]pplying pragmatics to political language, as a specifically selected form of language in use, we may gain confirmation of our pragmatic theories: real-world proof that pragmatic concepts are in operation in real talk, as opposed to the contextually sterile examples frequently employed by both linguists and philosophers.

Parliamentary questions and debates are adversarial and full of face-threatening and face-attacking acts (FTAs). Parliamentary discourse is also concerned with scrutinising and

evaluating opposed parliamentary groups' (government and opposition MPs') decisions and policies in positive and negative ways. This study, thus, incorporates the three pragmatic sub-fields of speech act theory, face and (im)politeness in order to provide further awareness of and contribute to the ongoing academic research in these sub-fields, especially in professional contexts, and how they relate to political/parliamentary discourse.

2.4.1 Speech acts

Speech act theory (SAT) is said to be interested in language as action and interaction (Tomlin, Forrest, Pu and Kim 1997: 75; van Dijk 1997: 14) notwithstanding its interest, also, in the 'referential and propositional content of discourse, although not in terms of its truth value' (Wood and Kroger 2000: 5). SAT's major concern is how meaning is constructed through language that counts as action – it allows us to understand indirection in language use and the unspoken part of what people mean during interactions (Paltridge 2006: 60). Indirect discourse is, perhaps, more crucial in parliamentary questioning contexts where 'questions carry (as well as propositions and presuppositions) certain invited inferences' (Wilson 1990: 177).

Proposed by Austin (1962) as a reaction to the logical positivist philosophers' view of language (especially statement) as expression of truth or falsity of a state of affairs of events (Paltridge 2006: 55; Jaworski and Coupland 2006: 55-65; Smith 1991: 2), SAT asserts that language, in addition to stating states of affairs as either true or false, could perform action. Austin (1962) referred to those forms of language use that could state something as true or false as constatives, while those that could be said to be performing actions he called performatives. In performatives, the saying is the doing (Austin 1962: 6) and, therefore, 'the saying and the doing are inseparable' (Stubbs 1983: 148). For example, if a judge tells a defendant in court: *I charge you with stealing*, the mere uttering of the words is the charging. Speech act theory is, thus, 'the study of the activities performed by utterances and the investigation of the pre-conditions necessary for an utterance to be interpreted as a particular kind of act' (Wooffitt 2005: 34). For instance, in our example (*I am the Prime Minister*), Cameron could be said to be *asserting* his authority, where his merely stating *I am the Prime Minister* is the asserting itself.

Austin (1962) classified performatives into two: explicit performatives (those containing a performative verb such as: I 'promise' that I will buy you a car) and implicit

performatives (in which the illocutionary force is inexplicit, as in: I will buy you a car). Austin (1962: 150), rather reservedly, categorised performative verbs into five (see also Coulthard 1985: 23):

- i. Verdictives, those exemplified in the giving of a judgement, e.g. charge, sentence, declare, diagnose.
- ii. Exercitives, those indicating an exercise of authority/power, rights or influence, e.g. order, warn, threat, appoint.
- iii. Commissives, showing commitment to a future action or intention, e.g. promise, bet, vow, guarantee.
- iv. Behabitives, indicating attitudes and social behaviour, e.g. apologise, criticise, challenge.
- v. Expositives, clarifying ‘how utterances fit into ongoing discourse, or how they are being used’, e.g. argue, affirm, concede, and agree.

The last three types are the ones we find and discuss in the data.

Austin (1962) further stated that utterances (or language use) could be considered at three levels, namely: locutionary force or meaning (the literal or referential meaning of what one says); illocutionary force or meaning (the intended meaning of what is said) and perlocutionary force or meaning (the effect of what is said on the addressee). For example, in the Cameron example, *I am the Prime Minister*, the locutionary force is a statement; the illocutionary force could be an order to accept his decision, to stop disrespecting him, and so on; while the perlocutionary force would be the reaction of the ministers, for example, accepting Cameron’s decision, challenging him, etc. For Sinclair (1992: 79), ‘Austin’s notion of “illocutionary force” was a powerful agent in reconceptualizing the way language relates to the world’.

Furthering the development of SAT, Searle (1989) proposed other ways of looking at SAT. Searle (1989: 536; see also Leech 1983: 175-6) challenges Austin’s distinction between constatives and performatives, and says ‘stating and describing are just as much actions as promising and ordering, and some performatives, such as warnings, can be true or false [and] ... statements can be made with explicit performative verbs’, as in, ‘I hereby state that it is raining’. He accepts Austin’s notion of explicit performatives but rejects that of implicit performatives, arguing that the implicit cases as proposed by Austin are not performatives at all, even though he admits them as ‘performances’. Searle (1989: 536) states that: ‘some illocutionary acts can be performed

by uttering a sentence containing an expression that names the type of speech act'. In Searle's view, a performative must necessarily contain a performative verb, while in Austin's view, when an illocutionary act does not contain a direct performative verb, it is an implicit performative. The difference, thus, is a matter of labelling. While Searle's classification looks more grammatically inclined and rule governed, Austin's seems more notional and arbitrary.

Searle (1976) thought that Austin's illocutionary act classification lacked any consistent principle (of course, Austin (1962: 150-1) himself expressed reservation about his classification). Searle (1976: 10-12) offered the following classification of illocutionary acts:

- i. Representatives, which commit the addresser to the truth of a proposition (e.g. accusing, asserting, complaining);
- ii. Directives, which ask addressee to do something and are behaviour-influencing (e.g. inviting, commanding, requesting);
- iii. Commissives, which commit the addresser to a future course of action (e.g. vowing, promising, offering);
- iv. Declaratives, which seek to effect changes in the world (e.g. appointing, baptizing, sentencing); and
- v. Expressives, expressing psychological states such as a feeling (e.g. thanking, wishing, apologising).

According Titscher, Meyer, Wodak and Vetter (2000: 243), Searle sees speech acts as 'the basic units of human communication.' His classification is, therefore, communicatively functional, otherwise referred to as purpose of utterance or intention (Pustejovsky 2006: 20).

In the analysis, we deal with representatives, directives, commissives and expressives, which are the ones we find in the data. We employ Searle's (1969: 66; 1975: 71) rules of speech acts: preparatory, sincerity and essential conditions. For example, for the (indirect) speech act of directive (e.g. request) to be performed, these conditions must exist:

- i. *Propositional content condition*: Speaker (S) predicates a future act (A) of Hearer (H)

- ii. *Preparatory condition*: H is able to do A. S believes that H is capable of doing A. And it is not obvious to both S and H that H will do A in the normal course of events of his own accord.
- iii. *Sincerity condition*: S wants H to do A.
- iv. *Essential condition*: The directive counts as an attempt to get H to do A.

For example, if a parliamentarian (MP) is asking a (Prime) Minister to take a certain action, the MP must believe that the (Prime) Minister is capable of doing it; he sincerely wants the PM to do it; and the directive counts as attempting to get the PM to do it. In the parliamentary context, (Prime) Ministers have ‘status function[s]’ (Searle 2010: 94) (e.g. policy formulation and implementation) and, therefore, at least in principle, they are presumed to be capable of performing such functions. When MPs are asking questions, they are holding the (Prime) Ministers to account and the assumption is that, if they do not hold the (Prime) Ministers to account, they will not perform the functions imposed on them. However, often, the extent to which MPs are sincere with their directives (which are performed indirectly through questions – utterances can indirectly perform other functions if the essential conditions are satisfied (Searle 1969: 68)) is difficult to determine as a result of the face-threats and –attacks that accompany the questions. For instance, the preparatory condition for asking a question, according to Searle (1969: 66), is that the Speaker (S) ‘does not know “the answer”’ to the question or have ‘the information’ needed’. But in the parliamentary questions, MPs invariably always know the answer to their questions (Ilie (2015: 9; 2006: 191), which makes the questions somehow insincere. On the other hand, one could argue that MPs ask the question for the benefit of their constituents and the ‘overhearing audience’ in the form of the public (Heritage 1985) who may not have the information required.

The Searlean indirect rules are complemented with the following principles established by Coulthard (1985: 130-133, see also Labov and Fanshel 1977: 82), which state that an interrogative is a:

1. Command to do if action was supposed to have been done earlier but not done.
2. Command to do if:
 - a. It contains one of the modals ‘can’, ‘could’, ‘will’, ‘would’, (and sometimes ‘going to’);
 - b. The subject of the clause is also the addressee;
 - c. The predicate describes an action which is physically possible at the time of the utterance.

3. Command to stop if it refers to an action or activity which is proscribed at the time of the utterance.

These principles are relevant for identifying and analysing the functions of the *yes/no* interrogatives obtained since about 55% in UK PMQs and 41% in GMQs were introduced by modal auxiliaries, including *will/would*, *can/could* and *may*. Consider, for example, the question:

Example 1: UK 26 Jan 11/Col. 291

... *Will my right hon. Friend* join me in *paying tribute* to the Holocaust Education Trust and its work to ensure that the lessons of the holocaust are not forgotten?

This is an interrogative in form, but pragmatically a request, as it is introduced by *will* and the subject, *my right hon. Friend*, is the same as the addressee, the PM David Cameron. Also, *paying tribute* is physically possible at the time of the utterance, so the interrogative functions as a request for the PM to pay tribute to the Holocaust Education Trust. The principles show that certain interrogatives are requests for action rather than questions, such as seeking information or confirmation. The principles further point towards the idea that there is no one-to-one correspondence between the structure of clauses and their pragmatic functions (Hobbs 2012: 49; Levinson 2012: 12; Downing and Locke 2006: 197; Biber et al. 2002). Interrogatives can contextually function as directives/commands (e.g. order, request, suggestion/advice, offer/invitation) and statements (e.g. criticism, praise, challenge) (Downing and Locke 2006: 211; Biber et al. 2002: 249). As we discuss in the analysis, these are functions frequently performed by *yes/no* interrogatives in UK PMQs and GMQs; they hardly ask simple *yes/no* questions.

The analysis is further informed by the assumption that questions have different sets of orientation, that is, presupposition or preference. *Yes/no* questions can often be 'biased according to the kind of answer the speaker expects, and are based on neutral, positive or negative assumptions' (Downing and Locke 2006: 202; see also Sadock 2012: 113; Tsui 1992; Quirk et al. 1972; 1985). Neutral orientations/assumptions are usually marked by non-assertive forms such as *any*, *anybody*, *ever*, *yet*, as, for example: Are you inviting *anybody* to the programme? Positive orientation is often marked by assertive forms such as *some*, *somebody*, *always*, *already*, *too*, as in: Are you inviting *someone* to the programme? (Downing and Locke 2006: 201-202; Tsui 1992; Quirk et al. 1972; 1985). Questions can also be '*negatively formulated*' (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 764),

which are more strongly biased (Pullum 2002: 881). Downing and Locke (2006: 201-203; see also Sadock 2012: 113) assert that:

[n]egative-interrogative *yes/no* questions are based on conflicting attitudes. The speaker had originally expected that the answer would be or should be positive, but new evidence suggests that it will be negative. This conflict produces a feeling of surprise, disbelief or disappointment. If the addressee is directly involved, the biased question can imply a reproach. E.g. Is there *no* butter? (There should be some butter, but it seems there isn't.)

However, in their analysis of *some* versus *any* in medical issues, Heritage and Robynson (2011: 21, 30; see also Heritage, Robynson, Elliott, Becket and Wilkes 2007; Robynson 2001) observe that 'any'-designed questions, such as '[a]re there *any* other concerns you'd like to address during this visit?', have 'negative polarity and will tend to exert a chilling effect on patient response'. This reinforces the concept that linguistic structures usually have different pragmatic functions in different contexts and therefore studying question types in a political context like the UK PMQs and GH GMQs can illuminate the pragmatics of questions. The analysis is also informed by the view that whether a linguistic form is a question or not depends on the 'ongoing interaction' (Wilson 1990: 135). Thus, the analysis incorporates the three approaches to question classification, namely: logico-formal, functional and sequential approaches (Wilson 1990: 134-135).

2.4.2 Face

Goffman's (2006 [1967]) work on 'face' has been considered the foundation of studies in 'face', 'the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself' (Goffman 2006 [1967]: 299). People endeavour to create, project and maintain an identity or public self-image (Brown and Levinson 2006 [1987]), and expect others to respect it during interactions. Face is, thus, a social contract. According to Goffman (2006 [1967]: 299), during interactions, participants 'act out' a *line*, the point of view or stance taken by an interlocutor, which puts them in a certain relationship with other participants. Goffman (2006 [1967]: 300) asserts that in an interaction, a participant 'may be said to *have*, or *be in*, or *maintain* face', when all necessary ingredients of interaction (e.g. evidence and others' opinion) support his/her line; but 'may be said to *be in wrong face*' when necessary ingredients do not support his/her line. One will '*be out of face*' if one has no line in an interaction. Interactants undertake a number of steps and ways to build, maintain and protect their own as well as others' face. A person usually has 'two points of view' –

a defensive orientation aimed at saving his own face and a protective orientation aimed at saving others' face (Goffman (2006[1967]: 302). That means some practices are primarily defensive while others are protective, even though the two may be performed simultaneously. In order to build, maintain and protect face and face wants, Goffman (2006[1967]: 302) says that interactants do what he calls *face-work*, which means 'to designate the actions taken by a person to make whatever he is doing consistent with face'. Face-work is meant to counter and manage face-threatening acts. It involves 'face-saving practices' of which 'each person, subculture, and society seems to have its own characteristic repertoire' (Goffman 2006[1967]: 302).

Goffman further establishes two basic kinds of face-work: the avoidance and corrective processes. In the avoidance process, interactants evade contacts in which face threats can hardly be avoided and employ the services of 'go-betweens'. Should contact be unavoidable, interactants usually avoid topics that can threaten a face or make use of hedges. Interactants also employ protective manoeuvres (e.g. showing respect and politeness) or employ 'tactful blindness' (Goffman 2006[1967]: 302) by overlooking the occurrence of a face-threatening act. The corrective process involves four moves/steps that are employed when a face threat occurs (Goffman 2006[1967]: 304-305):

- i. *challenge*, 'responsibility of calling attention to the misconduct' to bring events back into line;
- ii. *offering*, 'a participant, typically the offender, is given the chance to correct for the offense and re-establish the expressive order', for example, making the event appear a meaningless act or a joke;
- iii. *acceptance*, accepting the offering; and
- iv. *gratitude*, expression of thank you.

Goffman says that these four moves 'provide a model for interpersonal ritual behaviour' even though it may be departed from in some important ways.

Goffman (2006[1967]: 306) raises the issue of 'aggressive use of face-work', in which case he admits that face-threats/situations can be manipulated and exploited, and can be considered as a contest, such that participants may 'fish for compliments', as for example, demeaning oneself to make others feel guilty, discrediting others' face. This notwithstanding, face-work is considered a matter of social cooperation, the purpose of which is fundamentally to achieve mutual benefits. As a result, participants may go through 'reciprocal self-denial' (Goffman 2006[1967]: 307) by debasing or depreciating

oneself and complimenting others. Thus, face-work is principally informed by the ground rules of social interaction, with significant implications for social relationships, because ‘ongoing relationships motivate encounters; encounters maintain relationships; relationship partners often share face’ (Ryan 2010: 5). In other words, face-work is what upholds ongoing social relationships.

Deriving their notion of ‘face’ from Goffman, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61-62) propose two types of ‘face’, namely:

- i. Negative face: ‘the basic claim to territories, personal reserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom of imposition’ or ‘the want of every “competent adult member” that his actions be unimpeded by others’.
- ii. Positive face: ‘the positive consistent self-image or “personality” (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants’ or ‘the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least some others’.

Brown and Levinson agree with Goffman that face-work (face creation, protection and maintenance) is based on cooperation for mutual benefits. Brown and Levinson (2006 [1987]) call interactional acts that threaten the face of interlocutors face-threatening acts (FTAs) and those that protect face as face-preserving acts (FPAs). Brown and Levinson (2006[1987]: 313-315) classify FTAs into those that threaten either addressees’ negative face (e.g. orders, requests, suggestions, advice, reminding and threats) or their positive face (e.g. criticism, ridicule, accusations, irreverence, disagreements, blatant non-cooperation, and raising of divisive topics). There are also those that threaten either addressers’ negative face (e.g. expression and acceptance of thanks, acceptance of offers, excuses) or their positive face (e.g. apologies, acceptance of compliments, self-humiliation, and confessions). As a way of addressing FTAs and making social encounters successful some politeness principles have been proposed, which we discuss in the next section.

2.4.3 (Im)Politeness

The concept of the politeness principle was first put forward by Lakoff (1973; 1977) and further developed by Brown and Levinson (1978; 1987). Lakoff (1977: 88) proposed three ways of linguistic politeness, namely: don’t impose (showing formality/distance),

give options (showing deference/hesitancy), and make the addressee feel good (showing camaraderie/equality) (see Dynel 2009: 26). To Lakoff (1989: 64), politeness principles are meant to ‘reduce friction in personal interaction’, because ‘it is more important in conversation to avoid offense than to achieve clarity’ (Lakoff 1973: 297); and people will usually go for politeness at the expense of clarity of language (Lakoff and Sachiko 2005: 8). This view is shared by other scholars such as Arndt and Janney (1985: 282) who see politeness as ‘interpersonal supportiveness’, and Hill, Ide, Ikuta, Kawasaki and Ogino (1986: 349) who consider it as a means ‘to consider other’s feelings, establish levels of mutual comfort, and promote rapport’. Watts (2003: 14) regards politeness as ‘cooperative social interaction and displaying mutual consideration for others’.

Deriving their theory from Goffman’s (2006 [1967]) notion of ‘face’, and the English folk term ‘losing face’, Brown and Levinson (1987: 61) consider politeness as a face-saving phenomenon (Dynel 2009: 29). The theory is also partly derived from Grice’s (2006[1975]; 1991[1975]: 308) cooperative principle and conversational maxims, which are relevant for managing conversations.

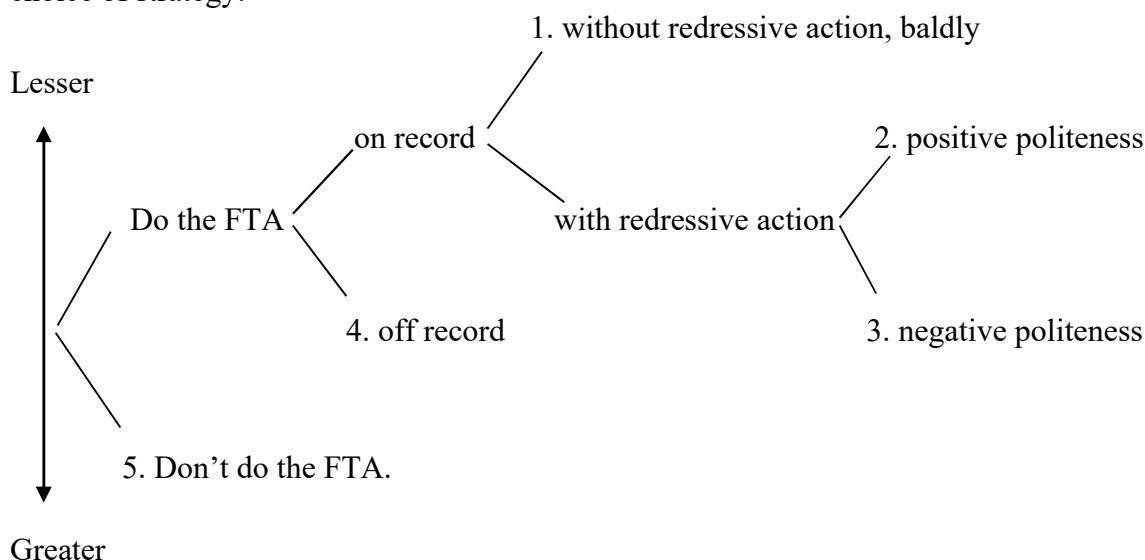
- i. Quantity: making one’s contribution to the conversation just informative as required, and nothing more, nothing less.
- ii. Quality: making one’s contribution one that is true. That is, ‘[d]o not say what you believe to be false’, and ‘that for which you lack adequate evidence’.
- iii. Relation: ‘Be relevant’, that is, the contribution being appropriate to the needs of the transaction;
- iv. Manner: ‘Be perspicuous’, including avoiding ‘obscurity of expression’, ‘ambiguity’; being ‘brief’ and ‘orderly’.

Grice’s view is that failure to observe these principles and maxims may lead to a conversational breakdown. However, in a parliamentary context, it may be difficult to appreciate the extent to which one flouts these principles and maxims and how flouting them breaks down the exchange, since it can be done purposely for political effects (Harris 2001).

Brown and Levinson (1987:1) assert that ‘politeness ... presupposes that potential for aggression as it seeks to disarm it, and makes possible communication between potentially aggressive parties’. Brown and Levinson (2006[1987]: 316) suggest that in interactions involving face and FTAs, two major considerations come to the fore, viz:

either the FTA is done with some thoughtfulness or it is not done at all. The FTA can be done in one of two ways, on or off record. If it is done on record, it can be done with or without redressive action, and if it is done with redressive action, it can be either positive or negative politeness. Thus, five strategies are proposed for dealing with FTAs as presented below.

Circumstances determining choice of strategy:



Possible strategies for doing FTAs (Brown and Levinson 1978: 60, 69)

Brown and Levinson (2006[1987]: 316-317) further explain the strategies in the following way.

- Doing an FTA 'on record' means interlocutors are unambiguous about their intentions, meaning and intentions are clear (see the example below).
- 'Off record' presents some level of ambiguity, such that more than one meaning or intention can be adduced to the act (e.g. being metaphorical and ironical). Example: *[W]e should not come here and then say things we are not aware of* (Prof. Gyan-Baffour, NPP MP, opposition; GH 21 Feb 12/Col. 1145-76). *[W]e* is ambiguous as it can refer to all MPs even though Prof. Gyan-Baffour was referring to government MPs.
- On record without redressive action is the most direct and unambiguous way of dealing with an FTA. Example: *In the last 13 years, he [the Prime Minister] has robbed pension funds of £100 billion* (David Cameron, Con., leader of opposition; UK Hansard: 7 Apr 10/Col 962). This is a direct accusation.

- On record with redressive action attempts to give face to the addressee. Example: *He should please bring a substantive Question and I would come and answer it* (Mrs Asmah, NPP MP, Minister; GH 6 Jul 05/Col. 1642). *Please* is a redressive action as it mitigates the face-threat in the directive (*He should bring...*).
- Depending on the kind of face involved, the speaker may apply:
 - a positive politeness strategy (which addresses the positive face of the addressee – such as allowing an addressee to join a group). Example: *May I thank the Prime Minister for his actions in the 2014 Budget which will mean that more missions are flown and more lives are saved?* (Guy Opperman, Con MP: UK 2 Apr 14/Col. 883). The MP praises the Prime Minister.
 - a negative politeness strategy (which addresses addressee's negative face – such as being formal, hedging, or apologising before taking an action), as for example: *May I ask the Prime Minister to examine the issue and try to create a level playing field for health care charities?* (Chris Hopkins, Con. MP: UK 26 Jan 11/Col. 291). This is a request from Chris Hopkins to the Prime Minister. The MP asks permission (*May I ...*) to make the request; it is a way of being formal and recognising the face wants of the Prime Minister.

Lakoff's (1973; 1977) and Brown and Levinson's (1978; 1987) models of politeness are not different in terms of goals: to engender smooth social interactions. While Lakoff's theory is pragmatically based, Brown and Levinson's is sociological (Żywicznyński 2012: 74). It is interesting to note that Brown and Levinson establish a direct link between politeness and speech acts. The examples given by Brown and Levinson (1987: 66) to illustrate the manifestations of their politeness strategies are all speech acts (negative-face threatening acts include orders, requests, suggestions, advice and threats; while positive-face threatening acts include criticism, ridicule, accusations, irreverence and disagreements). Perhaps, that is why speech acts are usually studied in relation with politeness theory.

Proposing 'a social model of politeness', Watts (2003: 14, 142) and Locher and Watts (2005: 9, 10) have argued against the idea of a theory (and universality) of politeness as claimed by Lakoff (1973; 1977) and Brown and Levinson (1987). Locher and Watts (2005: 10, 9) argue that Brown and Levinson's politeness theory 'is not in fact

a theory of politeness, but rather a theory of facework, dealing with only the mitigation of face-threatening acts', stating that 'politeness cannot just be equated with FTA-mitigation because politeness is a discursive concept'. Watts (2003: 27, 49) offers a distinction between two forms of politeness, 'first-order' and 'second-order' politeness. According to him, Brown and Levinson's (1987) and Lakoff's (1973; 1977) approaches to politeness fall under second-order politeness, which is more technical and abstract and does not consider real life situations of the occurrence of politeness. First-order politeness is 'discursive' and 'marked' (Locher and Watts (2005: 9, 10), 'situated' (Haugh, Davies and Merrison 2011: 1) and concerned with 'speakers' intentions and hearers' perceptions', making it naturally-occurring 'data driven' (Grainger 2011: 167; see also Locher and Watts 2005: 10). The relationship between 'first-order' and 'second-order' politeness is that of practice and theory. Watts (2003: 14) argues that it is the first-order (practice) politeness that must be the object of study by researchers. To this end, Mills (2011: 26) states that:

[t]here has been a discursive turn in politeness research ... [and] theorists are no longer content to analyse politeness and impoliteness as if they were realised through the use of isolated phrases and sentences. ... politeness and impoliteness are ... judgements about linguistic phenomena and judgements are generally constitute over a number of turns or even over much longer stretches of interaction. Furthermore, theorists who take a discursive approach are generally concerned with issues of context.

Thus, the study of politeness in an institutional context such as parliamentary discourse falls under first-order politeness, even though the principles of second-order politeness such as FTAs and FPAs are still applicable.

Notwithstanding the criticisms against Lakoff's (1973; 1977) and Brown and Levinson's (1987) claim to universality of their politeness principles because of their inability to 'account for many culture-specific manifestations of linguistic politeness' (Kádár and Bargiela-Chiappini 2011: 3), the politeness theory has pervasively informed discourse studies. Not even the recent attempts by proponents of the 'postmodern paradigm, who offer an alternative epistemological and ontological framework' (Haugh 2007: 1), and advocating a discursive approach which seeks only to identify 'potential instances of (im)politeness' (Haugh 2007: 11), suggesting 'giving up the idea of a Theory of Politeness altogether' (Watts 2005; cited in Haugh 2007: 1) have succeeded in dislodging the principles of the theory of politeness. Even though the theory may, in the strict sense of Lakoff's, and Brown and Levinson's, fail to account for politeness

principles in specific cultures, the fundamental assumptions that each culture has ways of managing face and (im)politeness is still significant in linguistic (politeness) research. As Grainger (2011: 168) suggests, ‘maintaining a focus on technical, second order notions of politeness, whilst also recognising the importance of first order concepts in analysis’ would be useful.

Related to politeness is ‘impoliteness’, which, according to Culpeper (2011: 19), evades a clear-cut definition. For a working definition, therefore, we will consider the following definitions (*italics mine*):

[i]mpoliteness is *a negative attitude towards specific behaviours* occurring in specific contexts... 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 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: 23)

... verbal impoliteness [is] linguistic behaviour assessed by the hearer as *threatening* her or his *face* or *social identity*, and *infringing the norms of appropriate behaviour* that prevail in particular contexts and among particular interlocutors, *whether intentionally or not*.

Holmes, Marra and Schnurr (2008: 196)

These definitions encapsulate the four major notions of impoliteness, namely, ‘face, social norms, intentionality and emotions’ (Culpeper 2011: 21). Culpeper (2011: 21) states that ‘any definition of impoliteness’ should include the central notion that it ‘always involves emotional consequences for the target (victim)’. Further, impoliteness attacks or threatens ‘face’ or the ‘social identity’ of the target and contravenes ‘social norms’ either intentionally or unintentionally. The two definitions are appropriate for this research because: (i) parliamentary interaction is full of (intentional) face-threatening acts or personality attacks (Bull and Wells 2012; Murphy 2012c; Ilie 2006; Ilie 2004; Harris 2001); (ii) MPs often flout parliamentary ‘norms’/rules of questioning; (iii) questions and responses between MPs and (Prime) Ministers often involve emotionally-charged (counter)-accusations.

As we noted in section 1.2.2, a number of studies have employed speech acts, face and (im)politeness in the study of parliamentary discourse. The studies give us a sense of the relevance of these pragmatic theories to the study of political discourse, generally, and parliamentary discourse, particularly. They give this study a starting point as it

investigates the pragmatics of UK and Ghanaian parliamentary questions and debates. The majority (if not all) of these studies are mainly qualitative, with only some passing references to quantitative information. For instance, Harris (2001) mentions only in passing that *yes/no* questions and requests as pragmatic functions of questions were the most frequent among the question types and functions identified, without giving further quantitative details. This is where the current study becomes significant: it combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. It first uses computational linguistic tools, *Wordsmith Tools version 6* (Scott 2012) and *CFL Lexical Feature Marker* (Woolfs 2011), to identify specific patterns in the corpus data, quantifies those patterns and then analyses their qualitative features such as their speech act functions, face and politeness.

2.5 Corpus approaches to discourse analysis

Corpus linguistic approaches to the study of discourse have gained a great deal of popularity in recent times. As Baker (2010a: 93) states: '[c]orpus linguistics is an increasingly popular field of linguistics which involves the analysis of (usually) very large collections of electronically stored texts, aided by computer software'. Corpus linguistics (CL) is simply defined as 'the computer-aided analysis of very extensive collections of transcribed utterances or written texts' (McEnery and Hardie 2012: i). According to Hunston (2011: 4), CL has 'basic shared concerns', which

include collecting quantities of text in electronic form so that they are open to data-manipulation techniques. Such techniques range from finding a search term and observing its immediate environments (key-word-in-context or concordance lines); to calculations of relative frequency (as in, for example, collocation studies); to annotation for such categories as word class, grammatical function or semantic class; and frequency calculations based on such categories.

The key issue here is the computerised manipulation of linguistic data analysis. CL is said to employ two main approaches: corpus-based and corpus-driven approaches. The corpus-based approach refers to 'a methodology that avails itself of the corpus mainly to expound, test or exemplify [existing] theories and descriptions' (Tognini-Bonelli 2001: 65) 'in order to validate', 'refute' or 'refine' them (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 6). The corpus-driven approach 'claims instead that the corpus *itself* should be the sole source of our hypothesis about language', that is, the theory must be derived from the corpus (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 6). For Hunston (2011: 91) the corpus-driven approach represents a 'serendipitous method', 'just "noticing" something that occurs frequently in

concordance lines’, while the corpus-based approach is a ‘rigorous method’ that attempts ‘to quantify a concept that has no single realisation’. McEnery and Hardie (2012: 6, 147-153), however, reject ‘the binary distinction between corpus-based and corpus-driven linguistics’ and think that ‘*all* corpus linguistics can justly be described as corpus-based’, as they believe that the distinction between the two is misleading. I take the view that both approaches can be useful in several ways. Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998: 4) state that corpus-based analysis has four characteristics.

- i. It is empirical, analysing the actual patterns of use in natural texts;
- ii. It utilizes a large and principled collection of natural texts, known as a “corpus,” as the basis for analysis;
- iii. It makes extensive use of computers for analysis, using both automatic and interactive techniques;
- iv. It depends on both quantitative and qualitative analytical techniques.

The last point here is particularly significant as it allows for quantitative measures of linguistic forms and patterns and at the same time include ‘qualitative, functional interpretations of quantitative patterns’ (Biber et al. 1998: 5). This implies a two stage analysis: (i) quantitatively identifying ‘association patterns’ within the text and (ii) ‘going beyond the quantitative patterns to propose functional interpretations explaining why the patterns exist’ (Biber et al. 1998: 9). The functional interpretation of the patterns may go into the social context of the text under study, in which case it becomes a pragmatic and/or discourse analysis approach, as in the current study. Biber et al. (1998: 106) have said that ‘the use of many lexical and grammatical features can only be fully understood through analysis of their functions in larger discourse contexts’. Biber et al. (1998: 106) further aver that the use of corpus-based ‘techniques can be applied to a large body of texts to accurately describe the discourse characteristics of selected registers’ so as ‘to produce generalizable findings’.

Using a corpus-based approach, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 5) examine ‘the discursive construction of refugees and asylum seekers’ in a 140-million-word corpus of UK press articles published between 1996 and 2005’ and find that refugees and asylum seekers are represented negatively. Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 5, 33) discuss ‘the extent to which a corpus-based methodological stance can inform critical discourse analysis’, concluding that ‘[w]hile the corpus-based approach was ... useful in identifying large-scale trends as well as minority cases, we would recommend that such a methodology only form[s] part of the analysis, informing and being informed by a critical discourse analysis approach’. According to Baker (2010b: 19):

[a]s corpus linguistics is a collection of methods, researchers need to determine which ones are most applicable in addressing their research questions, along with deciding which software will be used (often the affordances of the latter will heavily impact on the former).

The current research employs a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach (Partington, Duguid and Taylor 2013; Partington 2010). CADS combines the corpus approach with the discourse analysis approach and suggests a moving between and utilising the techniques of the two as and when necessary. A CADS approach is defined as a study of ‘the form and/or function of language as *communicative discourse* which incorporate[s] the use of computerised corpora in their analysis’ (Partington et al. 2013: 10). For Partington (2010: 88), ‘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’. As Partington et al. (2013: 10) state:

[i]n discourse analysis, one is analysing language in context and therefore to treat the corpus as an isolated black box is often methodologically unsound and unfruitful. It is often helpful to examine corpus-external data both to try and interpret and explain our data and also as a means of identifying areas for analysis.

This study employs such analytical approaches as forms and functions of interrogatives, process types in systemic functional linguistics and evaluation, but supported with corpus tools (concordance, wordlist and keywords). The incorporation of the corpus tools helps to uncover ‘*non-obvious meaning*, that is, meaning which might not be readily available to naked-eye perusal’ (Partington et al. 2013: 11). It helps us to ‘uncover linguistic patterns which can enable us to make sense of the ways that language is used in the construction of *discourses* (or ways of constructing reality)’ (Baker 2006: 1). While the corpus tools allow us to observe words within their co-texts and contexts, the interpretation of such words goes into the social, cultural and political contexts. For example, in this study, patterns of question forms indicated that government MPs usually asked image-enhancing questions, while opposition MPs asked image-discrediting questions during parliamentary questions (see section 4.5.3). But in order to confirm this, I watched part one of Michael Cockerell’s four-part BBC documentary *Inside the Commons – Lifting the Lid* (2015) and also considered an interview conducted among Ghanaian MPs, situating the analysis in its cultural context. The corpus-assisted approach to discourse analysis is significant because ‘a traditional corpus-based analysis is not sufficient to explain or interpret the reasons why certain linguistic patterns were found

(or not found)’ since it ‘does not usually take into account the social, political, historical, and cultural context of the data’ (Gabrielatos and Baker 2008: 33). In their study of the representation of refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (RASIM) in UK newspapers, Gabrielatos and Baker (2008: 33) state that: ‘a multidimensional CDA analysis that also goes beyond the “linguistic” elements of the text is instrumental in allowing researchers to consider issues such as’:

- i. processes of text production and reception of the news data under analysis;
- ii. the social context of the news industry in the United Kingdom (e.g., the competitive news market);
- iii. (changing) political policy in the United Kingdom and elsewhere surrounding RASIM;
- iv. statistics regarding immigration and asylum applications;
- v. social attitudes toward RASIM;
- vi. meta-data, e.g., reports or talk about the newspaper texts under examination;
- vii. macro-textual structures;
- viii. text-inherent structures (coherence and cohesion devices).

This means that a purely corpus linguistic analysis does not account for the wider situational context, hence the use of the corpus-assisted discourse approach in the current study.

2.6 Chapter conclusion

The theoretical background for this research includes institutional discourse, discourse analysis (e.g. the use of systemic functional linguistics – transitivity) and pragmatics (speech acts, face and (im)politeness). These theories and concepts, which largely take a social view of language, allow us to examine parliamentarians’ (MPs’) language to unpack some socio-cultural and political issues that underpin MPs’ language use in their questions and debates. In that way, we will be able to understand what MPs mean by what they say and what they represent in their professional engagements. MPs employ indirect speech acts in various ways, including as a means of attack, accusation and criticism. While doing so, MPs use various face and politeness strategies to manage face-threats and face-attacks. The study employs discourse analytical principles and approaches, with the support of corpus linguistic methods. Such a multilevel approach affords us the opportunity to examine linguistic patterns and phenomena both quantitatively and qualitatively. The next chapter looks at the methodological tools deployed in this study and how the data were analysed.

3 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

As noted in section 2.5 above, this research employs a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach, drawing inputs from corpus-based and corpus-driven methods, which are interested in using computational methods to study “‘real life’ language use’ (McEnery and Wilson 2001: 1). The key feature of these approaches is the employment of a computer as an aid, which allows ‘complex calculations’ to be made ‘on large amounts of text, revealing linguistic patterns and frequency information that would otherwise take days or months to uncover by hand, and may run on intuition’ (Baker 2006: 2). In this study, I deploy the use of *Wordsmith Tools* version 6 (Scott 2012) and *CFL Lexical Feature Marker* version 5A (Woolls 2011). These tools are introduced and discussed in this chapter. The chapter also describes a pilot study conducted with the UK data and its implications for the main study. It outlines data collection methods, ethical considerations and how the data were analysed, including the identification and classification of interrogatives, keywords, evaluation and the use of deictics/indexicals.

3.2 The data

This section explains the various datasets used in the study. I describe the pilot data and then the thesis data, which comprise: Hansards of UK Prime Minister’s questions (PMQs), UK Queen’s Address debates (UK QAD), Ghanaian Minister’s questions (GMQs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONAD) as well as two supplementary datasets, interview data from the Ghanaian Parliament and a documentary on UK House of Commons.

3.2.1 Pilot study data

In order to test the appropriateness of the methods and approaches employed in the thesis, before I collected the Ghanaian parliamentary data, I conducted a pilot study, whose data were Hansards of the UK House of Commons between 2005 and 2012. The data sample was a corpus of 62,887 words taken from 18 sessions of PMQs, six each from Prime Ministers (PMs) Tony Blair (TB – Labour (Lab)), Gordon Brown (GB – Labour (Lab)) and David Cameron (DC – Conservative (Con)), which were extracted from the House

of Commons website (www.parliament.uk). Table 2 shows the dates of the PMQs and the size of the corpus.

Table 2: Pilot data sample size

PM	Date/Word Count						Total
TB 2005-7	25/5/05	15/6/05	22/6/05	22/3/06	19/4/06	10/1/07	
	1,988	3,465	2766	3,386	3,660	4852	20,117
GB 2007-9	14/11/07	5/12/07	12/3/08	25/4/08	19/11/08	14/1/09	
	2,778	4,924	3,516	2,341	4,850	2,157	20,566
DC 2011-12	26/1/11	30/3/11	12/1/12	21/3/12	18/4/12	2/11/12	
	3,466	3,797	3,172	3,984	3,629	4,156	22,204
Total							62,887

Data sampling was both purposive (selection based on researcher's judgment) and simple random (selection based on chance) (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 100, 94).

I manually and randomly sampled 198 question-and-answer turns from the data for analysis. I wanted to identify the speech act functions of the questions, since that was the proposed aim of the research, 'speech acts in Ghanaian parliamentary discourse'. Using linguistic (Hobbs 2012: 49; Downing and Locke 2006: 197; Biber et al. 2002; Quirk et al. 1972; 1985) and speech act principles (see Coulthard 1985: 130-133; Labov and Fanshel 1977: 82), and content analysis (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 478), I labelled and coded each question in terms of locution (structural form), illocution (intended meaning) and perlocution (effect of the meaning on addressee), as shown in Example 2 (note: 12 March 2008 is the date on which the PMQs was held, and the question can be located at Column (page) 277 of the publication; Mr Andrew Mackay is Conservative (Con) MP who asked the question).

Example 2: UK 12 Mar 08/Col. 277

Mr. Andrew Mackay (Bracknell) (Con): When the Prime Minister was Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was widely spun that he gave Tony Blair only two days' notice of his Budget proposals. *Can we assume that the current Chancellor has been more co-operative?*

- a. **Locution/Type: Yes/No. 'mod' can-aux-subj.**
- b. **Illocution: Imputation/Criticism**
- c. **Perlocution: PM denies/rebuts**
- d. **Confrontational**
- e. **From Op MP**
- f. **prefaced** [this is the statement before the interrogative]

The Prime Minister [Lab]: The information that the right hon. Gentleman has is completely wrong, and it is because of co-operation in government that we are the Government who have created more stability than any Government in the history of this country.

After the coding, I used *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott 2012) to quantify and measure the locutionary, illocutionary and perlocutionary forms that were identified and represented them in tables and pie charts to observe the frequencies of those categories and patterns. These were then analysed and discussed qualitatively. Analysis of the 198 interrogatives from the data gave the results in Table 3.

Table 3: The speech act forms, their functions and frequencies

Locutionary forms	freq.	%	Illocutionary forms	freq.	%
i. <i>yes/no</i> interrogatives	143	72	i. multiple functions	120	61
ii. <i>wh</i> -interrogatives	34	17	ii. request	36	18
iii. alternative interrogatives	06	03	iii. criticism/imputation	22	11
iv. multiple interrogatives	15	8	iv. questions	14	7
v. declaratives	00	0	v. assertion	04	2
vi. tag-interrogatives	00	0	vi. suggestion/advice	02	1
Perlocutionary forms					
i. rebutting (including denying, counter-attacking, counter-criticising, defending, rejecting, ignoring, disagreeing, retorting)				94	40
ii. acknowledging (including accepting, affirming, admitting, commending, thanking)				71	31
iii. providing information/explanation				40	17
iv. promising/assuring				28	12

Table 3 shows that *yes/no* interrogatives were the most frequent (72%) followed by *wh*-interrogatives. Multiple functions, that is, one interrogative performing two or more functions simultaneously, were the most frequent (61%) followed by request (18%). Perlocutionarily, rebutting was the most common (40%). The higher frequency of multiple functions indicates that the Austinian (1962: 50) and Searlean (1976: 10-12) taxonomies (see section 2.4.1) of illocutionary acts could be misleading. However, it

reinforces Leech's (1983: 175-176) argument that the illocutionary forces of utterances are pragmatic and non-categorical. As Mey (2001: 125) notes, for speech acts to operate in the sense of a 'one sentence, one case principle' in a watertight manner could be misleading. From my data, it was clear that an interrogative, for instance, could simultaneously function both as a request (directive) and a criticism (representative). This makes both linguistic (e.g. preface) and non-linguistic contexts (e.g. political factors such as challenging a policy decision) major determinant factors of illocutionary functions (Coulthard 1985: 25), as, to understand the illocutionary force of an interrogative, I needed to consider the preface (a statement made before a question) and/or the postscript (a statement made after a question) and the PM's response (see section 4.2 for a discussion of this). The PMQs were hardly genuine questions, as they were used as conduit to make criticisms, assertions, suggestions/advice, etc., buttressing Ilie's (2006: 191) suggestion that parliamentary questions are 'usually a pretext to attack or praise the government'.

A further examination of the illocutionary-perlocutionary relationship revealed, for example, that criticisms always received counter-criticisms from Prime Ministers, leading to confrontations as a result of the face threats in them (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65). Such face threats could be considered as 'impolite' as they threaten the PM's 'identity' as a national leader (Holmes, Marra and Schnurr 2008: 196; Culpeper 2011: 23). It was observed that the source of such confrontations was often ideological, as in (counter-)criticising, the MPs and PMs took ideological stances. For example, as Example 2 above seeks to decry and impute a lack of seriousness on Gordon Brown's part as a PM, he ideologically presents himself and his government 'positively' (*we are the government who have created stability more stability than...*) and presents the opposition 'negatively' (*any Government...*) (van Dijk 2011a:397). Even as there were confrontations and impoliteness, there was some evidence to suggest that MPs and PMs tried to manage the confrontations through certain politeness principles such as: indirectness, modalisation, address terms and pre-question statement/preface.

The pilot study, which took place and was assessed during my first year of doctoral study, was significant in several ways. It offered me (through comments from the assessment panel) a reflection and refocusing, leading to a couple of adjustments in both approach and scope.

- i. I learnt about methodology, theory, computational and quantitative approaches in analysing data with which I was not previously familiar.

- ii. It was realised that doing a purely speech act study for the main work along the lines of locution, illocution and perlocution was going to be too wide in scope and a difficult task. I, therefore, needed to re-engage with speech act theory because, as stated by one reader, ‘... speech acts can be extremely difficult to identify since ... the type of discourse under consideration is highly stylised and therefore open to various forms of irony.’ Thus, instead of being the main theory, speech act theory is employed as a background and supporting theory in the main study.
- iii. There was a need to read relevant work in cultural theory to inform some of the differences that may arise between the Ghanaian and UK datasets, so as to account for some of the differences in linguistic and discourse patterns found between the UK and Ghanaian MPs.
- iv. The pilot study gave me an idea about the interrogative types to expect in both the Ghanaian and UK datasets for the main study and how to analyse them, but still being open-minded in terms of what the Ghanaian data and the UK data for the wider thesis might reveal.
- v. It gave me indications about the type of questions I needed to ask the Ghanaian MPs during my interviews with them (see section 3.2.2 below).

3.2.2 The thesis data: Hansard and supplementary data

There are three different types of data used for this research: Hansards and two supplementary datasets – interviews and a documentary, including video and televised parliamentary sessions and relevant news articles. The thesis data were already orthographically-transcribed Hansards of the UK parliament from 2005 to 2014 (including, but expanding the pilot study data) and the Ghanaian Parliament from 2005 to 2015, excluding 2007, which was unavailable. There were two different text types collected from each parliament: questions and debates. These were Prime Ministers questions and UK Queen’s Address debates (UK QAD), both of which were obtained from the UK Parliament website (www.parliament.uk). The Ghanaian data involved Ghanaian Ministers questions (GMQs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debate (GH SONAD). These are comparable datasets since the dates correspond and the discourse activities of the two parliaments are identical.

The UK PMQs data comprised about 177,000 words from 33 sessions (see Table 4), 11 each from Prime Ministers Tony Blair (Labour, 2005-2007), Gordon Brown (Labour, 2007-2009) and David Cameron (Conservative, 2011-2014). The size was considered bearing in mind that the available GMQs were 29 sessions. The Ghanaian data, obtained from the Hansard department of the Media and Public Relations of the Ghanaian Parliament, included 14 sessions from the J.A. Kufuor (New Patriotic Party (NPP), 2005-2008) and 15 from the J.E.A Mills/J.D. Mahama (National Democratic Congress (NDC), 2009-2013) administrations, comprising about 146,000 words (see Table 4). These were used for the analysis in Chapters 4 and 5. The periods of 2005-2014 were purposively chosen in order to have a broad range of corpus data that represented different administrations which could ‘be considered to “average out” and provide a reasonably accurate picture’ of the PMQs and GMQs (McEney and Wilson 2001: 30) as well as ensure intra-genre diversity and variability.

Meyer (2002: 30-54) and McEney and Wilson (2001: 30, 77) have underscored the need for data representativeness when creating reference corpora, such as the British National Corpus (BNC) and the International Corpus of English (ICE) (see Meyer 2002: 30-35; McEney and Wilson 2001: 29-31). According to Meyer (2002: 30-31) six decisions informed the creation of the BNC, one of which is relevant for my purpose: ‘[e]ach genre would be divided into text samples, and each sample would not exceed 40,000 words in length’. In fact, in the ICE Corpus (Greenbaum 1996: 29-30; Meyer 2002: 35), parliamentary debates as a genre consisted of 10 text samples, with a total word count of 20,000. For specialised corpus (corpus obtained from a special institutional setting) such as the parliamentary data for this study, Flowerdew (2004: 26) has argued that ‘there is no optimum size, but what is of paramount importance is that the size of the specialised corpus must be closely matched with the features under investigation’. Flowerdew (2005: 329) further argues that the ‘value of working with small, specialized corpora’ lies in the fact that:

the analyst [‘in the privileged position of being a “specialist informant”] is probably also the compiler and does have familiarity with the wider socio-cultural context in which the text was created, or else has access to specialist informants in the area. The compiler-cum-analyst can therefore act as a kind of mediating ethnographic specialist informant to shed light on the corpus data.

My access to documentary data, video and televised sessions, relevant news articles and the interviewing of MPs as special informants gave me the necessary socio-cultural

contexts in which the parliamentary texts were created. Following from this, we can say that the sample sizes (see Tables 3 and 4) are sufficient for this study. More importantly, the approach in this study is corpus-assisted, which means corpus analysis is employed as and when necessary to support the overarching discourse analytical approach. Biber, Conrad and Reppen (1998: 249) suggest that, if well designed, ‘ten texts’ representing a particular category of genre and ‘1,000-word samples from a text’ may well be a representative sample, depending on the kinds of linguistic features the researcher is interested in. They state that ‘[e]nough texts must be included in each category to encompass variation across speakers or authors’. The major issue, thus, is the representativeness of the corpus, that is, ‘the extent to which a sample includes the full range of variability in a population’, which ‘can be considered from situational and linguistic perspectives’ (Biber 1993: 243). For Koester (2010: 68, 69), ‘[w]hat is more important than the actual size of the corpus is how well it is designed and that it is “representative” and the ‘important thing is to ensure that samples are collected from a range of fairly typical situations’. Flowerdew (2004: 24) emphasises the need to sample ‘full texts’ as against ‘extracts’ in order to account for all features of the genre. Biber (1993: 243) has said that the ‘assessment’ of representativeness ‘depends on prior full definition from that population’. Section 1.5 demonstrated a full explanation and understanding of the context of this research by describing the two parliaments under study. The data cuts across different governmental administrations, with texts from each administration. From the foregoing, we can say that our data satisfy the established principles of creating a data sample for the study of a particular genre.

While Chapters 4 and 5 discuss parliamentary questions, Chapter 6 deals with the debates: the UK Queen’s Address debates (UK QAD) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONAD). The UK QAD dataset was Hansards of the debates of 2006, 2009 and 2013 from the periods of Prime Ministers Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron respectively. It comprised about one million words (Table 4). The GH SONAD dataset was debates of 2005 to 2015 (excluding 2007 and 2014, which were unavailable). The data, comprising about 616,000 words (Table 5), were from 2005-2008 of the J.A. Kufuor (NPP) and 2009-2015 of the J.E.A Mills/J.D Mahama (NDC) administrations. Table 4 shows the corpus sizes of the UK PMQs and UK QAD, while Table 5 shows those of the GMQs and GH SONAD.

Table 4: PMQs and UK QAD data

Administration	PMQs	Word Count	UK QAD	Word Count
TB (Labour) 1997-2007	11 sessions (2005-2007)	56,000	2006 (November)	347,000
GB (Labour) (2007-2010)	11 sessions (2007-2010)	58,000	2009 (November)	338,000
DC (Conservative) (2010-present)	11 sessions (2011-2014)	63,000	2013 (May)	327,000
Total	33 sessions	177,000		1,012,000

Table 5: GMQs and GH SONAD data

Administration	GMQs	Word Count	GH SONAD	Word Count
Kufuor (NPP) (2001-2008)	14 sessions (2005-2006, 2008)	67,000	nine (9) sessions (2005-2006, 2008)	152,000
Mills/Mahama (NDC) (2009- present)	15 sessions (2009-2013)	79,000	27 sessions (2009-2013, 2015)	464,000
Total	29 sessions	146,000		616,000

These GH SONAD data were the only ones available, which accounts for the imbalance in the data between the Kufuor (25%) and Mills/Mahama (75%) administrations. However, it does not affect the analysis because I do not compare and contrast the two administrations. Note also that the size of the UK data is about twice the size of the Ghanaian data. This difference is somehow proportional to the sizes of the two parliaments: while the Commons has 650 MPs, the number of Ghanaian MPs has changed from 230 in 2005 through 2012 to 275 in 2013 to the present.

The Hansards are orthographically-transcribed, which takes away the nuanced paralinguistic modes of expression such as tone of voice, gestures, facial expression and other forms of body language. This clearly produces limitations for the data analysis. Mollin (2007: 187) warns of being cautious in using, for example, the British parliamentary transcripts for linguistic research. She states that:

the transcripts omit performance characteristics of spoken language, such as incomplete utterances or hesitations, as well as any type of extra-factual, contextual talk (e.g., about turn-taking). Moreover, however, the transcribers and editors also alter speakers' lexical and grammatical choices

towards more conservative and formal variants. Linguists ought, therefore, to be cautious in their use of the Hansard transcripts and, generally, in the use of transcriptions that have not been made for linguistic purposes.

Mollin (2007: 207) identifies a number of words/features that are often either omitted or changed, as shown in Table 6 (adapted).

Table 6: Ranking for features in the original proceedings by how often they are omitted or changed by Hansard transcribers and editors (by percent of cases)

Feature	% of cases	Type of change
generic <i>you</i>	100	omitted or changed to impersonal and third-person constructions
<i>government</i> with singular concord	100	omitted or changed to plural concord
<i>help someone</i> with bare infinitive	100	omitted or changed to <i>to</i> -infinitive
<i>Speaker</i>	100	omitted
contractions	98.69	omitted or changed to non-contracted forms
<i>give way</i>	97.67	omitted
<i>going-to-future</i>	93.75	omitted or changed, esp. to the <i>will-future</i>
<i>absolutely, actually, clearly, really, very</i>	74.97 (average)	omitted or changed
determiner <i>this/these</i>	72.84	omitted or changed, esp. into <i>that/those</i>
<i>MAKE sure</i>	70.84	omitted or changed, esp. into <i>ensure</i>
<i>LOOK at</i>	64.29	omitted or changed, esp. into <i>consider</i> and <i>examine</i>
<i>order</i>	53.85	omitted
first person singular pronouns	45.85	omitted
<i>a number of</i>	40	omitted or changed, esp. into <i>several</i>
<i>have to</i>	39.02	omitted or changed, esp. into <i>must</i>

The relevant features for this research relate to: *going-to-future/will-future*), adverbs (*absolutely, actually, clearly, really, very* – these adverbs were found in my data, though), *make sure/ensure*), *LOOK at/consider/examine*. These changes do not significantly alter the intended meanings of the expressions. For example, *going-to-future* and *will-future* are semantically more similar than different. The determiners *this/these* and first person singular pronouns were found in my data. In order that the analysis would not be affected negatively by such omissions and changes, I relied heavily on pragmatic and contextual analysis through a multilayered approach, including the overall question design (see

section 4.2). Concordance lines involving lexical items were mostly used as supporting evidence. The analysis was supported with supplementary data, such as interview data, a documentary, videos and televised sessions of parliamentary proceedings to understand and validate some of the observations I made.

The study uses a ‘triangulation’ method, ‘using different methods and/or types of data to study the same research question’ (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 560), in this case, using corpus and discourse analysis along with supplementary data, such as interviews, which enhances the validity of the findings. I conducted face-to-face, semi-structured interviews, that is, ‘a structured interview combined with open-ended questions’ (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 696) at the Ghanaian Parliament. I interviewed six MPs, three each from the Majority and the Minority sides. This was used to obtain information about MPs’ personal feelings, perceptions and opinions about parliamentary debates and practices. I used the following questions as a guide.

1. What are parliamentary debates about?
2. How do you learn to debate in parliament? Any special training?
3. How do you plan for debates – preparation/strategies? Prompts?
4. What is the relationship between the Majority and the Minority like?
5. What usually brings about confrontations between the two sides during debates?
6. What are the procedures for handling confrontations (e.g. insults, attacks) during debates?
7. How do you feel about the standing orders regarding language use during debates?
 Standing Order 91 (2) states that ‘It shall be out of order to use offensive, abusive, insulting, blasphemous or unbecoming words or to impute improper motives to any other Member or to make personal allusions.’
8. Do MPs sometimes feel that their statements have been misinterpreted?
9. Are there any individual/group/party practices to which MPs must adhere?
10. To what extent are you influenced by your party political ideology when you are debating issues?
11. What would you like to see improved/changed in terms of language use during debates?

It was part of my plan to interview some UK MPs as well. But in February 2015, the BBC released a four-part documentary, *Inside the Commons*, ‘which follows Ministers and MPs high and low as they seek to navigate the machinery of the House, to

make laws and fight their constituents' battles'. The documentary covered all the questions I needed to ask. It was, therefore, no longer necessary to conduct the interviews. Both the interview and the documentary datasets were used to either confirm or deny some of the findings I made in analysing the Hansard data.

3.3 Ethical considerations

The different types of data used for this research – Hansards and the documentary on the House of Commons – are publicly available, except for the interview data from the Ghanaian Parliament. Hansards are publicly accessible from the websites of the two parliaments (UK: www.parliament.uk and Ghana: <http://www.parliament.gh/publications/30/page/320> and <http://odekro.org/hansard/>). Debates of the two parliaments are televised on *BBC Parliament* and *GTV Govern* respectively. The Ghanaian Hansard data for the years 2005 through 2010, which have not been published on the website, are available in printed form and are accessible to the public. I obtained the electronic copies from the Ghanaian parliament in a visit. The four-part BBC documentary on the House of Commons, *Inside the Commons*, was televised in February and March 2015 on *BBC Two* and it is now available on DVD produced by Atlantic Productions (www.atlanticproductions.tv). Thus, in the analysis, only the interview data are anonymised, so that, for ethical reasons, MPs who gave the interview cannot be identified. All the ethical considerations concerning this research have passed the University of Leeds' PVAC and Arts joint Faculty Research Ethics Committee's ethical review (see Appendix).

3.4 How the data were analysed

Since Chapters 4 and 5 are based on parliamentary questions, and Chapter 6 is based on the debate genre, I made sub-corpora for the different chapters in order to observe how different discourse activities within the same institution may show different linguistic-behavioural patterns. For Chapters 4 and 5, I adopt both a formal-functional and a systemic functional approach, making use of Halliday's (1976; 1994) process types (material, relational, verbal and mental processes) in the analysis of interrogatives, while in Chapter 6, I employ an evaluation approach (Thompson and Hunston 1999; N. Fairclough 2003; van Leeuwen 2008) with additional reference to deictics and indexicals

(Mey 2001; Charteris-Black 2014: 60-62). Before looking at these, I will discuss the use of *Wordsmith Tools*.

3.4.1 The use of *Wordsmith Tools*

Wordsmith Tools version 6 (Scott 2012) is a lexical analysis software programme that allows an analyst to observe words in context, that is, collocates of words, by means of concordances, wordlists and keywords in order to study meaning. While '[c]ollocation is the occurrence of two or more words within a short space of each other in a text', a collocate is a 'word which occurs in close proximity to a word under investigation' (Sinclair 1991: 170). In other words, collocation is interested in the 'immediate context' of the word, which is defined by:

the span or horizon to the left and right of a node word in a concordance.
The span in collocation studies is usually set to values of between 3 and 5 words to the left and right of the node.

(Bartsch 2004: 14)

Concordance refers to 'a collection of the occurrences of a word-form, each in its own textual environment' (Sinclair 1991: 33; see also McEnery and Wilson 2001: 18). By using concordances, I was able to observe words in context. For instance, Figure 1 is a concordance output of the five instances of *would he* as an interrogative form extracted from the UK PMQs.

N	Concordance
1	all face both a personal and a political challenge? Would he consider joining me and other
2	5 Dec 2007 : Column 822 in need a real chance? Would he be prepared to meet me and a
3	a further 12 months' funding from 1 April, and would he like to see – Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir
4	have grown longer in the past 12 to 18 months? Would he like to come down to Worthing,
5	trade unionists back into the Labour fold, would he refer to the 40,000 job cuts under

Figure 1: 5 of 5 concordance lines of *would he*

Would he is considered here as a node word in the concordance, with the words to the left and right in each line being collocates and co-text or context. This concordance output (Adolphs 2008: 4) allows us the opportunity of interpreting *would he* co-textually and qualitatively. For example, the highlighted parts appear to have negative semantic prosody and put some responsibility on the addressee (the Prime Minister) to respond to the negative meaning in the question. Semantic prosody is the 'consistent aura of meaning

with which a form is imbued by its collocates' (Louw 1993: 157; Louw 2000; Louw and Chateau 2008). For example, in lines 1-5 are invitations to the Prime Minister to confront some challenges facing the people. It appears, therefore, that *would he* occurs in negative contexts in which the Prime Minister is coerced to respond. The choice of *would* over *will*, however, performs a politeness function as it mitigates the illocutionary force in the demand put on the Prime Minister. As well as using the concordance output, the analyst can access the 'source text', by double clicking on a concordance line, which 'takes the researcher straight to the node within the context of the whole file' (Taylor 2010: 224-5). One other advantage of using *Wordsmith Tools* is that, through (key)wordlists/frequency lists, it is able to quantitatively 'calculate the number of occurrences of the word so that information on the frequency of the word may be gathered' (McEnery and Wilson 2001: 18). A wordlist/frequency list (Figure 2) is a list of 'all words appearing in a corpus', specifying 'for each word how many times it occurs in that corpus' (McEnery and Hardie 2012: 2). Figure 2 shows, for example, that *we* occurs 12,156 times and it is 1.18% of all words in the UK QAD. Wordlist always has function words at the top because they are generally more frequent than lexical words. For example, while *we* is 11th on the wordlist, it is 6th on the keyword list (Figure 3), and while *people* does not appear in Figure 2, it is 19th in Figure 3.

N	Word	Freq.	%	Texts	% Lemmas	Set
1	THE	68,035	6.63	3	100.00	
2	TO	32,520	3.17	3	100.00	
3	OF	28,339	2.76	3	100.00	
4	THAT	28,322	2.76	3	100.00	
5	AND	25,826	2.52	3	100.00	
6	IN	21,358	2.08	3	100.00	
7	A	18,423	1.79	3	100.00	
8	IS	17,229	1.68	3	100.00	
9	#	14,881	1.45	3	100.00	
10	I	13,479	1.31	3	100.00	
11	WE	12,156	1.18	3	100.00	
12	FOR	11,512	1.12	3	100.00	
13	IT	10,864	1.06	3	100.00	
14	HAVE	9,674	0.94	3	100.00	
15	ON	9,110	0.89	3	100.00	
16	NOT	8,942	0.87	3	100.00	
17	ARE	8,218	0.80	3	100.00	
18	BE	7,855	0.77	3	100.00	
19	WILL	7,148	0.70	3	100.00	
20	AS	6,107	0.59	3	100.00	
21	THEY	5,568	0.54	3	100.00	
22	WITH	5,473	0.53	3	100.00	
23	GOVERNMENT	5,061	0.49	3	100.00	
24	BUT	4,948	0.48	3	100.00	
25	WAS	4,782	0.47	3	100.00	

Figure 2: The first 25 most frequent words in a wordlist for UK QAD corpus

We therefore consider Figure 3 as representing the first 25 keywords, that is, the ‘statistically frequent’ words in the UK QAD relative to the BNC (Archer 2009: 8). As we would expect, the word *government* occurs 5,061 (0.49%) in the UK QAD, while it occurs 56,343 (0.06%) times in the reference corpus (the BNC). This means *government* is about eight times as frequent in the UK QAD as it is in the BNC, with a keyness value of 12,617.29. Less predictable, however, are words such as *we* (line 6), *will* (line 14), *people* (line 19), *our* (line 23) and *would* (line 25), and, therefore, their appearance among the first 25 keywords draws attention. This is what informs our focus on ‘people’ and its components and hyponyms in Chapter 6.

N	Key word	Freq.	%	Texts	RC. Freq.	RC. %	Keyness	P	Lemmas	Set
1	THE	68,035	6.63	3	6,055,10	6.09	503.40	0.0000000000		
2	TO	32,520	3.17	3	2,599,50	2.61	1,149.06	0.0000000000		
3	THAT	28,322	2.76	3	1,052,25	1.06	19,383.4€	0.0000000000		
4	IS	17,229	1.68	3	974,293	0.98	4,205.07	0.0000000000		
5	I	13,479	1.31	3	732,523	0.74	3,736.67	0.0000000000		
6	WE	12,156	1.18	3	300,833	0.30	14,891.77	0.0000000000		
7	FOR	11,512	1.12	3	880,848	0.89	592.92	0.0000000000		
8	IT	10,864	1.06	3	922,687	0.93	180.26	0.0000000000		
9	HAVE	9,674	0.94	3	448,684	0.45	4,135.79	0.0000000000		
10	ON	9,110	0.89	3	731,319	0.74	301.99	0.0000000000		
11	NOT	8,942	0.87	3	431,075	0.43	3,471.28	0.0000000000		
12	ARE	8,218	0.80	3	458,368	0.46	2,087.43	0.0000000000		
13	BE	7,855	0.77	3	651,535	0.66	179.44	0.0000000000		
14	WILL	7,148	0.70	3	251,179	0.25	5,326.91	0.0000000000		
15	THEY	5,568	0.54	3	376,289	0.38	638.32	0.0000000000		
16	GOVERNMENT	5,061	0.49	3	56,343	0.06	12,617.2€	0.0000000000		
17	HAS	4,781	0.47	3	252,703	0.25	1,434.93	0.0000000000		
18	HON	4,566	0.44	3	10,692	0.01	23,476.31	0.0000000000		
19	PEOPLE	4,292	0.42	3	116,196	0.12	4,687.80	0.0000000000		
20	THERE	4,093	0.40	3	285,870	0.29	391.00	0.0000000000		
21	MY	4,014	0.39	3	146,775	0.15	2,788.69	0.0000000000		
22	ABOUT	3,961	0.39	3	192,022	0.19	1,510.92	0.0000000000		
23	OUR	3,750	0.37	3	93,455	0.09	4,538.90	0.0000000000		
24	WHO	3,288	0.32	3	193,075	0.19	695.50	0.0000000000		
25	WOULD	3,277	0.32	3	229,699	0.23	306.39	0.0000000000		

Figure 3: A screenshot of the first 25 words in a keyword list for UK QAD corpus

The qualitative approach is ‘primarily an inductive process of organizing data into categories and identifying patterns (relationships) among categories’ (McMillan and Schumacher 1993: 479), permitting an objective in-depth description, inductive analysis and interpretation of verbal behaviour, attitudes and experiences in a specific setting (Dawson 2002: 14; Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 426-7). It helped me to draw on the concept of situational context to identify the pragmatic functions of MPs’ utterances. ‘Context’ is used here to refer to the ‘textual, the situational and socio-cultural

environment of linguistic expressions' (Bednarek 2006: 10). This was necessary because the concordance output could not indicate beyond-clause-boundary features (Adolphs 2008: 3). Such a combined approach allows for a multilevel analysis (Adolphs 2008: 4), involving:

- i. Corpus linguistics, and more specifically the analysis of concordance and keyword outputs.
- ii. Pragma-rhetorical analysis, which 'involves both the description of the structural and linguistic choices' of parliamentarians and 'a complex interpretation of their effects' (Ionescu-Ruxăndoiu 2012: 12). It has particular reference to utterance function and levels of directness and indirectness, allowing inputs from speech act theory, face and (im)politeness.
- iii. Discourse analysis, with focus on patterns and sequences in extended stretches of discourse, as for example, the application of systemic functional analysis (Simpson 1993; Halliday 1976), as employed for analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 of this thesis as well as evaluation (Thompson and Hunston 1999; N. Fairclough 2003) as used in Chapter 6.
- iv. Context analysis, and the relationship between textual patterns and contextual variables.

This multilevel approach greatly helps to reduce subjectivity and bias, which is usually cited as a weakness of qualitative studies (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 458).

This study makes use of two reference corpora – the British National Corpus (BNC) and the International Corpus of English (ICE)-Ghana (the portion of ICE which relates to Ghanaian English) – which serve as the benchmark for the calculation and measuring of keywords in the study corpora. The BNC is a 100-million-word corpus of both written and spoken British English from a wide range of sources (including extracts from newspapers, academic books, popular fiction, and conversations from formal business or government meetings, informal social gatherings, and radio talk shows). The ICE-Ghana is a corpus of Ghanaian written and spoken English of about one-million words, which was created as part of the ICE project. I compare the Prime Minister's questions (PMQs) and the UK Queen's Address debate (UK QAD) corpus with the BNC; while I compare the Ghanaian Minister's questions (GH MQs) and the Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debate (GH SONAD) corpus with the ICE-Ghana corpus.

3.4.2 Interrogatives

The first stage of the analysis was to identify various forms of interrogatives in the data. Structurally, interrogatives are typically constructed with:

- i. a subject-operator inversion (e.g. *Is the Prime Minister* at all concerned?, where the subject, *the Prime Minister*, swaps position with the operator *is*);
- ii. introduced with a ‘wh’ item (e.g. *Who* is to blame for that piece of mismanagement?), or
- iii. through the use of a minor sentence (e.g. Any ministerial appointments?).

Biber, Conrad and Leech (2002) identify five types of interrogatives:

- i. *yes/no* questions (which ask the truth or otherwise of a proposition), e.g. Is he not just taking people for fools once again?
- ii. wh-questions (which seek information), e.g. What is the Prime Minister’s strategy to ensure that it will continue?
- iii. alternative questions (which make a choice between two or more options), e.g. Is it that he regards the advocates of that policy ... as too left wing, or is he petrified by indecision?
- iv. tag-questions (which seek confirmation of an expressed proposition), e.g. I do not think that the hon. Gentleman is proposing VAT on fuel, is he?
- v. Declarative questions (use declarative structures, which are also a type of *yes/no* question), e.g. The hon. Gentleman is proposing VAT on fuel?

Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985: 806-826) talk of three main interrogative types: *yes/no* (with declarative and tag-questions being sub-categories), wh-questions and alternative questions. They can also be classified as dependent and independent interrogatives (Downing and Locke 2006: 106) (see explanation below with the examples). Tkačuková (2010a; 2010b, see also Gibbons 2003) identifies: open (wh-questions, indirect questions and requests) and closed questions (*yes/no*, declarative, tag and non-sentence questions).

Since I was looking at interrogative forms and their pragmatic functions, I categorised them according to formal (*yes/no*, wh-, alternative, tag- and declarative questions) and direct-indirect classification (see i-vii below) in order to account for the complex levels of interpretation. Since *Wordsmith Tools* could not automatically identify interrogative forms, to get an idea about the interrogative types that were present in the datasets, I manually and randomly sampled 438 and 412 questions from the Ghanaian and

UK data respectively and labelled them according to their structural forms, as in the following.

- i. Independent/direct *yes/no* interrogatives, e.g.
Madam Speaker ... Can he tell us the state of the infrastructure that compelled him and the Military High Command to suspend the recruitment?
(GH: Mr. I. A. B. Fuseini, 10 Jun 09/Col. 441)
- ii. Independent/direct *wh*-interrogatives, e.g.
What plans does the Prime Minister have to protect the progress that has been made and the way in which waiting lists have plummeted?
(UK: Linda Gilroy, 7 Apr 2010/Col. 966)
- iii. Independent/direct alternate interrogatives, e.g.
... will the Prime Minister support such an investigation, or is he afraid that there is something to hide?
(UK: John Mason, 7 Apr 2010/Col. 970)
- iv. Dependent/indirect *wh*-interrogatives, e.g.
Mr. Speaker, I want to find out from the hon. Minister what approximate proportion of the annual production of about four hundred thousand metric tonnes of fish is attributed to aquaculture?
(Mr. Effah-Baafi, 6 Jul 05/Col. 1653)
- v. multiple interrogatives, e.g.
Mr. Speaker ... [#i] I just want to know if that contract is going to be executed this year, and if so, [#ii] when it is going to start and [#iii] when it is going to be completed.
(GH: Mr. J. K. Avedzi, 9 Jun 06/Col. 764)

In addition to these, the Ghanaian data contained:

- vi. dependent/indirect *yes/no* interrogatives, e.g.
Mr. Speaker, I would like to know from her whether some exercise has been carried out to determine such areas of high potential for aquaculture development.
(Mr. J.A. Ndebugre, 6 Jul 05/Col. 1653)
- vii. dependent/indirect alternate interrogatives.
Madam Speaker ... I want to know whether this is a tradition for the district to provide or it should be provided by the Ghana Fire Service.
(Mr. Amidu, 2 Jul 10/Col. 1786)

Independent interrogatives (also called direct interrogatives by Downing and Locke (2006: 106) are characterised by main clauses (Examples i-iii). Example (i) is an independent (or direct) *yes/no* interrogative. Independent/direct *yes/no* interrogatives are usually constructed with a subject-operator inversion as in Example i. The

independent/direct wh-interrogative is a question directly introduced by wh-words such as *who*, *which*, *when*, *where* and *how*, and usually followed by a subject-operator inversion (Example ii). Alternate interrogatives are characterised by two or more clauses (in the form of options) connected by *or*. Example iii is an alternate interrogative with two clauses connected by *or*: ... [#i] *will the Prime Minister support such an investigation*, or [#ii] *is he afraid that there is something to hide?* Multiple interrogatives (Dickson and Heritage 2006: 138) are multipart questions which combine two or more question forms in one question turn, as in Example v. This example has three different parts, each of which can be a question on its own: *I just want to know [#i] if that contract is going to be executed this year*, and if so, [#ii] *when it is going to start* and [#iii] *when it is going to be completed*.

On the other hand, dependent interrogatives are characterised by embedded questions (Examples v-vii), also called indirect questions by Downing and Locke (2006: 106). Examples include: dependent wh-interrogative (Example iv), dependent *yes/no* (Example vi) and dependent alternate interrogatives (Example vii). They are characterised by subordinate clauses that are attached to matrix clauses. Example iv contains a matrix clause (*I want to find out from the hon. Minister*) and an embedded interrogative (*what approximate proportion of the annual production of about four hundred thousand metric tonnes of fish is attributed to aquaculture*). Example vi has a matrix clause (*I would like to know from her*) and an embedded interrogative (*whether some exercise has been carried out to determine such areas of high potential for agriculture development*). The matrix clause in Example vii is *I want to know*, while the two coordinated embedded interrogatives are *whether this is a tradition for the district to provide* and *it should be provided by the Ghana Fire Service*. Figure 4 represents the frequency of various interrogative forms identified in both the Ghanaian and UK data.

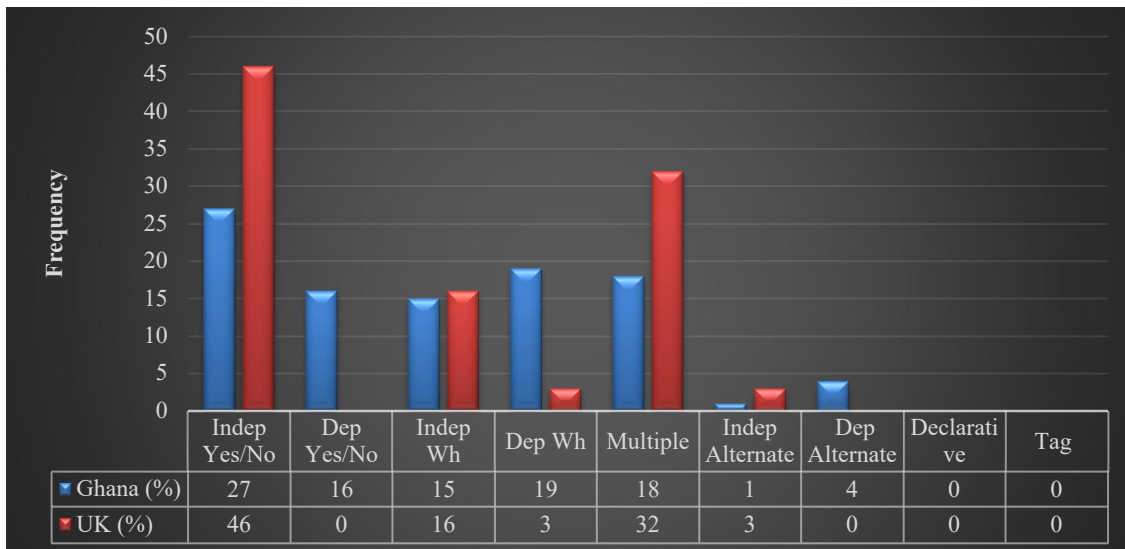


Figure 4: Categories of Ghanaian/UK parliamentary questions

The sample analysis identified *yes/no* interrogatives as the most frequent in both datasets, similar to Wilson's (1990: 146) distribution of parliamentary question types. The independent and dependent *yes/no* interrogatives in the Ghanaian data (27% + 16% = 42%) are almost the same as the UK independent forms (46%). There are differences between the UK and Ghanaian dependent wh-interrogatives and multiple interrogatives, but I am unable to explore them due to space limitation. I discuss only *yes/no* interrogatives in this thesis, though, where necessary, other forms are utilised in the analysis.

I further explored *yes/no* interrogatives to identify their specific forms in the data (e.g. the auxiliary forms involved in their construction). Table 7 represents the various *yes/no* forms that I identified, which shows that out of the 419 Ghanaian *yes/no* interrogatives that were examined, there were 311 (74%) direct/independent and 108 (26%) indirect/dependent forms. The UK had 940 (approximately 100%) and one (approximately 0%) direct/independent and indirect/dependent forms respectively. This means that the UK data contained more independent *yes/no* interrogatives than the Ghanaian data, and virtually no dependent forms. These interrogatives were constructed with the usual subject-operator inversion, including *modal* (*will/would, can/could* and *may*), *do, be* and *have* auxiliaries. The identification of these forms helped me to use *Wordsmith Tools* to extract questions involving them, which further assisted me in examining the major verb forms that accompanied them and allowed for grouping them as containing material, relational, verbal or mental processes (see section 2.3.2). For

example, to identify *yes/no* interrogatives constructed with *will*, I ran a concordance of *will* and deleted those that were not interrogatives, as in Figure 5.

N	Concordance
1	very nature requires a common price, not a unilateral one, so will he suspend that price and send his Chancellor into the
2	difficulties? Given the pressure charities are under, will he step in and pull together some bridging finance so
3	proposals. We remember what Labour's Budgets did. Will he stand up and condemn Labour's candidate for Mayor
4	that the Prime Minister's majority was slashed to just 23, will he show some leadership , think again and back British
5	of which are grounded at present because of lack of funds. Will the Prime Minister use his office, or his Ministers, to
6	never known a development to have so much public support. Will the Prime Minister use his best efforts to ensure that

Figure 5: Sample concordance lines of *will*-constructed interrogatives

Having obtained the interrogative forms, it became possible to identify the verb forms by sorting and classifying them into the various processes. For example, **suspend**, **step in**, **stand up**, **show**, and **use** above are material processes.

Table 7: Direct and indirect *yes/no* forms in the Ghanaian and UK datasets

Auxiliary	Ghana	%	UK	%
Will	19	4	347	37
Would	49	12	13	2
Can	28	7	78	8
Could	13	3	9	1
May	66	15	67	7
Do (do, does, did)	25	6	263	28
Be (is, are, was, were)	99	24	152	16
Have (has, have)	12	3	11	1
<i>Indirect yes/no</i>	108	26	1	0
Total	419	100	941	100

The determination of the pragmatic functions of the interrogatives was informed by the Searlean (1969) and Coulthard's (1985) principles as well as the assumptions (Downing and Locke 2006: 202; see also Sadock 2012: 113; Tsui 1992; Quirk et al. 1972; 1985) discussed in section 2.4.1.

3.4.3 CFL Lexical Feature Marker and Wordsmith Tools

Chapter 6 focuses on the UK Queen’s Address and the Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates. Keyword analysis is used to determine the focus of the chapter and then the evaluation framework is used as the main analytical approach with additional reference to deictics/indexicals (see section 3.4.4). Deictics/indexicals help to compare and contrast political actors, through person deixis (e.g. *us* and *them*), time deixis (e.g. *last year* as against *this year*) and space deixis (e.g. place names). Hence deictic and indexical markers contribute to the performance of evaluative functions. The analysis is supported with concordances.

I used *CFL Lexical Feature Marker* version 5A (Woolls 2011) and *Wordsmith Tools* (Scott 2012, as described in section 3.4.1) to systematically manipulate and explore the ‘aboutness’ of the data, ‘what the text [data] is about’ (Bondi 2010: 7-8; Warren 2010: 113; Scott 2010: 43-44), that is, themes and concepts which were key in the two datasets. The data exploration revealed *people* as a significant concept in both the UK QAD and GH SONAD. The processes of data manipulation are described below.

CFL Lexical Feature Marker is software that is able to identify built-in lists of *pronouns, modals, prepositions, to be, CFL core, specific words, function and content* words and their frequencies in a dataset. It marks words in the data according to these types, without doing grammatical parsing. Figure 6 is a screenshot of content words with their frequencies in a sample data from the UK QAD. On the bottom right are the first 10 content words with their percentage frequencies.

Word	Count	Percentage
prime	103	0.48%
minister	99	0.46%
speech	90	0.42%
government	81	0.38%
people	77	0.36%
hon	75	0.35%
house	50	0.23%
labour	49	0.23%
right	48	0.22%
years	44	0.20%

Figure 6: Screenshot of some content words from the UK QAD

With its *Transcript* tab (see top left) and the *Names* tab (top right), I was able to identify the words of government and opposition MPs and their frequencies. It involved running the programme after marking the starting point of each government or opposition MP's debate transcript with his/her name followed by a colon (e.g. Azumah:). Figure 7 is a screenshot of Azumah's word sample which she shares with other MPs.

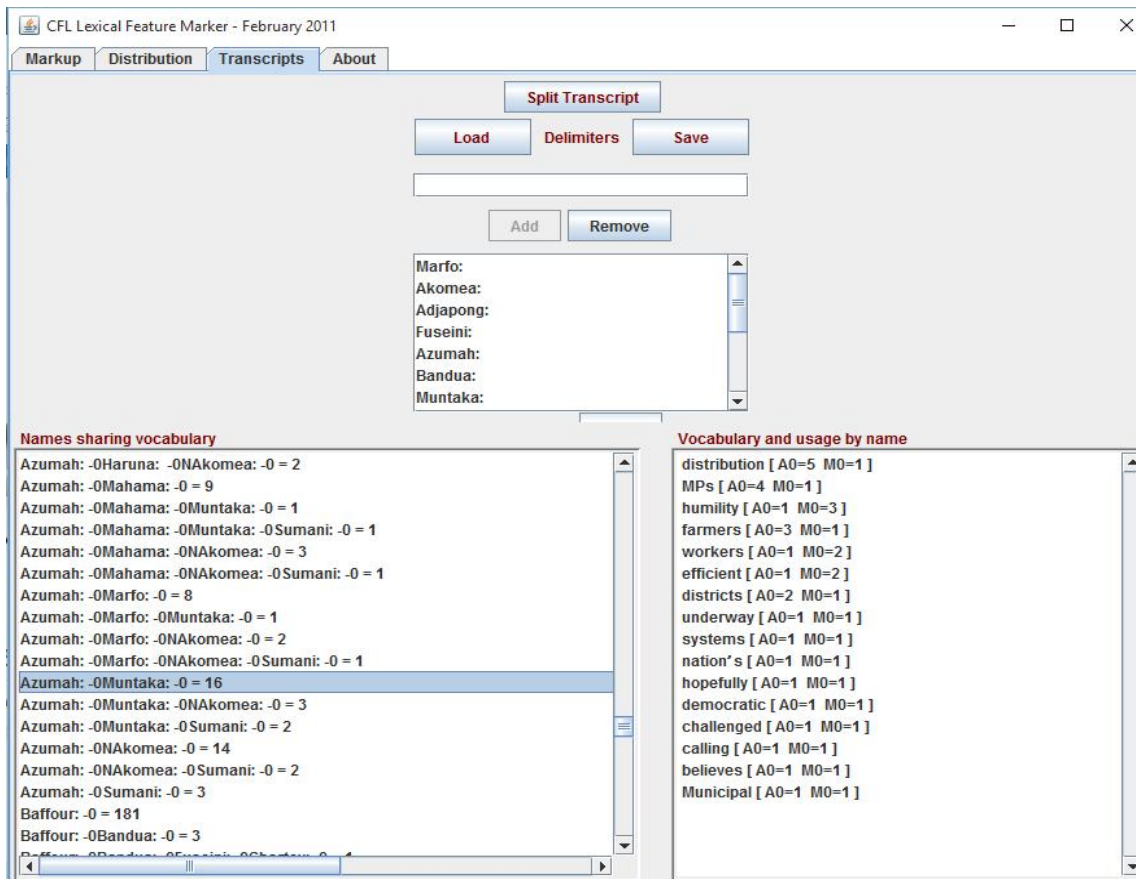


Figure 7: Screenshot of Azumah's word sample shared with other MPs

Clicking on a line in the left window, as shown in the blue highlight, displays the words in the right window. Figure 7 shows that Azumah shares with Muntaka the 16 words in the right window. Azumah also shares 14 words with NAKomea (line 14, left hand box), nine words with Mahama (line 2), three with Sumani (line 16), etc.

CFL Lexical Feature Marker could not handle large datasets. I, therefore, purposively, that is, using selection based on my judgement (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 100, 94), created samples. There were 14 and nine transcripts from government and opposition MPs in the GH SONAD and the UK QAD respectively. The GH SONAD sample was 37,637 words while the UK QAD sample was 21,347 words. Since I was interested in themes and characteristic concepts, I concentrated on *Content* words (words to which independent meaning can be assigned, such as nouns, main verbs, adjectives and adverbs) and *CFL core words*. *Core words* are a list of commonly used content words for children (Woolls 2011) or 'a small set of simple words, in any language, that are used frequently across contexts' (Baker 2009; Cross, Baker, Klotz and Badman 1997). They are said to be the essential words that any learner or child needs that form the foundation of language (Lee 2001: 256), which 'dominate everyday speech for toddlers ...

preschoolers ... adults ... and seniors' (Baker 2009: 1). If large proportions of *core words* were frequent in MPs debates, then they were potentially significant as they pointed to the accessibility of the debates to the audience, since the fewer the core words, the more specialised the text is. I first ran *content words* in both datasets and CFL returned 17,107 (45.45%) of 37,637 running words in the GH SONAD and 9,418 (44.12%) of 21,347 running words in the UK QAD, with *people* featuring in the top 15 words (Table 8).

Table 8: First 15 most frequent of CFL content words

GH SONAD			UK QAD		
Word	Frequency	%	Word	Frequency	%
1. speaker	703	1.87	prime	103	0.48
2. president	403	1.07	minister	99	0.46
3. madam	400	1.06	speech	90	0.42
4. state	186	0.49	government	82	0.38
5. nation	176	0.47	people	77	0.36
6. address	156	0.41	hon	75	0.35
7. country	154	0.41	house	50	0.23
8. feb	142	0.38	labour	49	0.23
9. said	112	0.30	right	48	0.22
10. col	103	0.27	years	44	0.21
11. government	94	0.25	country	43	0.20
12. people	94	0.25	member	43	0.20
13. house	92	0.24	new	42	0.20
14. cent	82	0.22	said	42	0.20
15. Ghana	74	0.20	today	39	0.18

Predictably, the majority of these words are parliamentary debate-genre specific, for example: GH: *speaker, madam, president, state* (as in *state of the nation*), *address, house, hon., [interruption]*; and UK: *prime, minister, speech, government, hon., house, labour, right* (e.g. *right hon. friend*), *member(s), parliament*. These are mainly conventional parliamentary address terms, and, therefore, their occurrence demonstrates the nature of the interaction. Thus, the concept of *people* (reflected also in *nation, country* and *Ghana*) appears as the most frequent and important theme, since *people* is less predictable.

In order to be certain about how frequent and important *people* as a concept was, I reran the data using *CFL core words*. The words in Table 9 represent the first five most frequent *CFL core words* of 3009 (8%) of the 37,637 running words in the GH SONAD and 2,176 (10%) of the 21,347 running words in the UK QAD. The concept of *people* is reinforced by the fact that *country* and *people* appear within the top three in both datasets.

Table 9: First 5 most frequent *CFL* core words

GH SONAD			UK QAD		
Word	Frequency	%	Word	Frequency	%
1. country	154	0.41	people	75	0.35
2. said	112	0.30	right	46	0.22
3. people	91	0.24	country	45	0.21
4. going	61	0.16	said	42	0.20
5. time	56	0.15	new	41	0.19

Following this, I ran the programme using the *Transcript* and *Names* tabs and found that 57 words were used by all 14 MPs in the GH SONAD, while 84 words were used by all nine MPs in the UK QAD. Out of these, the first ten content words (Table 10) included *country*, *nation*, *people* and *Ghana* in the GH SONAD and *people* and *country* in the UK QAD. !! indicates that a word is used more by one speaker than another, with the differences between speakers shown in square brackets. The overall frequency of the use of *people* and *country* by UK opposition MPs was almost twice (0.36%) their use by government MPs (0.20%). Even though in the Ghanaian data the overall frequency does not show much difference between government (0.68%) and opposition (0.65%) MPs, the use of *people* by opposition MPs was almost twice (0.17%) that used by government MPs (0.09%).

Table 10: First 10 *CFL* Content words shared by government and opposition MPs

GH SONAD		UK QAD
1. !! president		prime
2. !! country	[Gv=98 Op=56]	minister
3. !! address		!! government
4. !! state		people [Gv=38 Op=36]
5. !! nation	[Gv=27 Op=40]	speech
6. !! people	[Gv=32 Op=59]	Labour
7. !! house		right
8. !! Ghana	[Gv=39 Op=35]	house
9. now		years
10. !! make		!! country [Gv=3 Op=40]

The frequency differences in the use of these words, especially *country* and *people* (GH SONAD) and *country* (UK QAD) signal potential differences in the construction of the concept of *people* by the two groups of MPs. In their study of the 2010 British election

debates, Woolls, Johnson, Dickson, Saatchi and Wright (2011: 1) found that, even when answering the same questions, three Prime Ministerial contestants (Gordon Brown, David Cameron and Nick Clegg) said ‘different things and in distinctively different ways’. The authors ‘suggest that image perception, issue ownership, political commitment and candidate evaluation is strongly lexically constructed by the political leaders for the viewing and voting audience’. We can, therefore, hypothesise that government and opposition MPs differently construct *people* as a theme.

By triangulation, that is, assessment of validity of information by cross-checking with different instruments (Fraenkel, Wallen and Hyun 2012: 426, 458), I used *Wordsmith Tools* to run a keyword analysis of both the whole Ghanaian and UK datasets in order to test the sampling method for consistency, validate it and find the keyness value of *people* as a concept. This was important because a keyword analysis identifies words which occur with unusual frequency in a given text when compared with a reference corpus (Scott 1997: 236; Gabrielatos and Baker 2008: 10). *People* (with its hyponyms) was found to be key, as shown in Table 11.

Table 11: Keywords in GH SONAD and UK QAD

Keyword	GH SONAD					Keyword	UK QAD				
	Freq	%	RC Freq	%	Keyness		Freq	%	RC Freq	%	Keyness
1. Speaker	10,912	1.89	8,328		86,425.31	Hon	4,567	0.44	10,692	0.01	23,453.92
2. Mr	9,763	1.69	66,114	0.07	43,276.97	That	28,416	2.74	1,052,259	1.06	19,447.41
3. Madam	3,700	0.64	790		33,983.99	We	12,210	1.19	300,833	0.30	14,977.33
4. President	4,789	0.83	15,747	0.02	27,264.88	Gov't	5,354	0.52	56,343	0.06	13,827.43
5. Hon.	4,170	0.72	19,692	0.01	25,483.99	Speech	2,209	0.21	7,718		9,875.93
6. Nation	1,821	0.31	3,567		11,919.27	Member	2,052	0.20	17,230	0.02	6,085.08
7. Ghana	1,280	0.22	334		11,551.29	Bill	1,812	0.18	13,297	0.01	5,793.13
8. Address	1,748	0.30	6,890		9,397.00	Will	7,167	0.70	251,179	0.25	5,335.02
9. Excellency	942	0.16	79		9,153.75	Gentleman	1,204	0.12	4,505		5,242.19
10. That	14,662	2.53	1,052,259	1.06	8,587.95	People	4,417	0.43	116,196	0.12	4,983.24
11. Deputy	1,434	0.25	4,020		8,543.48	Our	3,753	0.36	93,455	0.09	4,528.66
12. Member	2,044	0.35	17,230	0.02	8,233.98	Am	1,977	0.19	26,042	0.03	4,356.50
13. We	6,553	1.13	300,833	0.30	7,659.96	Is	17,278	1.68	974,293	0.98	4,210.27
14. Interruption	893	0.15	617		7,168.37	Have	9,686	0.94	448,684	0.45	4,120.15
15. NDC	588	0.10	21		5,877.52	Secretary	1,514	0.15	15,115	0.02	4,041.05
16. Is	12,249	2.12	974,293	0.98	5,745.76	Friend	1,489	0.14	15,526	0.02	3,864.36
17. Country	1,745	0.30	27,959	0.03	5,033.13	I	13,576	1.32	732,525	0.74	3,809.51
18. I	9,642	1.67	732,523	0.74	4,994.04	Debate	1,108	0.11	7,285		3,751.74
19. Interruptions	563	0.09	208		4,326.81	Country	1,854	0.18	27,959	0.03	3,673.52
20. Am	1,518	0.26	26,042	0.03	4,196.38	EU	418	0.04	44		3,539.83
21. NPP	418	0.07	35		4,061.76	Not	8,983	0.87	431,075	0.43	3,498.48
22. Ghanaians	399	0.07	10		4,018.13	Queen	958	0.08	5,894		3,353.57
91. People	1,333	0.23	116,196	0.12	493.11						

The first 22 keywords in the GH SONAD are mostly parliamentary debate-genre specific, which means that *nation*, *Ghana*, *country* and *Ghanaians* appear as the most significant words. Similarly, the majority of the first 22 keywords in the UK QAD are debate specific. Thus, the keyword analysis confirms *people* (with the component *country*) as a significant subject. While *people* occurs at the 10th position, with a frequency of 0.43%, in the UK QAD, it is 91st, with 0.23% frequency, in the GH SONAD, making this difference worthy of investigation. Interestingly, the keyness value of *people* in the UK QAD is about four-times that of the British National Corpus (BNC) frequency (see Table 11, columns 4 and 10 for Reference Corpus (RC) frequency), while in the GH SONAD, it is about two-times that of the International Corpus of English (ICE)-Ghana, which makes *people* especially key in both datasets. All the keyness values in both datasets have a *P*-value of 0.000000, which means that the probability that the keyness of a word is due to chance is zero. *We*, *our* and *I* as deictics are also keywords. Thus, drawing on the concept of evaluation and deictics/indexicals, I examine (in section 6.5) how, in their debates, MPs evaluatively construct what I call *the people concern*.

3.4.4 Evaluation and deictics/indexicals

The analytical approaches of evaluation and deictics/indexicals are employed in Chapter 6. Evaluation refers to statements about desirability or what is good (as in Figure 8, lines 1-4) and undesirability or what is bad (lines 5-7) (N. Fairclough 2003: 172; van Leeuwen 2008: 109-110).

N	Concordance
1	, I beg to quote a paragraph: "Mr Speaker, our people need decent and sustainable jobs to lead
2	healthy people. So, that is a vision and a healthy people building a prosperous nation; that is what I
3	sure that is what led to this whole statement about people being very courageous and defending the
4	because I did that". It is about so many people are better off because "I did that". It is an
5	being very happy. But I must say that my people are not happy; they have gloomy faces. Why
6	Graduates. Why should we enter into this? The people are so frustrated that they cannot do
7	impression that the President tried to convey to us. People are suffering out there; we were assured in

Figure 8: Sample concordance shot of evaluative expressions (GH SONAD)

For Thompson and Hunston (1999: 5):

evaluation is the broad cover term for the expression of the speaker or writer's attitude or stance towards, viewpoint on, or feelings about the entities or propositions that he or she is talking about. That attitude may relate to certainty or obligation or desirability or any of a number of other sets of values.

It means that evaluation covers some aspects of modality such as certainty and desirability, as well as the use of evaluative adjectives and adverbs.

It should be acknowledged that often 'stance' and 'appraisal' are used in similar senses as 'evaluation' (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 2-5). We adopt 'evaluation' in this study because of its corpus-oriented approach, as against stance (sociological) and appraisal (systemic functional linguistic) approach, even though, where appropriate, these terms are used in the study.

Evaluation can be linguistically (grammatically, lexically and textually) and conceptually constructed or recognised (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 13). Grammatically, evaluation is most obviously realised through relational processes (N. Fairclough 2003: 172), in the form 'X is [seen by the writer as] Y' (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 4), as in Figure 8, lines 3-7. It can also be realised lexically through adjectives (lines 1-4, Figure 9), adverbs (lines 5-7), verbs (lines 8-10) and nouns (11-13).

N	Concordance
1	. Let us take for example globalisation, for which the Prime Minister is a huge enthusiast, as is the
2	men and women will die. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister has a good grasp of that, and
3	it needs to concentrate more on growth and jobs. The Prime Minister has a far greater chance of
4	the mess that he inherited. Let us remember that the Prime Minister is complicit and 23 Nov 2006 :
5	about and hidden tariffs. We have to end that, and the Prime Minister is absolutely right to talk about
6	end of their lives. Did my hon. Friend notice that the Prime Minister completely failed to answer a
7	people 13 May 2013 : Column 391 of Britain want. The Prime Minister is entirely right to seek to
8	also advocate that. To return to cluster bombs, the Prime Minister today evaded my question,
9	to do so. The war in Iraq has been a disaster, as the Prime Minister has admitted for community
10	an acknowledgement that the regulation set up by the Prime Minister has failed . What he did as
11	so. 5.22 pm Dr. Kim Howells (Pontypridd) (Lab): It is a privilege to follow the right hon. and
12	to be told what the official figure is. However, it is a fantasy to believe that we are in control,
13	pm Angie Bray (Ealing Central and Acton) (Con): It is a pleasure to be called to speak and to join

Figure 9: Examples of lexical evaluation: adjectives, adverbs, verbs and nouns (UK QAD)

Conceptually, evaluation is achieved by ‘identifying signals of comparison, subjectivity, and social value’ (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 13-14). Comparison may be achieved through an ‘oppositional frame’, a contrastive opposition, parallel structures and negation (Jeffries 2010: 39-44). The most obvious expression of subjectivity is the use of the first person pronoun (*I, we*). According to Hunston (1985; 1989; cited in Thompson and Hunston 1999: 14) value-laden evaluation can be realised by considering ‘what is good’ and ‘what is bad’ from the point of view of goal-achievement: what is good ‘helps to achieve a goal’ while what is bad ‘prevents or hinders the achievement of a goal’. This, in Martin and White’s (2005: 42-43) ‘appraisal’ terms, is ‘judgement’, that is, attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire/praise (e.g. lines 471, 472, Figure 10) or criticise/condemn (e.g. lines 473, 474).

N	Concordance
471	be clear to the people of this country that this Government has been very efficient has been
472	Speaker, without fear of contradiction, this Government has proved to be the most efficient
473	do not want to see, who sang the chorus “NPP Government has done nothing over these
474	on board later. Again, this is a sign that the NDC Government has not done well to help this

Figure 10: Sample concordance shot of praise and criticism (GH SONAD)

Being deliberative, that is, ‘weighing one choice against the other, considering the circumstances’ (Heinrichs 2010: 33), the GH SONAD and the UK QAD exhibit an extensive use of evaluative statements. MPs assess the value of government policies and actions contained in the addresses. It is a means by which MPs demonstrate their attitudes towards the policies. Such attitudes, according to Martin and White (2005: 42-43), ‘tend to spread out and colour a phase of discourse as speakers and writers take up a stance oriented to **affect, judgement...**’, where:

- i. ‘affect’ refers to positive and negative feelings: ‘happy or sad, confident or anxious, interested or bored’, as for example, *people are not happy; they have gloomy faces* (line 5, Figure 8)
- ii. ‘judgement’ (see above)

Issues of affect and judgement are value evaluations generally about feelings, which have either positive or negative orientations.

According to Thompson and Hunston (1999: 6) evaluation performs three functions. First, it is used ‘to express the speaker’s opinion, and in doing so to reflect the value system of that person and their community’. For example:

Example 3: GH SONAD 21 Feb 12/Col. 1147

Alhaji Muntaka (NDC): *I can feel comfortable to say that all past governments ... in this country should come with their first term achievement. I believe that when we march them boot-to-boot, one-to-one, it would be clear to the people of this country that this Government has been very efficient, has been the one that has managed to deliver so much on the needs of our people.*

I can feel and *I believe* express Alhaji Muntaka’s personal opinion about the government’s efficiency of delivering the needs of the people, indicating a link between evaluation and the *people concept*. This reflects Stubbs’ (1986: 1) statement that language can be used:

to express personal beliefs and adopt positions, to express agreement and disagreement with others, to make personal and social allegiances, contracts, and commitments, or alternatively to dissociate the speaker from points of view, and to remain vague or uncommitted.

In the parliamentary debates, MPs measure (against their opponents’) their personal beliefs, ideologies and policies to meet the developmental needs of the people. They aim to show that what they want is what the people also want; hence they ‘make personal and social allegiances, contracts and commitments’. For example, Alhaji Muntaka (Example 3) does not only express his personal opinion, but also adopts a position against *all past governments* (including the opposition) and signals his allegiance to *our people*. Notice how he emphasises his assessment through adjectival evaluation (*comfortable, it would be clear to the people*), intensified adverb (*very efficient, so much*), modality (*should*) and past tense indicating a completed action (*has managed to deliver*).

Second, evaluation is employed ‘to build and maintain relations between the speaker or writer and hearer or reader’ (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 8). This is achieved through manipulation, hedging and politeness. For an MP to manipulate is to persuade the audience to see things in his way. Thompson and Hunston (1999: 8) point out, for example, that ‘[e]xpressing something as a problem ... makes it difficult for the reader not to accept it as such’, and that when ‘given’ information in a clause is expressed evaluatively, it is difficult to challenge it. Thompson and Hunston (1999: 8) further state that manipulation can also be

achieved by means of conjuncts such as ‘and’ and ‘but’ and subordinators such as ‘because’ and ‘although’, since they assume a common ground between the speaker/writer and the audience in terms of what is expected or unexpected in a discourse. Consider, for example, Cameron’s statement:

Example 4: UK QAD 15 Nov 06/Col. 16)

David Cameron (Con): *The tragedy of this Queen’s Speech* is that all that his successor offers is more of the same: more laws on crime, *yet* violent crime is up; more laws on health, *yet* hospitals have closed; more laws on immigration, *yet* our borders are still completely out of control. Every year, the same promises; every year, the same failures.

Cameron’s given information, *[t]he tragedy of this Queen’s Speech*, is a negative evaluation of the address, which is an attempt to manipulate his audience to see the address as such. The use of the conjunct *yet* assumes a common ground between Cameron and the audience, as it connects a previously stated point to a second one. The manipulation is intensified by a tetracolon pattern of three pairs of parallel *X yet Y*. Hedging is used to adjust ‘the truth-value or certainty attached to a statement’ in order to reduce commitment or mitigate the illocutionary force (Brown and Levinson 1987: 132-144) of the statement, which serves as a politeness marker, as for example, in Alhaji Muntaka’s use of *I believe* in Example 3 above.

Third and last, evaluation can be used to organize discourse. This refers to expressions that indicate or point to the organisation of the discourse, as in the following.

Example 5: GH SONAD 8 Feb 06/Col. 556

Haruna Iddrisu (NDC): Mr. Speaker, I rise *to second the motion* and with the indulgence of Mr. Speaker, *to make a few preliminary comments* about the President’s State of the Nation Address and some of the issues raised by hon. Akomea.

Mr Iddrisu gives the structure of his presentation: *to second the motion*, *make preliminary comments* on the address and what the honourable member, Akomea had said. He signals to the audience that he is only going to make introductory (‘preliminary’) remarks, in preparation for a more serious commentary.

According to Hay (2007: 69) ‘politics in terms of deliberation may entail something of a value judgement’. Both evaluatory and deliberative politics, such as parliamentary discourse, are about value judgments. Since the GH SONAD and the UK QAD are about judging the consequence and appropriateness of government policies, employing evaluation

as an analytical approach will reveal MPs' evaluative strategies, including the linguistic mechanisms, tactical bias and how they construct and maintain relations with the audience and fellow MPs.

When MPs evaluate, they also draw extensively on deictic (person, time and place) expressions, also called indexicals. Deictic expressions, according to Chilton (2004: 56; see also Charteris-Black 2014: 60-62), 'are linguistic resources used to perform *deixis* – that is, to prompt the interpreter to relate the uttered indexical expression to various situational features'. They 'are linguistic pointers which orientate reference in an utterance to' (Adetunji 2006: 179) 'the contextual coordinates of the utterance' (Mey 2001: 54). Person deictics allow a speaker to construct relationships between him/her-self, addressees and third parties. This is realised mainly through personal pronouns such as *I, we, us, our, you, he, she, they* and *them*. These pronouns can be used to 'include' and 'exclude' political actors (Adetunji 2006: 189), establish 'solidarity' with audience or 'antagonism' with political opponents (Kuo 2002: 29), ideologically 'signal in-group and out-group membership, as in *Us vs. Them*', leading to 'positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation' (van Dijk 2011a: 397, 398). Chilton (2004: 56) points out that 'in political discourse the first person plural (*we, us, our*) can be used to induce interpreters to conceptualise group identity, coalitions, parties, and the like either as insiders or outsiders'. Consider the following example.

Example 6: UK QAD 10 May 13/Col. 337

Mr Duncan Smith (Con): ... Let *me* remind *Labour Members* that, for all *their* crocodile tears, long-term unemployment nearly doubled in *two years* under the previous Government... That was a failure on *their* part. *They* gerrymandered the figures on youth unemployment, but when *we* take the gerrymandering out, *we* find that youth unemployment is now lower than when the Labour Government left office.

That was a failure on their part/[t]hey gerrymandered and when we take the gerrymandering out/we find that unemployment is now lower ... are contrastive evaluative statements. The personal deictics *[t]hey* and *we* are contrastive as well, which means deictics and evaluation work simultaneously together. *They* and *their...*, which refer to *Labour Members* and their behaviour, construct Labour as an out-group and create antagonism between them and the Conservatives, *we*. While the statement views Labour MPs as

insincere, it portrays the Conservatives as honest. Similarly, *their welfare reforms* (in Example 7 below) implies the exclusion of *our welfare reforms*.

Time/temporal deictics (e.g., *two years* in the above example) indicate the time of an utterance, which has three dimensions: past (before the moment of the utterance), present (the moment of the utterance) and future (after the moment of the utterance) (Adetunji 2006: 181). Place/spatial deictics designate a geographical location vis-à-vis the location of the speaker. They are used to locate referents as either near/proximal (e.g. *here, this, these*) or far/distal (*there, that, those*) (van Dijk 2011a: 398; Adetunji 2006: 181). For example:

Example 7: UK QAD 9 May 13/Col. 207

Helen Jones (Lab): ... They have hit *those big cities* suffering most from unemployment through *their welfare reforms* ... *Birmingham* will lose £10 million on council tax ... *Liverpool* is losing more than £7 million in bedroom tax.

[T]hose *big cities, Birmingham* and *Liverpool* are spatial referents. Once again, notice the use of the superlative (*suffering most*) and comparative (*losing more than*) evaluative forms. The significance of place/spatial deictics in politics is succinctly captured by Chilton (2004: 57) thus: '[i]f politics is about cooperation and conflict over allocation of resources, such resources are frequently of a spatial, that is, geographical or territorial, kind'. Spatial references during the GH SONAD and UK QAD indicate the extent to which government policies affect such places, as in *welfare reforms* making *Birmingham* and *Liverpool* lose millions of pounds, which reinforces the fact that deictics and evaluation work together.

Deictic expressions have a substantial political significance since '[p]olitical actors are ... always situated with respect to a particular time, place and social group' (Chilton 2004: 57). For instance, to the extent that the GH SONAD and the UK QAD are debates about policies of political parties as government and opposition, with far-reaching implications for the wellbeing of the masses, group and social identity creation during such debates is crucial. Time/temporal deictics are important for the reason that 'the location and/or extent of social activities are timed in relation to other social activities ... [which] allows for measurement and for time spans of different levels of magnitude' (van Leeuwen 2008: 77-78). During debates, MPs construct various kinds of 'historical periodisation' (Chilton 2004: 56), as, for example, *last year, during the previous administration, today, within three years, by the end of this year*. This allows them to create a situational picture of: where we have come from,

where we are and what the future looks like, which creates the opportunity for them to evaluatively compare the performance and achievements of past and present governments in order to show whose accomplishments are better. Place/spatial deictics allow MPs to make references to specific geographical or territorial areas (e.g. constituencies) which they believe need some attention or the other. The foregoing offers a strong basis for me to discuss deictics alongside evaluation in the GH SONAD and the UK QAD.

3.5 Chapter conclusion

Chapter 3 has described the methodological design employed in the study. The study uses a triangulation design, involving corpus-assisted discourse analysis, drawing on corpus-based and corpus-driven methods, along with supplementary data, such as interviews and a documentary, to explore Ghanaian and UK parliamentary questions and debates. It deploys *Wordsmith Tools* and *CFL Lexical Feature Marker* as computational tools. Chapters 4 and 5 engage a formal-functional and a systemic functional approach, particularly in relation to interrogative forms and process types to explore parliamentary questions. The analysis covers only the *yes/no* forms, which are further categorised in relation to their use of material, relational, verbal, mental and existential processes before they are interpreted and discussed. Excluding existential processes, Chapter 4 looks at material, relational and verbal processes, while Chapter 5 examines mental processes and negative *yes/no* interrogatives to offer insights into what MPs do with their questions. The interpretation is supported with keywords, concordances, interview data, documentary material, video and televised sessions of parliamentary proceedings. Chapter 6 employs an evaluation approach, with additional reference to deictics and indexicals, in order to illuminate evaluation in parliamentary debates as an ideological construct, and how MPs conceptualise people's concerns in the debates. The analysis deals with the UK and Ghanaian data comparatively and contrastively. However, since the two datasets are more similar than different, they are mostly treated as equivalent.

4 Yes/no interrogatives: holding (Prime) Ministers to account

4.1 Introduction

This chapter examines *yes/no* interrogatives in the UK Prime Minister's questions (PMQs) and Ghanaian Minister's questions (GMQs). These interrogatives very rarely do expect 'yes' or 'no' as responses. Indeed, such responses would be pragmatically inappropriate. The analysis indicates that the *yes/no* interrogatives contextually function as directives (e.g. order, request) and statements/assertions (e.g. giving information, criticism, praise) (Downing and Locke 2006: 211; Biber et al. 2002: 249). Through verbs denoting material processes (processes of doing-and-happening) (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 179-210) that are contained in these questions, MPs urge (Prime) Ministers to perform their duties and responsibilities. *Yes/no* interrogatives containing relational processes (processes of being and having) attack personalities and sometimes target ideas. Those characterised by verbal processes (processes of saying/telling) request (Prime) Ministers to express commitment, assurance, give narrative or explanatory responses. A critical examination of the UK PMQs and GMQs readily brings to the fore the idea of indirectness or the use of indirect speech acts (Downing and Locke 2006: 178; Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 862; Searle 1969: 66), offering an unblemished view that:

[i]n indirect speech acts the speaker communicates to the hearer more than he actually says by way of relying on their mutually shared background information, both linguistic and nonlinguistic, together with the general powers of rationality and inference on the part of the hearer.

Searle (1975: 60-61)

Thus, even though the fundamental purpose of MPs' questions is to hold (Prime) Ministers to account, the nature and manner of asking the questions appears to push the core purpose to the background. The chapter responds to the question of how, through their questions, MPs: (i) attribute agency/actor roles to (Prime) Ministers, (ii) remind them of their responsibilities, (iii) construct acts of praise and positive recognition or condemnation of the

power and authority of (Prime) Ministers, and (iv) reveal the political and power ramifications that come into play in the question-answer dichotomy.

The following research questions are dealt with, even though the discussion does not follow them in turn.

- i. What are the key features of the form, design and function of the questions?
- ii. What do MPs indicate or seek when they ask the questions?
- iii. How or in what manner do MPs ask their questions? For example, do they sound accusatory or complimentary?
- iv. What are the effects of asking questions that involve material, relational and verbal processes?
- v. Do MPs attempt to show any forms of politeness in their questioning?
- vi. What are the responses to these questions like?

Before we delve into the analysis, let us examine how MPs design their questions because the nature of the design impacts on their meanings.

4.2 MPs' question design

Before and/or after asking questions, MPs habitually make statements which briefly set out the 'facts' on which the questions are based. These statements often contain assumptions and 'a series of contextualizing propositions' (Harris 2001: 458) either accusing, criticising or praising the (Prime) Ministers and/or their governments, which form the basis of and inform the interpretation of the questions. The design of questions in both datasets can be generally represented as:

(i. Preface/pre-question statement) + Question + (ii. postscript/post-question statement)

where 'preface'/'pre-question statement' and 'postscript'/'post-question statement', which are optional, respectively refer to a statement made before and after asking a question. Usually, the preface forms the basis of the question. For instance, in Example 8, [i] is the preface and the basis of [Q], the main question (note: red highlights indicate main focus of discussion).

Example 8: UK 12 Mar 08/Col 277:

Dr. Howard Stoate (Dartford) (Lab): [#i] As my right hon. Friend will know, this is prostate cancer awareness week, and 10,000 men die of prostate cancer every year, making it the commonest cause of cancer deaths in men. However, there are significant inequalities across the country in cancer death rates for prostate disease. [Q] *Will my right hon. Friend commit to reducing health inequalities and improving research, treatment and awareness of that terrible condition, so that we can bring the death toll down?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I agree entirely with what my hon. Friend says. More has to be done. There has been a 16 per cent. fall in cancer deaths, and there is more availability of help, check-ups and screening...

[i] gives facts and figures ('10,000 men die of prostate cancer every year' and 'there are significant inequalities across the country ...') which contextualise the question. Without such a context, it would be difficult for the MP to have any grounds to request the PM to commit to improving the situation. The statement sometimes comes after the question (making it a postscript) and performs a similar (if not the same) function as the preface, by predicting the response to the question. As in Example 9, a question can have both a preface [i] and a postscript [ii].

Example 9: UK 7 Apr 2010/Col 969:

Dr. Doug Naysmith (Bristol, North-West) (Lab/Co-op): [i] As I know my right hon. Friend is aware, the past 10 years have seen an unprecedented increase in support for science and technology in this country, but [Q] *will he agree that now is not the time to cut investment in science, research and education?* [ii] For it is in these areas that we will ensure our future economic success and economic growth.

The preface [i] offers, contextualises and prepares the ground for the question, while the postscript [ii] reinforces the question by predicting what the preferred response (affirmation) will achieve. There can also be a midscript, which means it occurs between sub-questions in a multipart/multiple question, which could be said to be a postscript to the first question and a preface to the second (Example 10).

Example 10: UK 23 Apr 2008/Col. 1309

Ms Dari Taylor (Stockton, South) (Lab): [Qi] Does my right hon. Friend agree that the Army cadet forces, which are national voluntary youth organisations, are excellent and the best youth organisations in Great Britain today? [#i] *They are organised by enthusiastic staff and officers. My detachment, the Durham ACF, takes*

700 youngsters away during the summer holidays, many of whom would never go away on holiday. [Qii] Will my right hon. Friend announce to the House today what my Government are to do to support further the future of the Army cadet forces?

The Prime Minister: I am grateful to my hon. Friend because she works with her local Army cadets and plays a prominent role with the cadet force in her area. I have been hugely impressed by the good work of our cadet forces.... We will provide extra money to help the development of cadet forces, not just in some schools but across a whole range of schools...

In Example 10, [i] is a midscript, which occurs between sub-questions [Qi] and [Qii]. While [Qi] asks the Prime Minister's opinion on the excellence of 'the Army cadet forces', [i] contextualises the question and gives a reason why the 'Army cadet forces are excellent and the best youth organisations in Great Britain today'. Such a contextualising proposition attempts to validate the claim and, therefore, makes it difficult for the Prime Minister to deny support for the cadet forces. The PM assures the MP that they 'will provide extra money to help the development of cadet forces...'

Prefaces, postscripts and midscripts give contextualising propositions or the premise which offer the basis for the interpretation of the questions. They usually seek either to undermine or enhance the (Prime) Ministers' credibility. The statistics in Table 12 (based on the initial analysis of 438 Ghanaian and 412 UK questions, see section 3.4.2) indicate the various forms of question design and their frequencies.

Table 12: Types of MPs' question design

Design	UK	%	GH	%
i. Preface/pre-question statement:	316	76.70	317	72.37
ii. Post-script/post-question statement:	7	1.70	11	2.51
iii. Preface and Post-script:	19	4.61	3	0.68
iv. Midscript:	24	5.82	3	0.68
Sub-Total	366	88.83	334	76.24
v. No accompanying statement:	46	11.17	104	23.74

Approximately 89% of the UK and 76% of the Ghanaian questions were designed with accompanying statements as prefaces, post-scripts or mid-scripts. Even in questions which had no accompanying statements, the assumptions were usually contained in the contents of

the question in the form of presuppositions or propositions as the question drew on events that were well known, as in Peter Luff's (Mid-Worcestershire) (Con) question: *What, precisely, has Lord Malloch-Brown done to deserve his grace-and-favour apartment?* (14 Nov 2007, Col. 663). The question presupposes that Lord Malloch-Brown has been given a 'grace-and-favour apartment' and PM Gordon Brown answers in the form of rebuttal: 'Lord Malloch-Brown is a Minister of the Government, representing our country'. This indicates that both the MP and the PM had prior knowledge of the events that informed the question.

Question design is crucial for understanding MPs' questions, irrespective of whether they involve material, relational or verbal processes, which are the analytical focus of the discussion that follows. First, *yes/no* interrogatives with material processes (the least frequent in both datasets) are considered, which deal with issues relating to (Prime) Ministers' performance of their duties and responsibilities. Second, *yes/no* interrogatives involving relational processes are explored, as through them, MPs attempt to depict (Prime) Ministers' attitudes towards their duties and responsibilities. Then, verbal processes are discussed. In other words, I begin with a discussion of questions about (Prime) Ministers' duties and responsibilities, followed by questions about their attitudes towards those duties and responsibilities, and then how MPs urge (Prime) Ministers to express confirmation, commitment and assurance, and so on.

4.3 *Yes/no* interrogatives with material processes: requesting (Prime) Ministers to perform their duties/responsibilities

Through material processes, MPs ask questions of performance of specific duties and responsibilities. The material process *yes/no* interrogatives perform speech acts of requesting: action towards dealing with a specific problem, support for a course of action, information about and confirmation of an action or a situation, invitation to a meeting or a visit. Figure 11 shows sample concordance lines illustrating material processes in the Ghanaian Minister's questions (GMQs). In line 1, 'Government' is positioned as an agent which is responsible for budgeting and financing the project in question. The question expresses possibility and willingness of the 'Government budget[ing]' 'to finance this [the project] locally'. '[C]ollaborate' (line 2), 'come back' (line 3), 'start' (line 4), 'lay' (line 5),

‘refer’ (line 6), etc. are verbs denoting material processes, where MPs are asking for those actions to be taken.

N	Concordance
1	that her effort to get the support from donor agencies fails, will the Government budget to finance this locally? Ms.
2	a sentence pose the question — Dr. Annan: The question is, will the Ministry of Transport collaborate with the Ministry of
3	Concordance
4	plan and they must know where this district falls. So, would the Hon Minister come back to this House —
5	it is serious and they attach so much importance to it, would they start with the districts so that they would
6	Concordance
7	Because we still do not have copies. If possible, can she lay the one that is in her hands for
8	like to assume that they have one. On that basis, can he refer to it and tell us when Nkwanta North
9	Concordance
10	, as the Hon Minister has pointed out, with this problem, is he going to undertake a bigger review to address
11	three years ago and has just been revived, how long is it going to take her to put the pieces together and
12	a transformer to enable these guys get electricity? Or is he waiting till 2012? a. Locution: Multi-qn: Wh-question
13	Hon Minister is, since that department was boosted, have they done any research, and if they have, what

Figure 11: Sample concordance lines of material processes in GH PMQs

Figure 12, on the other hand, represents sample concordance lines from UK PMQs. The material process verbs ‘suspend’ and ‘support’ (lines 1 and 2) collocate with ‘Will he’; and ‘introduce’, ‘meet’, ‘investigate’, ‘help’, ‘do’ and ‘come’ (lines 3-8) collocate with ‘will the Prime Minister’, urging the Prime Minister to take such actions.

N	Concordance
1	requires a common price, not a unilateral one, so will he suspend that price and send his Chancellor
2	, yet can claim gift aid often on only about 5% of that. Will he support my efforts to make it easier for
3	further action will be taken. As a matter of urgency, will the Prime Minister therefore now introduce
4	are working cross-party and cross-Humber on that. Will the Prime Minister meet us so that we can
5	the right to be treated by the English-run NHS. Will the Prime Minister investigate what can be done
6	are spending their time squabbling with each other. Will the Prime Minister help me to sort out those
7	and Hythe) (Con): When he is in Brussels tomorrow, will the Prime Minister do what the majority of the
8	the world yacht race, which kicked off this week. Will the Prime Minister come to Gosport to see for
9	may have been forced into marriage against their will. Will he look into the role of education welfare officers
10	flair to the high office that he has held for 10 years. Will he leave office with honour by giving an
11	unscrupulous operators moving into the industry? Will he initiate talks with other party leaders so that
12	that are not already earmarked for development? Will he come and visit the Ribble Valley and see for
13	women who are doing so well over in Melbourne? Will he also join me in helping to support the

Figure 12: Sample concordance lines of material processes in UK PMQs

The highlighted structures encode processes of doing and happening, expressing the idea that the Prime Minister is supposed to do something. For example, in Figure 12, ‘come’ (lines 8,

12), ‘look into’ (line 9), ‘leave’ (line 10), ‘initiate’ (line 11) and ‘visit’ (line 12) indicate that the Prime Minister is supposed to perform those actions. Table 13 shows various material process verbs and their speech act functions found in the two datasets. It indicates that there were 19 (5%) material processes in the Ghanaian MQs, which were *will/would/can/be/have/do*-operator interrogatives and functioned as requesting confirmation of an action, requesting action or advising Ministers to take a specific course of action.

Table 13: Material processes and their speech act functions

GMQs: Material processes (19; 5%)	UK PMQs: Material processes (97; 10%)
<p>Will a) collaborate (1), budget (1), eat (1) <i>requesting confirmation; advising/suggesting</i></p>	<p>Will: a)take (10), do (10) <i>requesting action; advising/suggesting</i></p>
<p>Would b) come back (1), start (1) <i>requesting confirmation; advising/suggesting</i></p>	<p>b) support (6), endorse (2), throw <i>his weight</i> (1), put ... <i>behind</i> (1), join (1), help (2) <i>requesting support, help</i></p>
<p>Can c) lay (1), refer (1): <i>requesting action</i></p>	<p>c) give (7), offer (1) <i>requesting confirmation, information</i></p>
<p>Is d) going to undertake (1), going to take ... to put (1), waiting (1): <i>requesting action</i></p>	<p>d) investigate (3), look into (6), see (1), look (again) at (3), (help me to) find out (1) <i>action advising/suggesting – to investigate, examine</i></p>
<p>Have/Has e) done (2), linked up (1), made (1), given (1) <i>requesting confirmation</i></p>	<p>e) meet (11), join (15), come (3), find <i>time</i> (2), visit (2) <i>requesting a meeting, visit; confirmation</i></p>
<p>Do f) go back/through (2), come back (1): <i>requesting confirmation</i></p>	<p>Can a) give (1), join (1) <i>requesting information; advising/suggesting</i></p>
	<p>Could b) arrange (1) <i>request for a meeting</i></p>

The UK PMQs recorded 97 (10%) material processes involving *will/can/could*-operator interrogatives and these interrogatives performed the various functions indicated against them in green. For example, the processes under *will* (d) ‘investigate’ and ‘look into’

functioned as requests for action or advising PMs to investigate or examine a situation. Both Figure 12 and Table 13 indicate that almost all the material processes were constructed with ‘will’. This indicates that most of the actions contained in the material processes are meant to be performed outside the House in the future, as ‘will’ marks future time and willingness. The *will*-constructed material processes reflect the performance of the (Prime) Minister’s political responsibilities/duties as dealing with and solving problems for the benefit of the country and as mainly external to the House.

Let us examine Examples 11 and 12 (Table 14) in detail. Example 11 is a request for affirmation (or otherwise) of whether the Ghanaian Government will find local sources to finance projects that have been earmarked for execution should donor support fail. The question presupposes that donor sponsorship may fail, in which case the projects must still be carried out. Mr Appiah-Ofori implies that the Government should have had a contingency plan to forestall any abandonment of the project in case donor support fails. The question indirectly asserts that the Government should budget to execute the programme locally, because it is the Government’s responsibility, in view of its ‘status functions’ and ‘deontic powers’ (Searle 2010: 8-9). Mr Appiah-Ofori further suggests that the Government should be ready to explore local ways to finance the projects in case donor agencies do not support them. However, Ms Ayithey’s response is quite ambiguous and does not necessarily say whether the funding will be from local sources or not. Having stated already in a response to the substantive question that ‘The Ministry will approach donor agencies to sponsor these programmes’ (*Col. 90*), Ms Ayithey appears to use ‘subtle evasion’, that is, when a ‘subtle shift changes the terms of the question so slightly that it appears the respondent is answering the question’ (Rasiah 2010: 670; see also Clayman 2001). First, Ms Ayithey avoids using ‘locally’, which is the main focus of the question, and gives a general response that the ‘Government will fund the project’. Second, she does not state whether the Government has already planned to explore local sources or not. Third, if there was such a plan, she would have stated it in response to the substantive question. To ‘budget’ is to have an income and expenditure plan and, therefore, the question demands some level of specific plan towards executing the project should donor support fail. For the Minister to say in general terms the government will fund the project evades the specific demands of the question – she does not state how the project will be funded should donor support fail.

Table 14: Participants in material process clause

Preface	Operator	Requested Actor	Material process	Goal	Circumstance
<p>Example 11: GH 2 Jun 09/Col. 96: Mr. P. C. Appiah-Ofori [NPP]: [i] Madam Speaker, page five; the Hon Minister enumerated three lines of action the Government has in mind to pursue in order to give effect to the solution there. And she went on further to say that the Ministry will approach donor agencies to sponsor these programmes. In the event that her effort to get the support from donor agencies fails,</p>	[Q] will	the Government	budget	to finance this	locally?
<p>Ms. Ayittey [NDC]: Madam Speaker, Government will fund the project — [Uproar.]</p>					
<p>Example 12: UK 2 Apr 14/Col 881: Roger Williams (Brecon and Radnorshire) (LD): [i] Although I welcome the Government’s intervention on fuel bills, many rural people do not benefit from mains gas and have to depend on more expensive fuels.</p>	[Q] will	the Government	investigate	how they can benefit off-grid customers, who often live in fuel poverty?	
<p>The Prime Minister [Con]: My hon. Friend raises an important point. There are many people who are off mains gas, including in my constituency. I think that there are things we can do, not least encouraging the power of group purchasing by encouraging communities to come together to buy oil and gas so that they can drive down prices. I am sure that he will be looking at the options available in his constituency.</p>					

Example 12 (Table 14) has two shades of meaning. First, and literally, it requests the Prime Minister to confirm whether he will explore ways of helping rural people to benefit from mains gas. Second, and more importantly, it is an indirect request for the Government (represented by the Prime Minister) to do so. Before making the request, Roger Williams welcomes, in the preface [i], ‘the Government’s intervention on fuel bills’. This acceptance legitimises the request in addition to mitigating the face-threat in asking the question. The request to find ways of helping rural folk to benefit from mains gas relates to the core mandate of both the MP and the Government as representatives of the citizenry, that is, to serve the interests of their people.

In both Examples 11 and 12, ‘the Government’ is thrust into requested actor position or cast in the material processes denoted by ‘budget’ and ‘investigate’, as shown in Table 14, making ‘the Government’ responsible for those actions. The attribution of agency to the Government amounts to prompting it of its responsibility in which the semantic role of ‘actor’ is understood as ‘the Government’ being a willing initiator (Duranti 1994: 125) of budgeting and investigating. Note that ‘Goal’ refers to the item that undergoes the process, while ‘Circumstance’ here refers to the place of occurrence of the process (Halliday and Matthiessen (2004: 180)). It is noteworthy that ‘the Government’ is made the actor in each of these questions rather than the (Prime) Minister. This allows the MPs to depersonalise their questions. When these (including ‘the Ministry’) are used as ‘actors’, MPs depict the execution of political responsibility as being a collective effort, rather than as an individual’s duty. We can, therefore, infer that the higher percentages of making the (Prime) Minister requested actors and agents, to some extent, attest to the person-targeted nature of the parliamentary questions as discussed in section 4.4.

Since the government has a duty to perform its responsibilities, in virtue of its status functions (Searle 2010: 8-9), asking whether the government will perform its responsibilities, indirectly implies that it ought to perform them. In each of Examples 11 and 12, the preface to the question indicates that the government has recognised its responsibility. Thus, to ask that the government perform its responsibility is to hold the government to account, which is part of the MP’s status functions. The fact that the government by its status functions and deontic powers (Searle 2010: 8-9) has to fulfil its obligations, which are usually obvious to the MPs, the manner of reminding the government of its duties is crucial. It shows the

attitudes and feelings MPs have towards the government and/or (Prime) Ministers. This is where the kind of verb or process type chosen and the directness or indirectness of the expression becomes significant.

In both the UK PMQs and GMQs, verbs denoting material processes are the least frequent among relational, verbal and mental processes. From their examination of ‘8425 clauses’ from a range of ‘registerially mixed samples’, Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 215) state that material processes had the highest frequency, followed by relational, mental and then verbal processes. As indicated in Table 1, in the data, mental processes were the most frequent, followed by verbal, relational and material processes, which run almost in reverse order to Halliday and Matthiessen’s. So, what does this tell us about the parliamentary *yes/no* questions? Material processes denote ‘happening’, ‘creating’, ‘changing’, ‘doing (to)’ and ‘acting’ (Halliday and Matthiessen 2014: 216), which imply actual performance of responsibilities and implementation of policies takes place in the real world outside the corridors of parliament. It denotes, to put it in a common parlance, ‘walking the talk’ or ‘actions rather than words’. Since the parliamentary questions are a spoken genre the high frequency of verbal processes (second highest) seems reasonable. The high frequency of mental and relational processes, on the other hand, could suggest that MPs focus more on personality attacks and counter-attacks and attempts to outmanoeuvre each other in the question and answer session. Supposing that these assumptions are true, then we can say that the UK MPs are, to some extent, better at focusing on the material concerns of the people than their Ghanaian counterparts as the UK recorded 10% material processes as against 5% in the Ghanaian context.

4.4 Relational processes, person- and idea-targeted questions

Relational processes generally concern things ‘of being’, with the ‘central meaning ... that something is’ (Halliday (1994: 112). While in material processes ‘the attribution of agency to [(Prime) Ministers] typically coincides with an implicit or explicit’ prompting of responsibility (Duranti 1995: 129), relational process interrogatives in the parliamentary questions concern (Prime) Ministers’ personalities and their attitudes towards their responsibilities. They are used to describe (Prime) Ministers as carriers of certain attributes (qualities or values) relating to their positions, as for example, the concordance lines in

Figures 13 and 14 showing some descriptive adjectives used in such interrogatives: Figure 13 – ‘is the hon. Minister **aware**’ (line 1), ‘is she **willing**’ (line 4) and Figure 14 ‘Will he be **able**’ (line 1), ‘Will my right hon. Friend be **kind** enough’ (line 4). For example, willingness refers to readiness to do something voluntarily. Therefore, associating that attribute to the Minister implies questioning her readiness to perform her duties, which implies she is reluctant to perform her status functions (Searle 2010: 7). Similarly, to be kind is to have the compassion to do something. Thus, a request to ‘be kind enough’ expresses some reservation about the Prime Minister’s ability to act kindly. To put it another way, the question implies: you must have the attitude of willingness or kindness. The questions, thus, become indirect speech acts. We will discuss specific examples presently, but first let us look at the various functions that questions with relational processes perform in the two datasets (see Table 15).

N	Concordance
1	. Mr. Agbesi: Mr. Speaker, my question is, as at today, is the hon. Minister aware that the roads in Middle
2	of tarring roads in every district capital; my question is, is the Minister supposed to tar all roads within the
3	Answer is, if there is no managerial problem here, is the Minister sure that the contractor has been paid,
4	was not answered. My question to the Hon Minister. Is she willing to eat fish from that lagoon?

Figure 13: Sample concordance lines of relational processes in GH MQs

N	Concordance
1	kind of formal recognition for those brave men. Will he be able to bring that to a conclusion
2	to do whatever we can to relieve their tragedy? Will he be good enough to have a word with the
3	review of the voting systems in this country. Will that be yet another pointless exercise, or can
4	threatening their energy and fuel supplies. Will my right hon. Friend be kind enough to tell

Figure 14: Sample concordance lines of relational processes in UK PMQs

Table 15 shows the relational processes, with their speech act functions, as found in both the GMQs and the UK PMQs. While there were 62 (15%) instances of relational processes in the GMQs, there were 186 (20%) of them in the UK PMQs. Functions of the relational processes include (marked in green, Table 15): GMQs – requesting information, confirmation of opinion/attribute, expressing doubt, challenge, etc.; UK PMQs – requesting action, confirmation (of opinion) with positive or negative orientation, meeting, expressing doubt, challenge, offering opinion, etc. The Table depicts that relational processes were constructed with *will/would*, *can* and *be* as operators, including negative and positive forms.

Table 15: Relational processes and their speech act functions

GMQs: Relational processes (62; 15%)	UK PMQs: Relational process (186; 20%)	
<p>Will a) be (3), undertake to ensure (1) <i>requesting information, confirmation</i></p> <p>Would b) (not) be (4) <i>requesting confirmation of opinion</i></p> <p>Can a) be kind (2) <i>requesting confirmation of attribute</i></p> <p>b) acquire (1) <i>requesting confirmation, with negative orientation</i></p> <p>Be fair (1), willing (1), possible (3) supposed (3), required (1), sure (1), armed (1) <i>Expressing doubt, challenge; Requesting confirmation</i></p> <p>Be ... + an NP or nominal clauses (e.g. <i>Is + it + a practice that ...?</i>) it (13), that (5), the sum (1), they (2) <i>Expressing doubt, challenging; Requesting confirmation</i></p> <p>Be + it + not better (1), sub judice (1), advisable (1), a fact (1), a ploy (1) <i>Requesting confirmation, with negative orientation; advising, challenging; expressing doubt</i></p>	<p>Will: ensure (17), use ... to ensure (2), (introduce measures) to ensure (1), seek to ensure (1) <i>action, to ensure</i></p> <p>b) be (11) <i>confirmation, action</i></p> <p>c) be prepared (1), be willing to meet (1) <i>for meeting, visit; confirmation</i></p> <p>d) not be (4) <i>requesting affirmation of opinion, advice/suggestion, with negative orientation</i></p> <p>Can a) have (1), (do more to) ensure (1), guarantee (4), make (2), reconcile (1), be (1) <i>requesting assurance, confirmation</i></p> <p>b) have (1), correct (1) <i>requesting a meeting</i></p>	<p>Be proud (2), concerned (1), surprised (1), convinced (1), afraid (1), true (1), embarrassed (1), wonder (3), petrified, good (1), prepared (2), in favour (1), confident (1), able (1), right (1), bovvered (1), satisfied (1), pleased (1), willing (1), remaining (1), relaxed (1), worth (1), getting stuck (1), non-negotiable (1) <i>Expressing doubt, challenge, questioning</i></p> <p>Be ... + an NP or nominal clause (e.g. <i>Is + this + an opposition ready for government?</i>) this (6), that (2), it (10), he (2), the idea (1), the PM's (2), the chancellor's (1) <i>Expressing doubt, challenge, questioning</i></p> <p>Be + not ... (e.g. <i>Is not that ...?</i>) that (7)/it (6)/the + NP (14)/the chancellor (1) + (e.g. <i>Is not that ...</i>)</p> <p>Be ... not ... (e.g. <i>Is that not ...?</i>) it (28), that (11) this (1), there (2), he (2), the PM (1), we(1) <i>offering opinion, requesting agreement, with negative orientation; criticising, challenging; expressing doubt</i></p>

In this section, I discuss only the positive forms, leaving the negative ones (such as ‘be + not’/be ... not ...) for Chapter 5 because of the particular features and functions of the negative forms and the relationship they have with forms of *do*-operator interrogatives.

Attributive clauses normally have a carrier (i.e. the participant), relational process and attribute (Flowerdew 2013: 18), as in:

Kantankah (carrier) *is* (relational process) *prepared* (attribute).

However, in an interrogative form, it will be *requested carrier*, *relational process* and *attribute* (see Examples 13 and 14, Table 16 below). In Example 13 ‘the Hon Minister’ is cast as a requested ‘Carrier’ (Flowerdew 2013: 18) of an ‘Attribute’ of preparedness. As a former Deputy Minister of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, Dr Osei knows that Gen Smith ‘must seek approval from’ that Ministry. He wants to know whether Gen. Smith (Minister for Defence) followed standard procedures to acquire approval for funding from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. Dr Osei sounds sceptical about Gen. Smith’s handling of securing funding and presupposes a contravention of procurement procedures. In his response, Gen Smith implies that he has not received funding yet, as he has not had time to apply for approval from the Ministry because the reports were received only ‘some few days back’. Gen. Smith also responds to the assumption of contravention of procedures, indicating that, when the approval is obtained, ‘we will do the right thing’.

The main purpose of Dr Osei’s question is to request evidence from the Minister. The relational process and attribute of ‘be prepared’ raises a question of trust, commitment and doubt. The MP is not only interested in requesting information but also the Minister’s commitment and sincerity in the performance of his political duties. Bull, Fetzer and Johansson (2008: 326) have noted the importance of political commitment, observing that, as a basis of their decision to vote for one political leader or another, ‘voters may question the extent to which politicians can be trusted to keep their word or to implement their promises’. In his question, Dr Osei implies a lack of commitment and sincerity on the part of the Minister as a result of the use of ‘be prepared to’, a semantically negative expression.

Table 16: Participants in the relational clause

Preface	Operator	Requested Carrier	Relational process	Attribute	Circumstance
<p>Example 13: GH 10 Jun 09/Col. 444/5:</p> <p>Dr. Osei [NPP]: [i] Madam Speaker, in his Answer and with your permission, I quote: “Recruitment funding would therefore be used to improve physical conditions in the training school”. What I want to know is that, has the Hon Minister sought approval for moving from item 3 to item 4 for this purpose? The requirement is that he must seek approval from the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning. If such approval was sought and it was given,</p>	[Q] would	the hon. Minister	be	prepared	to provide the evidence that he got the approval?
<p>Lt. Gen. Smith (ret'd) [NDC]: Madam Speaker, we received the reports just some few days back and if I say I directed, the process will take its course and the necessary approvals will be sought and we will do the right thing. Thank you.</p>					
<p>Example 14: UK 20 Jun 07/Col 1373:</p> <p>Gordon Banks (Ochil and South Perthshire) (Lab): [i] My right hon. Friend will be aware that since being elected to this House I have campaigned for formal recognition of the Bevin Boys and the role that they played in our world war two success and the defeat of Nazism. In January, the Prime Minister acknowledged their role and said that he would make progress on some kind of formal recognition for those brave men.</p>	[Q] Will	he	be	able	to bring that to a conclusion before he leaves office next week?
<p>The Prime Minister [Lab]: I congratulate my hon. Friend on the campaign that he has mounted for some recognition for the Bevin Boys and the extraordinary work that they did in world war two, without which our war effort would have been seriously hindered. We will have a special commemorative badge for the Bevin Boys, and we will announce that later today. It will provide some recognition for the tremendous work that they did, express the sense of gratitude that the country has for them, and show why it is a good idea that on this day we should commemorate their work.</p>					

The concordance shots in Figures 15 and 16 of ‘be prepared to’ from the International Corpus of English-Ghana (ICE-Ghana) and the British National Corpus (BNC) show that it has a negative semantic prosody. Figure 15 indicates the only five instances of ‘be prepared to’ in the ICE-GH; while Figure 16 indicates the first 10 of 1000 collocates of ‘be prepared to’, which amounts to a frequency of one instance per 1000 words in the BNC.

N	Concordance
1	S2: [mm]\par S9: [So] I think that lawyers must sometimes be prepared to actually offer free legal regard
2	you must have the ability to accept change, be a self-starter be prepared to learn and to seek help when necessary.
3	the light of these expectations, the District Assembly should be prepared to share powers, functions and resources with
4	our own postgraduates do not get it. I will try for you, but be prepared to take private accommodation for the week or
5	submit to full treatment within the three months period and be prepared to testify to the public after treatment. It called

Figure 15: Semantic prosodies of ‘be prepared to’ from the ICE GH

N	Concordance
1	he liked. And we both knew that hardly anyone would be prepared to speak out and argue my case. I remember
2	all jurors have to believe in capital punishment, and be prepared to sentence someone to death. Since black
3	you can bring something of your own imagination to it, and be prepared to risk some indulgence. Keep Titania tough,
4	that pictures are part of a tradition; finally, children may be prepared to make a judgement going beyond an
5	the biggest problems. If you're up for a 'tart' part you must be prepared to present a flavour of the role as you see it. If
6	that you may face longish periods of unemployment and to be prepared to deal with this constructively. Isolation is one
7	just sit around waiting for the telephone to ring. Actors must be prepared to create their own work. Anywhere — on the
8	a forthcoming forum. 'Facing the Financiers'. Would you be prepared to contribute? If so, please write to Amanda
9	of divorce in a future united Ireland, indeed that they might be prepared to budge on the issue even now. But the
10	nearer the mark. I think that many of his readers would be prepared to bear witness to the sense that somewhere

Figure 16: Semantic prosodies of ‘be prepared to’ from the BNC

The collocates show that ‘be prepared to’ occurs mostly in negative contexts, such as to make concessions, yield or give something away. For example, in the ICE GH, to ‘actually offer free services ...’ (line 1), ‘you must have the ability to accept change ... learn and seek help when necessary’ (line 2), ‘share powers, functions and resources’ (line 3) and ‘take private accommodation for the week’ (line 4) imply making compromises and forfeitures. In the BNC, examples include: ‘sentence someone to death’ (line 2), ‘risks some indulgence’ (line 3), and ‘budge on the issue even now’ (line 9), all of which connote negativity. Thus, ‘be prepared to’ means being ready to accept some negative consequences. This demonstrates that Dr Osei is pessimistic about the Minister’s handling of procuring funds for the recruitment exercise. From Searle’s (2010: 8-9) ‘status function’ and ‘deontic powers’ perspective, the Minister has a duty to go through the right processes to secure funding for

the said recruitment exercise. Therefore, to ask the Minister if he is prepared to provide evidence of approval implies Dr Osei is doubtful about the Minister's trustworthiness.

Dr Osei appears to be aware of the face-threat (Brown and Levinson 1987) or "face attack" (Culpeper 2011: 20) in his question. He attempts to mitigate it through the use of 'would', a hypothetical and epistemic modality. The choice of 'would' over 'will' is a politeness marker, as it provides 'distancing in time' (Brown and Levinson 1987: 204; Leech and Svartvik 1994: 163, 248-249), thereby making the illocutionary force remotely binding, that is, less obligatory and compelling. This politeness feature is strengthened by the *if*-conditional past, '[i]f such approval was sought and was given', which underlines the hypotheticality.

The UK example (Example 14, Table 16) performs two functions. First, it requests confirmation or otherwise of the Prime Minister's ability to, before leaving office, bring 'formal recognition for those brave men', the 'Bevin Boys', young British men who were conscripted to work in the UK coal mines between 1943 and 1948. Second, it politely requests the Prime Minister to do so before his departure. Asking a question of capacity, when Gordon Banks assumes Tony Blair is able, is designed to reveal Blair's competence as a Prime Minister; it also allows Blair to express his desire to attend to the needs of and recognise the contribution of those who have contributed to the course of Britain as a country. In asking the question, Gordon Banks takes the opportunity, in his preface, to do 'personal publicity' (Proksch and Slapin 2010; Raunio 1996), portraying himself as someone who represents the interest of the Bevin Boys, as he says: 'since being elected to this House I have campaigned for formal recognition of the Bevin Boys ...'. The Prime Minister accordingly congratulates him 'on the campaign'. This shows that when MPs are asking questions, they are not only putting the (Prime) Minister on the spot, but also projecting themselves as serving the interest of their constituents and the citizenry as a whole. This is politically prudent as the MP has 'social ties' with the constituents and, as a representative, 'belong[s] to the same social community' as the constituents (Manin 1997: 203). Given that Gordon Banks has engaged in a campaign for the recognition of the Bevin Boys, and he being a government MP, it would be highly surprising if Gordon Banks did not know that Tony Blair was going to announce a special commemorative badge later that day. This confirms the view that he was doing some publicity for himself by asking the question.

Questions of attitude display interesting features of parliamentary questions when they are constructed with forms of ‘be’ (*is, are, was, and were*). The *be*-operator interrogatives create direct relationships between (Prime) Ministers and their attitudes, thereby heightening the illocutionary force of such interrogatives. Let us consider:

Example 15: UK 6 Jun 07/Col 252:

Tim Loughton (East Worthing and Shoreham) (Con): [i] Fifteen per cent. of school-age children are obese, and under-age drinking has doubled. Yesterday, the Children’s Society said that 43 per cent. of parents are scared to let their children go out with their friends. Schools have become exam factories, contributing to the one in 10 children suffering mental health problems, to which the Prime Minister’s solution is to force four-year-olds to take exams in mental health. [Q] *Is he proud of his legacy on the state of our children, or is he just not “bovvered”?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I think that the hon. Gentleman is exaggerating the situation a trifle. Of course, there are pressures on children today: pressures through exams and through the type of things to which they have access a lot earlier than generations past. The majority of young people whom I meet are working hard and are extremely responsible, decent members of society who behave very well. There is a minority who either misbehave or are socially excluded and we need specific measures to help them. However, I do not think that the debate is helped by that type of hyperbole, if the hon. Gentleman does not mind my saying so.

Example 15 relates to the attitude of PM Tony Blair towards children’s welfare. The question is emotionally loaded. It is an alternative question, with two parts representing opposite ends of a spectrum. It gives two impossible alternatives, that is, failure to deliver on children’s welfare and not being ‘bovvered’ about it, each of which mocks Blair. The use of ‘or is he just not “bovvered”’, especially, is humorous, ironic and mocking. ‘Bovvered’ (a colloquial form of ‘bothered’) is associated with aggression, violence, hooliganism and comedy. ‘Bovvered’ was popularised by *The Catherine Tate Show* (2015), a *BBC Two* comedy sketch series that was first performed in 2004. Luran Cooper, ‘an argumentative and idle teenage girl ... gets out of awkward situations by asking’ repeatedly, ‘Am I bovvered?’ The expression has, thus, come to represent teenagers and their speaking style. Using ‘bovvered’ to describe Blair is, therefore, an attempt to ridicule him, as it somehow aligns him with disaffected, troublemaking and rowdy street gang youths and comic characters, who do not care about anything. The question cannot, therefore, be said to be anything other than a mocking challenge which casts doubt on the PM’s legacy. Based on the statistical information provided in the preface (‘Fifteen per cent. of school-age children ..., 43 per cent

of parents ...’ and ‘one in 10 children suffering mental health problems ...’), Tim Loughton infers that Tony Blair has failed to offer proper support for children’s wellbeing. The implication is that a competent leader will not be ‘proud’ of such a ‘legacy on the state of our children’. In principle, a political leader will be proud about his/her performance. Political leadership such as being a Prime Minister concerns committed attitudes towards the governed. If a leader has a positive attitude towards the citizenry, the better it is for his/her political success. Thus, when MPs ask questions of attitude, they are attempting to portray to the citizenry their Prime Ministers’ attitudes, opinions and feelings towards the citizenry. Again, the statistical information makes it difficult for Tony Blair to respond *yes* or *no* to the question. If he says ‘Yes, I am proud of my legacy’, he would appear to be insensitive to the plight of children; and saying ‘no’ could also imply that he has failed as a PM. Each of these responses will be damaging. Wilson (1990: 137) has said that the design of political questions makes it difficult for politicians to answer them

in that questions are rarely straightforward, but are, rather frequently prefaced by a variety of statements (often controversial). If politicians attend to the propositions contained in these pre/post statements they may be seen as trying to avoid the question. On the other hand, if politicians fail to attend to such propositions they may be seen as accepting certain controversial claims as matters of fact.

Such is the paradox facing (Prime) Ministers during parliamentary questions. No wonder, in the above question, Blair admits that ‘there are pressures on children today’. This admission makes Blair appear a responsible, sincere leader who has empathy for children.

It is noteworthy that the majority of the *be*-operator interrogatives in the UK PMQs form part of multipart interrogatives as in Example 14. In such cases, the *be*-operator interrogatives seek to ask about the Prime Ministers’ knowledge or awareness of a situation or their attitudes towards the situation, and then the other interrogative is used to ask what the (Prime) Ministers are going to do about such situations, as in:

Example 16: UK 3 Jun 09/Col 274:

Mr. Michael Jack (Fylde) (Con): [Qi] *Is the Prime Minister aware that his departing Home Secretary leaves a legacy of 342,000 cases of domestic violence in this country every year?* [Qii] *May I ask him to ensure that he re-examines the effectiveness of policies in that area, because of the cost in human misery on the victims and the cost to our caring services?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will be fair and acknowledge that the Home Secretary has also led the way on tougher sentences on domestic violence, including in domestic violence courts. This Government, led by the Leader of the House as well as the Home Secretary, have a record in taking on domestic violence by also funding centres for women throughout the rest of the country. That is vital public expenditure, and we believe that it is important for the health of this country. We will continue to support that measure to help women in our country.

Example 16 [Qi] asks whether the PM is ‘aware that his departing Home Secretary leaves a legacy of 342,000 cases of domestic violence in this country every year’ and [Qii] implores the PM to re-examine the situation regarding his ‘policies in that area’. [Qi] is an assertion that seeks to establish a condition for Mr Michael Jack to request the PM to take action. Establishing the PM’s awareness of the situation is a kind of information control (Gibbons 2003: 103), which is a coercive measure to put pressure on the PM to act. For instance, if the PM denies knowledge of the situation, he would be deemed to be not in control of affairs as a PM, and if he answers ‘yes’, he is admitting to failure. Consequently, the PM defends the Home Secretary while accusing Mr Jack of being unfair to the Home Secretary. He goes ahead to state the record of his Government in fighting domestic violence. He defends his Government’s record because Mr Michael Jack attacks the Government. Mr Jack’s first question is ironic, as it creates a semantic conflict and opposition between ‘legacy’ and ‘342,000 cases of domestic violence in this country every year’. The word ‘legacy’ has a positive semantic value denoting wealth, wherewithal, money, a bequest or a gift. So, to say that the Home Secretary’s legacy is ‘342,000 cases of domestic violence ... every year’ is being ironic and imputative because this is a truly unwanted gift in anybody’s imagination. This is a face attack (Culpeper 2011: 20, 8). However, the use of ‘May I...’ mitigates the face attack, as it is a request for permission to ask the question, even though the MP does not need permission to do so. The mere act of asking the question is the request itself, which makes it a (an indirect) performative utterance (Austin 1962: 148). Thus, ‘May I...’ marks politeness.

However, Example 17 from the GMQs is not part of a multipart question. The question asks about the Minister’s awareness of ‘the said market’ being initiated by ‘the traditional chiefs’.

Example 17: GH 13 Jul 05/Col. 1873/4:

Mr. Kyeremeh [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, *is the hon. Minister aware that the said market [the Techiman Market] was started by the traditional chiefs and as a result they are demanding some percentage of the market proceeds to initiate projects of their choice for the well-being of the people?*

Mr. Bintin [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, that is so and we are in consultation with them. We are talking with them to get the issue resolved.

Example 17 performs two functions: one, a surface realisation, is seeking a(n) (dis)affirmation of the Minister’s awareness of the situation and the other, an inverted/indirect realisation, is a request for action (Grosz and Sidner 1986: 178). Mr Kyeremeh inferentially requests Mr Bintin to say what he, as a Minister, is doing about the traditional chiefs’ demand for ‘some percentage of the market proceeds’. In the context of parliamentary questions where MPs ask questions for either information or to push for action, it would be strange to assume that Mr Kyeremeh only wants to know if the Minister is aware or not aware of the situation. Accordingly, the Minister does not only confirm his knowledge of the situation, but also responds to the inverted realisation by telling the House what is being done – they are in ‘consultation with them’.

The employment of the *be*-operator interrogatives clearly brings to bear what Gibbons (2003: 112) calls ‘person targeted’ and ‘idea targeted’ pragmatic strategies in questioning. In person-targeted constructions, the (Prime) Ministers are usually made the requested carriers (see Examples 16 and 17 above). Out of 94 questions in the GMQs, 55 (59%) were constructed using ‘the Minister’ (5, see Figure 17, line 3), ‘the hon. Minister’ (13, lines 1 and 2), ‘he’/‘she’ (37, lines 5-11) as requested carriers.

N	Concordance
1	. Mr. Agbesi: Mr. Speaker, my question is, as at today, is the hon. Minister aware that the roads in Middle
2	not comment on. Col. 1969, 7 Jul 10 But Mr Speaker, is the Hon Minister aware that the President promised
3	of tarring roads in every district capital; my question is, is the Minister supposed to tar all roads within the
4	Answer is, if there is no managerial problem here, is the Minister sure that the contractor has been paid,
5	august House to establish any unit within her Ministry? Is she required by law to come before this House to
6	was not answered. My question to the Hon Minister. Is she willing to eat fish from that lagoon?
7	, 2008 commenced the process on 4th March 2008. Is he aware? Is he aware of it that this letter from the
8	establish police stations in the newly created district. Is he aware that some of the established, existing old
9	424. Mr Speaker, my question to the Hon Minister is, is he aware that a bunch of the added staff of 283 are
10	is not working ever since it was moved to that place? Is he aware that it lacks accessories because the
11	, he did not get it and he was transferred there. So, is he aware that a lot of — [Interruptions.] Mr First

Figure 17: Sample concordance lines of person-targeted questions in GMQs

In the UK PMQs, 41 (53%, with 47% being idea targeted) of the 78 questions had ‘the Prime Minister’ (15, e.g. Figure 18, lines 4 and 5), ‘he’ (19, lines 1-3), ‘my right hon. Friend’ (3, lines 7 and 8), ‘the Government’ (1), ‘we’ (1), ‘people’ (1) or ‘parents’ (1) as requested carriers. By means of person-targeted questions, MPs normally touch on the attitudes and personalities of (Prime) Ministers.

N	Concordance
1	the Prime Minister support such an investigation, or is he afraid that there is something to hide? The Prime
2	the problems of global warming and climate change, is he convinced that, following the comprehensive
3	Is he proud of his legacy on the state of our children, or is he just not “bovered”? The Prime Minister: I think
4	months, if not years, for their cases to be determined. Is the Prime Minister proud of the service that his
5	top—in the top five poorest regions in western Europe. Is the Prime Minister at all concerned, or is he, like
6	is to force four-year-olds to take exams in mental health. Is he proud of his legacy on the state of our children, or
7	, we see the threat, and the time for action is now." Is my right hon. Friend confident that he can persuade
8	sure that they do. Anne Snelgrove (South Swindon) (Lab): Is my right hon. Friend able to use his influence in the

Figure 18: Sample concordance lines of person-targeted questions in UK PMQs

Let us examine Example 18 from the GMQs.

Example 18: GH 2 Jun 09/Col. 95:

[Qi] **Mr. Yaw Maama Afful [NPP]**: Since the Hon Minister is telling us and she has agreed that the lagoon is polluted, yet she is not going to ban fishermen from fishing from it, *is she telling us she will be willing to eat fish from that lagoon?* [Interruptions.]

Ms. Ayittey [NDC]: Madam Speaker, we will still not consider banning it but we will intensify the public education. [Interruptions.]

[Qii] **Mr. Afful [NPP]**: Madam Speaker, I think my question was not answered. My question to the Hon Minister. *Is she willing to eat fish from that lagoon?* [Interruptions.]

Ms. Ayittey [NDC]: Madam Speaker, I reserve my comments — [Interruptions.]

Example 18 relates to Ms Ayittey’s willingness to eat fish from the lagoon under reference. The question is both illocutionarily a challenge and an accusation. Mr Afful questions the Minister’s decision not to ban fishing in the polluted lagoon and raises doubts about the Minister’s genuineness/sincerity. Mr Afful implies that the Minister is being inconsiderate to the general public: if the Minister agrees that the lagoon has been polluted, then it is sensible that fishing in the lagoon is banned. To put the Minister on the spot, Mr Afful asks about her readiness to eat fish from the lagoon. Mr Afful imputes irresponsibility on the part of the

Minister. Notice that the question is in two parts: [Qi] is the main question and [Qii] a follow-up which comes as a result of the Minister evading [Qi]. Ms Ayithey evades the surface meaning of the question and responds to the inverted meaning of challenge and accusation by stating that they ‘will still not consider banning it’ because they ‘will intensify public education’. However, thinking that his question has not been answered, Mr Afful, dropping the telling part, changes the question to a more coercive form: ‘**Is she willing to eat fish from that lagoon?**’ Even though question [Qi] raises mistrust about the Minister, its illocutionary force is mitigated by the interrogative structure, which is that the relational process of ‘willingness’ is embedded in a ‘verbal process’ of ‘telling’. The verbal process of ‘telling’ allows the Minister to give some explanation to what she has said earlier. But question [Qii] is direct and, therefore, illocutionarily more coercive; it directly puts the Minister on the spot. Realising the embarrassment in the question, she decides not to comment anymore. The question succeeds in exposing the contradictions in the Minister’s position not to ban fishing in the lagoon. This supports Harris’ (1991: 93) statement that ‘[e]vasiveness is most likely to emerge in response to questions which expose contradictions in a position’.

MPs use idea-targeted questions to ask about specific practices and actions of the (Prime) Ministers, governments or Ministries. Such interrogatives use noun phrases such as: ‘it’ (see Figure 19, lines 4-6; Figure 20, lines 6 and 7), ‘that’ (Figure 19, lines 2 and 3), ‘this’ (Figure 20, lines 2-4), ‘the idea’ (Figure 20, line 5), etc. as requested carriers.

N	Concordance
1	Alhassan Company Limited on the 30th of June 2005. Is the sum involved £3.4 million or €3.4 billion? Dr.
2	: On behalf of the Committee. Mr Owusu-Agyemang: Is that the right thing to do? Mr First Deputy Speaker:
3	forms part of this ongoing electrification project? Is that it? I need a “yes” or “no” answer. Alhaji
4	for anybody to do overpayment without overbilling? Is it possible? Mr Bagbin: Mr Speaker, definitely, it is
5	acquired. Madam Speaker, I want to know from him, is it a practice in the acquisition Col. 1830, 5 Jul 10 of
6	Minister how often a child would receive a uniform. Is it a one-time supply to an individual? Mr

Figure 19: Sample concordance lines of idea-targeted questions in GMQs

N	Concordance
1	uncertainty and high youth unemployment? Is youth unemployment a price worth paying? The
2	law and his party general secretary facing charges, is this what the Prime Minister meant when he
3	(Witney) (Con): Can the Prime Minister tell us, is this the Chancellor's last Budget? The Prime
4	for putting flamboyant labels on empty luggage." Is this Prime Minister's so-called bonfire of the
5	. But I asked the Prime Minister a specific question: is the idea of offenders in orange uniforms
6	May I ask the Prime Minister what his priority is? Is it to put bioethanol in a Range Rover's fuel tank
7	many parts of the country." So what is the policy? Is it a goer or not? Hon. Members: You are! The

Figure 20: Sample concordance lines of idea-targeted questions in UK PMQs

Idea-targeted questions, to some extent, depersonalise issues, as illustrated in Example 19. In this question, *is it a practice* shows a focus on the ‘practice’ of acquiring land by the Ghana Armed Forces. Even though Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu indicates some reservation about the *practice*, he does not target the personality of the Minister, Lt. Gen. Smith.

Example 19: GH 5 Jul 10/Col. 1829/30:

Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu [NPP]: [i] Madam Speaker, the parcels of land are acquired for use by the Ghana Armed Forces. In the second paragraph of the Hon Minister's Answer, he refers to sections within the Nkaakom village which have been acquired or which are being acquired. Madam Speaker, I want to know from him, [Q] *is it a practice in the acquisition of lands for use by the Ghana Armed Forces? Is it a practice that settlements, that is, villages are acquired?*

Lt. Gen. Smith (retd.) [NPP]: Madam Speaker, I think before the Ghana Armed Forces takes any steps to acquire a piece of land, we make sure that there are no settlements on the land. At the time we started the process to acquire the piece of land, there were no settlements in the area. As I said in my statement, there have been encroachers; so there has been encroachment since we started the process to acquire the piece of land.

The question seeks a confirmation from the Minister if indeed ‘settlements are ... acquired’ for use by the Ghana Armed Forces. Depersonalising the question reduces interactional confrontation and conflict. It does not necessarily mean that idea-targeted questions are always non-confrontational. To attack a policy or practice may entail or imply an attack on the person who instituted the policy or practice. Gibbons (2003: 112) acknowledges that the boundary between ‘person targeted’ and ‘idea targeted’ questions can be fuzzy. For instance, contextualization cues, ‘any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions’ (Gumperz 1982: 131) can make idea-targeted questions even more confrontational than person-targeted questions. Example 20 illustrates this.

Example 20: GH 14 Jul 05/Col. 1903/4:

Mr. Mahama [NDC]: [i] Mr. Speaker, I will just make a point. Mr. Speaker, Question time for Ministers is a very serious exercise and when we ask Questions in this House, we require detailed Answers... — [Interruption.] ... so that this House carries out its mandate to the people of this country. Mr. Speaker — [Interruption]. ... Mr. Speaker, this incident happened in 2002; we are in 2005. [Q] *Is it the case that three years after the incident, the advice of the Attorney-General has not yet been procured in order that action can be taken on this matter?*

Papa Owusu-Ankomah [NPP]: Mr. Speaker, I also with due diligence crave your indulgence to say that indeed as Ministers, we take this House extremely serious and certainly, for me who has occupied the Majority Leader's seat, I take this House seriously; and we endeavour to do our best. Unfortunately, we cannot anticipate all details and because we seek to be fair and candid with this House, we try as much as possible to be sure of our Answers.

Even though Mr Mahama's question focuses on the 'incident' that happened, the preface [i] to the question makes it abrasive. To say that 'Question time for Ministers is a very serious exercise' and, therefore, Ministers should give required details when demanded implies that the Minister, Papa Owusu-Ankomah, is not serious about Minister's questions. This raises a credibility issue, and, therefore, it is no wonder that Papa Owusu-Ankomah rebuts and defends Ministers, 'we take this House extremely serious[ly] ...' Example 21 from the UK data has a similar feature.

Example 21: UK 23 Apr 08/Col. 1307/8:

Mr. Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): [i] The first stage of the renewable transport fuel scheme came into operation last week. [Q] *May I ask the Prime Minister what his priority is? Is it to put bioethanol in a Range Rover's fuel tank or to put bread in an African's stomach?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: We had a seminar on food yesterday in Downing street, with all the different organisations that are involved, and I think there is a general recognition that the policy on bioethanol has got to be reviewed ... But there is also a determination that we do more to increase the supply of food in the world. ... That is why we discussed yesterday emergency measures that could both increase food supply in the short term and avoid famine ... in every country in the world...

This is an idea-targeted question. It concerns what the Prime Minister's 'priority is'. However, the co-text of the question makes it inferable that Mr Robert Goodwill thinks the Prime Minister has got his priorities wrong. Even though the question is primarily on 'bioethanol' and food security, it ironically questions the Prime Minister's credibility and commitment to fighting hunger in Africa. So, the question is also person-targeted – which,

in fact, has a stronger interactional effect than the idea-targeting. Note that, being an alternative question, the question employs grammatical parallelism for rhetorical emphasis. It gives two opposite points, one undesirable and the other desirable. Both points concern consumption, but while the former is an aspirational consumption, the latter is consumption for human survival. Mr Robert Goodwill controls the information to coerce (Gibbons 2003: 103) the Prime Minister to choose the desirable option, ‘to put bread in an African’s stomach’. By giving a choice between an undesirable and a desirable choice, Mr Robert Goodwill aligns himself with the desirable choice, thereby casting himself into a positive light. Consequently, the PM is forced to tell the House the measures he has taken to respond to food insecurity, while acknowledging that ‘the policy on bioethanol has got to be reviewed’. He attempts to debunk the idea that he has got his priorities wrong by stating the measures he has taken so far on food security. Mr Goodwill’s question reflects the fact that the UK government normally has foreign policies, something which hardly occurs in the Ghanaian Minister’s questions.

The foregoing indicates that *yes/no* interrogatives with relational processes question (Prime) Ministers’ attitudes and personalities towards their responsibilities by thrusting them into requested carrier positions in the clause. Those questions can normally be either person- or idea-targeted, which attempt to question, undermine or enhance the (Prime) Ministers’ attitudes towards their responsibilities. If a question raises doubts about a (Prime) Minister’s attitude to duty, it, conversely, promotes the attitude of the MP who asks the question. Relational process questions such as Gordon Banks’ call for recognition for the ‘Bevin Boys’ (Example 14) and Tim Loughton’s question of whether the Prime Minister cares about the ‘state of our children’ (Example 15) characterise parliamentary politics as relational politics, an engagement between the government and the governed. In other words, political leadership must relate with and be bothered about the needs of the people. This can also be seen in how verbal process interrogatives engage the (Prime) Ministers. While the relational process interrogatives describe (Prime) Ministers’ attributes, verbal process interrogatives request (Prime) Ministers to compliment, condemn, instruct and so on. The next section looks at *yes/no* interrogatives with verbal processes and their functions.

4.5 Yes/no interrogatives with verbal processes

While MPs use material process interrogatives to ask (Prime) Ministers questions about the performance of specific duties and responsibilities and use relational process interrogatives to question (Prime) Ministers' attitudes towards such duties and responsibilities, MPs use verbal process (process of saying) interrogatives to request/ask (Prime) Ministers to express such things as compliments (e.g. 'congratulate' – line 7, Figure 21) or condemnation (e.g. 'condemn' – line 6), and to encourage, instruct or urge (e.g. 'ask', 'tell' – lines 3, 8, 12) institutions and individuals to take certain specific actions. They are also used to request: commitment to a course (line 5); support (line 12); information (e.g. 'clarify', 'report', 'announce' – lines 9, 10, 14; 'explain', 'name' – lines 15, 16); 'promise' (line 13); assurance (line 20) or confirmation (line 21).

N	Concordance
1	on the back of 5.3 million of the poorest people in our country. Will he admit now that that Budget was a gross miscalculation
2	want partnership with Russia on Iran, Kosovo and other issues. Will he also talk frankly with his European partners, because it
3	122 aids were longer now than when he came into office. Will he ask his Cabinet colleagues who have English
4	: If the Prime Minister will not say sorry for the 10p tax fiasco, will he at least apologise or voting down the restoration of the
5	he thinks that that reflects the success of his policies, and will he commit to meet the all-party group to discuss long-term
6	incentive not to improve one's lot through one's own efforts. Will he condemn the Tory politicians who made those
7	last week was voted the best performing council in Britain? Will he congratulate Graeme Morrice and Alex Linkston, the
8	, in arrears or have been bankrupt to take out mortgages, will he please tell Birmingham city council, which is controlled
9	to British troops or mixed messages to anybody else. Will the Prime Minister clarify whether he would expect British
10	115 Dr. Palmer: Now that everyone has suddenly gone green, will the Prime Minister report on progress in achieving
11	about dilemmas". He has been neither. A simple question: will the Prime Minister say when he was told about the
12	will be connected, which makes alternative planning impossible. Will the Prime Minister tell BT to produce clear plans for the
13	with the job of ensuring that these claims are paid. Thirdly, will he promise to return to the House with a clear indication
14	holidays, many of whom would never go away on holiday. Will my right hon. Friend announce to the House today what my
15	Prime Minister's commitment to the Commission for Africa, can he explain why western diplomatic efforts appear to
16	"don't, in all cases, do a great deal of charitable work". Can the Prime Minister name any of these charities? The
17	television stationed above his bed would cost him £6 a day. Can the Prime Minister justify why it costs hospital
18	even an extra £25. Q6. [140254] Paul Rowen (Rochdale) (LD): Can the Prime Minister tell the House what evidence there
19] Mrs. Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): Can the Prime Minister say when a decision will be taken
20	that are not included in phase 1 are deteriorating rapidly. Can my right hon. Friend assure me and people in east
21	889 in yesterday's horrific attacks in Iraq and Pakistan? Can the Prime Minister confirm that police in Basra,

Figure 21: Sample concordance lines of verbal processes in UK PMQs

Table 17 below gives the range of various verbal process types and their speech act functions (in green). It indicates which groups of verbs perform which functions. For example, verbs numbered a) in the Ghanaian data functioned as requesting assurance, confirmation, information and advice, while those in the UK data functioned as compliments/praise/paying tribute in the contexts in which they were used. While verbal processes accounted for 35% of all the process types in the Ghanaian data, they accounted for 33% in the UK data, making verbal processes an important feature of both datasets. In the sections that follow, I discuss specific functions of *yes/no* interrogatives with verbal processes, such as MPs using them to: (i) indicate the power of the (Prime) Minister; (ii) establish rapport with the citizenry; (iii) seek (Prime) Ministers' confirmation, commitment and assurance; and (iv) ask (Prime) Ministers to provide (detailed) information.

Table 17: Verbal processes and their speech act functions in the (P)MQs

GMQs: Verbal processes (146; 35%)	UK PMQs: Verbal processes (314; 33%)	
<p>Will</p> <p>a) assure (1), give <i>assurance</i> (1), confirm to (1), admit (3), concede (2): <i>requesting assurance, confirmation; information, advice; admission</i></p> <p>b) tell (3), indicate (3), advise (1): <i>requesting information</i></p> <p>Would</p> <p>c) tell (6), respond (1), confirm (1): <i>requesting information</i></p> <p>Can</p> <p>d) tell (16), explain (1), give (3), ask (1), confirm (3), assure (1): <i>requesting (detailed) information, confirmation, assurance</i></p> <p>Could</p> <p>e) tell (8), explain, (2), inform (1), provide (1), clarify and confirm (1): <i>requesting (detailed) information</i></p> <p>May</p> <p>ask (10), enquire (1), quote (1), tell (1), crave (2): <i>requesting (detailed) information</i></p> <p>I want/would ... ask (17), <i>him/the Minister to</i> tell (21)</p> <p>Be</p> <p>saying (8), telling (7), calling (1), implying (2), suggesting (1), moving (1), talking about (2): <i>requesting confirmation; doubting</i></p>	<p>Will:</p> <p>a) congratulate (8), praise (1), welcome (4), acknowledge (1) commend (1); <i>join me in</i> –congratulating (9), praising (1), thanking (1), acknowledging (1), welcoming (7), paying <i>tribute</i> (1), extending <i>sympathy</i> (1): <i>requesting compliments/praise/tribute</i></p> <p>b) ask (1), encourage (5), instruct (2), press (1) condemn (4), put ... (3), intervene (1), try to persuade (1), urge (2), condemning (2), talk with (1), use ... (1), send <i>a message</i> (1): <i>requesting action; urging</i></p> <p>c) confirm (19), (re)assure (19), admit (3), reaffirm (1): <i>requesting confirmation, assurance, admission</i></p> <p>c) commit (11), promise (2), wish (2), give ... commitment (2), make (5), guarantee (2): <i>requesting promise/pledge</i></p> <p>d) tell (18), explain (9), clarify (1): <i>requesting confirmation, action, explanation/(detailed) information, name, challenging</i></p> <p>Would:</p> <p>e) <i>join me in</i> –congratulating (1), expressing (1); refer (1): <i>requesting compliments; expressing concern</i></p> <p>Be:</p> <p>telling (2): <i>requesting confirmation; challenging</i></p>	<p>Can:</p> <p>tell (28), explain (13), (re)assure (10), confirm (9), say (1), name (1), update (1), justify (1), ask (1): <i>(detailed) information, name; challenging</i></p> <p>Could:</p> <p>tell (3), explain (1): <i>requesting (detailed) explanation; challenging; criticising</i></p> <p>May (Performative functions):</p> <p>a) ask (18), urge (4), press (1), seek (3), invite (1), appeal (1), come <i>back to</i> (1), have (2): <i>requesting action, permission</i></p> <p>b) express (1), add (4), offer (1), join (4), associate (3): <i>expressing condolences, sympathies, paying tribute</i></p> <p>c) commend (2), congratulate (1), welcome (1): <i>complimenting</i></p> <p>d) thank (4), (start by) thanking (1), say (2): <i>thanking, expression of gratitude</i></p> <p>e) draw ... to (2), point out to (2), put <i>it</i> to (2), suggest (1), make <i>a suggestion</i> (1): <i>performatives; drawing attention to, alerting, suggesting, inviting</i></p> <p>n) take <i>time</i> (2): <i>requesting invitation</i></p>

4.5.1 Asking (Prime) Ministers to make statements and show their power

Parliamentarians (MPs) usually use interrogatives with verbal processes to request the (Prime) Ministers to make statements about certain situations. In asking such questions, the MPs clearly portray the power vested in the (Prime) Ministers. As noted earlier, (Prime) Ministers have status functions and deontic powers (Searle 2010: 8-9) in virtue of their (Prime) Ministerial positions. Thus, when MPs ask questions, they want the (Prime) Ministers to appear responsible, as the (Prime) Ministers are normally made the requested sayers of the actions expressed in the questions, as in lines 1 and 2 (Figure 22), where ‘the Hon. Minister’ is requested to ‘give assurance’ and ‘advise’ respectively. The Minister can give assurance and advice because he is collectively recognised as having the authority to take action. Thus, the MPs attempt to recognise that authority, but sometimes imputing some irresponsibility (if he/she is an opposition MP). In the GMQs, out of 84 instances of verbal processes involving *will/would*, *can/could* and *be*, ‘the (hon.) Minister’ was used 27 (40%) times, ‘he’/‘she’, 40 (59%) times and ‘they’ (referring to the government) once (1%) as requested sayers. In the UK PMQs, ‘the Prime Minister’ occurred 104 (47%) times; ‘he’, 80 (36%); ‘my right hon. Friend’, 33 (15%); ‘the Government’, once (0.5%); ‘we’, once (0.5%) and ‘I’, twice (1%) as requested sayers in 221 instances of verbal processes involving *will/would*, *can/could* and *be*. The use of the institutional title ‘the (hon) Minister’ (e.g. Figure 22, lines 1, 2, 5-8) or ‘the Prime Minister’ (e.g. Figure 23, lines 1-6) is a direct reminder of their institutional role and therefore thrusting them into the requested sayer/agent role reminds them of their responsibilities. A shift between the use of an institutional title, pronominal and governmental referencing is a way of separating and distinguishing personal responsibility from a governmental one (Wilson 1990: 63). ‘My right hon. Friend’ (e.g. Figure 13, line 9) is a solidarity title used for MPs who are Privy Counsellors, that is, official advisers to the sovereign in the UK (Royle 2013: 158). Its use may connote amity with the Prime Minister, as in line 9, Figure 23, where the call to join ‘in paying tribute’ indicates solidarity. ‘He’ in both datasets performs a cohesive function, used as an anaphoric reference when the institutional title has been used in the preface, even though it could also mean attribution of personal responsibility.

N	Concordance
1	the programme are still at home in Amansie Central District. Will the Hon Minister, as a matter of urgency, give assurance that
2	— and even trips to Winneba were ignored in the survey. Mr. Speaker, will the hon. Minister advise the MMT to continue this during market
3	that the hon. Minister has not provided the kind of details I expected, will he assure this House that on the other issues that he said he
4	Ministry, the Regional Co-ordinating Councils and so on and so forth. Will he tell this Honourable House what criteria were used in
5	is being pursued with all the vigour and seriousness it requires. Now, will the hon. Minister tell the House what concrete steps the Ministry
6	Resources, Works and Housing. Q415. Mrs Addo: Madam Speaker, will the Hon Minister tell us how much money under the World
7	on the average. And this is an intake for the last three years, 2007. Will the Hon Minister indicate to us what the level of intake is right
8	Speaker, maybe, two questions. Madam Col. 94, 2 Jun 09 Speaker, will the Hon Minister indicate to us whether or not there is a
9	have been supplied. The performance rate is about 20 per cent. Will he indicate to the House in clear terms, how this can be

Figure 22: Sample concordance lines of verbal processes with *will/would* in GMQs

N	Concordance
1	. With the schools budget rising from £35 billion to £39 billion in 2015, will the Prime Minister welcome the finance bid put forward by Prudhoe
2	figures today show that our long-term economic plan is working. Will the Prime Minister join me in congratulating the educational institutions
3	sector, before we can take such a step. Keith Vaz (Leicester East) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister join me in welcoming the visit of the Prime Minister
4	by about 20 per cent. Q3. [6081] Miss Anne McIntosh (Vale of York) (Con): Will the Prime Minister join me in extending our sympathy to those who
5	in future. Q8. [163663] Mr. David Evennett (Bexleyheath and Crayford) (Con): Will the Prime Minister join me in acknowledging the hard work of Bexley
6	greatly attended, and local Middleton people were able to pay their respects. Will the Prime Minister join me in commending the people of Middleton for
7	is working, and following the recent success of the Braintree youth jobs fair, will he join me in thanking Braintree district council, Jobcentre Plus and
8	independence, there are 1 million people of Indian origin in this country. Will he join me in praising their great contribution to this country and their
9	memorial day—the anniversary of the day on which Auschwitz was liberated. Will my right hon. Friend join me in paying tribute to the Holocaust Education
10	if changes are necessary, we will make them. Mr. Patrick Hall (Bedford) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister congratulate the Bedfordshire and Luton road casualty
11	question put by the right hon. Member for Manchester, Gorton (Mr. Kaufman), will the Prime Minister acknowledge that, now that one former Prime

N	Concordance
1	East) (Con): In recognising British success at the Oscars, would the Prime Minister join me in congratulating Bournemouth
2	party was in office. Mr. John MacDougall (Central Fife) (Lab): Would my right hon. Friend join me in expressing concern about

Figure 23: Sample concordance lines of verbal processes with *will/would* in UK PMQs

The attribution of agency in these contexts constitutes either ‘an act of praise and positive recognition of authority or an act of condemnation’ (Duranti 1995: 129) of perceived wrongdoings of (Prime) Ministers, depending on whether the question comes from a government or an opposition MP. The ‘attribution of agency ... clearly places them [(Prime) Ministers] in a position of power and authority’ (Rodgers 2011: 111). The question becomes a means of calling (Prime) Ministers (or the government) to account for their stewardship. Let us consider Examples 22 and 23 in Table 18 for a more detailed examination.

While in Example 22, ‘the hon. Minister’ is the ‘Requested Sayer’ and agent of the verbal process of advising, ‘the Prime Minister’ is the ‘Requested Sayer’ and agent of the verbal process of congratulating in Example 23. The receivers of these processes are ‘the

MMT’ and ‘the First Minister’ respectively. The ‘Verbiage’ refers to the content of what is said (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 255). By thrusting the (Prime) Minister into a requested sayer position, he/she is being requested to perform a duty relating to his position as a (Prime) Minister; it recognises the power of the (Prime) Minister to perform specific responsibilities (Duranti 1995: 126).

Table 18: Participants in verbal process clause

Preface	Operator	Requested Sayer	Verbal process	Verbiage
<p>Example 22: GH 9 Jun 06/Col.768/769</p> <p>Mr. Hackman [NPP]: [i] Mr. Speaker, the hon. Minister’s response indicated that major market centres of the Gomoa people were ignored in the survey — especially Mankesim, Kasoa — and even trips to Winneba were ignored in the survey. Mr. Speaker,</p>	[Q] will	the hon. Minister	advise	the MMT to continue this during market days since market days prove to be very much patronized?
<p>Dr. Anane [NPP]: Mr. Speaker, I have taken note of my hon. Colleague’s submission and we will convey it to the MMT.</p>				
<p>Example 23: UK 20 Jun 07/Col 1375</p> <p>Angus Robertson (Moray) (SNP): [i] Since taking office, there has been more investment in schools, local health services have been protected and young families have benefited from more free nursery care—all provided by the new Scottish National party Government.</p>	[Q] will	the Prime Minister	congratulate	the First Minister on those excellent developments?
<p>The Prime Minister [Lab]: I think that I prefer to say that investment on any scale can be made only because my right hon. Friend the Chancellor has run the most effective economy in this country for 30 years or more. We are able to invest in health and education because of the sensible policies of this Labour Chancellor, not because of the SNP’s economic policies.</p>				

In Example 22, Mr Hackman urges the hon. Minister, Dr Anane, to ‘advise the MMT [a transport company] to continue this [plying the routes in the area] during market days’. It is an indirect request for Dr Anane to do so, as the question follows a conventionalised indirect request pattern of: *will+(the PM/he/my right hon. Friend)+VERB* (Culpeper and Archer 2008: 66-70). Culpeper and Archer have established that the conventionalised indirect request form is: *will/would + a requested subject + a main verb* followed by what is

requested. The function of Example 22 as a request becomes more prominent as a result of the preface and the background to the question. The Metro Mass Transit (MMT) had done ‘a route survey and test runs of some towns and villages in Goma West’, Mr Hackman’s constituency, to see how feasible it was for buses to run in those areas. But the survey and test runs had ignored, in Mr Hackman’s words, ‘major market centres of the Gomoa people’, ‘especially Mankesim, Kasoa – and even trips to Winneba’. Having ignored those places presupposes that the buses may not ply those areas any-more. The preface to Mr Hackman’s question implies that the survey and test runs should have included those major market centres. Mr Hackman, therefore, thinks that the MMT should be advised to ‘continue’ to ply those routes ‘during market days since market days prove to be very much patronized’. Such a request recognises the institutional duty and power of the Minister. Mr Hackman’s use of ‘the Gomoa people’ shows his emotional attachment to the concerns of his constituents. The problem stated in the preface makes it imperative for Dr Anane to advise the MMT to continue plying the routes in question during market days. Consequent on the preface establishing a problem, Dr Anane could not deny Mr Hackman’s intent, as the preface legitimises the question. Legitimising the question by reconstructing a world of events is a tactful way of controlling information and ensuring compliance from the Minister to answer the question. Having oversight responsibilities over the operations of the civil service, government departments and agencies, such as the MMT, in his Ministry, if the Minister fails to respond to the question in an appropriate way, he may be seen as being insensitive to the plight of the people in the area. Question Time offers (Prime) Ministers an opportunity to show how considerate they are towards the citizenry. Given the preface and the context of the question, it will be impertinent for the Minister to answer the question with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. While Example 22 demands a verbal action that is required later and outside the house, Example 23 demands an immediate verbal action in the House.

Example 23 urges the PM to compliment the First Minister. It is an indirect directive (request) to congratulate the First Minister, because the subject, the PM, is the same as the addressee and the interrogative contains the modal ‘will’, while the action (to congratulate) is possible at the time of the question (Coulthard 1985: 130-133). From Searle’s (1969: 66; 1975: 71) perspective it is a request because:

- i. it satisfies the *preparatory condition* – the PM is able to congratulate the First Minister;
- ii. the *sincerity condition* is satisfied – Angus Robertson wants the PM to do so;
- iii. the *essential condition* is also satisfied – the question counts as an attempt to get the PM to congratulate the First Minister, since it has positive political implications for Mr Robertson’s Scottish National Party (SNP).

Requesting compliments is not only to acknowledge the SNP for their ‘excellent developments’ for political credibility and points (Bull and Mayer 1993: 659), but also to recognise the power and position of the PM as a leader and chief executive of the UK. As head of government, the Prime Minister oversees the operations of all civil services and government agencies in the UK. If the PM expresses appreciation for the SNP’s ‘investments in schools, [and] local health services’, it would boost the credibility of the SNP, which would eventually give them a strong sense of being responsible governors of Scotland. Angus Robertson’s request for compliments for the SNP also implies a snub or lack of compliment for the Prime Minister. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Prime Minister gives the credit to his own side, that is, his ‘right hon. Friend the Chancellor [who] has run the most effective economy in this country for 30 years or more’. There is some political manoeuvring between Angus Robertson and the PM. Angus Robertson tries to boost the status of the SNP as the minority governing party in the Scottish parliament, while asking a question in the Westminster parliament. He is shot down with an English retort, to put it one way, but more neutrally he is reminded that even though there is devolution of power, the Chancellor in Westminster holds the purse strings and, therefore, he deserves the credit. This political manoeuvring between Angus Robertson and PM Tony Blair compares with Marris’s (2001: 282) view that the rhetoric of rational argument involves, among others:

- iv. a formulation of the issue designed to gather the most favourable attention;
- v. an appeal to evidence that is claimed to be true, comprehensive and a matter of public record;
- vi. analogies with other, comparable situations which confirm or dramatize the argument;
- vii. rebuttal of any evidence which appears to be contradictory.

In his question, Angus Robertson requests a ‘favourable’ recognition from the Prime Minister to the SNP, based on the amount of investment made in schools, local health services and

benefits for young families, investment which must be ‘a matter of public record’. However, Tony Blair rebuts and snubs Angus Robertson’s claims by counter-claiming that those levels of investments have been the result of his Chancellor’s ‘sensible policies’. Tony Blair’s indirect comparison of his Chancellor’s performance with others as ‘the most effective ... in this country for 30 years or more’ somehow exaggerates (if not ‘dramatize[s]’) the Chancellor’s (and, by extension, the government’s) performance. Perhaps, Blair’s rebuttal and rejection of Angus Robertson’s claim is expected, given that the SNP is an opposition party in the Westminster parliament. However, asking the question and getting a rejection still succeeds in getting the point across to the Scottish audience, that is, the idea that the SNP is a credible and responsible party. And Blair’s snub of the SNP leader is also fuel for the SNP’s goal: independence, as Westminster does not appear to care about Scotland. Both the request by Angus Robertson and Tony Blair’s response demonstrate Blair’s power and authority as a Prime Minister. When MPs urge (Prime) Ministers to compliment institutions and individuals or advise them to perform a duty, MPs gain publicity for themselves, as we observe in the next section.

4.5.2 Standing with the people: how MPs establish rapport with the citizenry

As noted above, through verbal processes, MPs push the (Prime) Minister to impress upon social institutions to perform specific activities. MPs also request compliments from the (Prime) Ministers to institutions, individuals and groups. When MPs push (Prime) Ministers to act that way, they are trying to establish rapport and goodwill from such institutions, groups and individuals. Indeed, such acknowledgement indicates commitment to the welfare and wellbeing of such bodies (as in Example 24). About 116 (37%) of all 314 verbal processes involving *will/would*, *can/could* and *may* in the UK PMQs requested compliments from Prime Ministers. Establishing rapport is an important political strategy which creates a solicitous image for the MPs, which points to the fact that MPs perform not only ‘public roles’ but also ‘private roles’ (Ilie 2010c: 2). Such questions are mostly concerned with politically neutral, ‘non-partisan matters’ (Harris 2001: 458) that call for the attention of all political actors, such as paying tribute to the armed forces personnel, especially those who die in battle, and expressing condolences and sympathies to their families. These are usually

sensitive matters and, therefore, even when they come from opposition MPs, the Prime Ministers enthusiastically accept the requests. This is why, even though Example 24 comes from a Labour MP, a Conservative Prime Minister willingly accepts and commends the people of Middleton for their support and solidarity for the family of Lee Rigby.

Example 24: UK 5 Jun 2013/Col 1518:

Jim Dobbin (Heywood and Middleton) (Lab/Co-op): The family of Drummer Lee Rigby live on the Langley estate in my constituency. I visited the parents last week, and they were very appreciative of everything that has been said in support of the family, particularly by the local estate residents. A memorial service was held in the town centre. It was greatly attended, and local Middleton people were able to pay their respects. *Will the Prime Minister join me in commending the people of Middleton for their very strong but sensitive support for the family during this very sad time?*

The Prime Minister [Con]: I certainly join the hon. Gentleman in what he says about the people of Middleton and the great respect, support and solidarity they have shown for the family of Lee Rigby...

On 22nd May, 2013, an off-duty British soldier, Lee Rigby, was attacked and killed by Michael Adebolajo and Michael Adebowale near the Royal Artillery Barracks in Woolwich, Southeast London (BBC 2013). The two claimed that they had avenged the killing of Muslims by British soldiers around the world. The killing attracted a wide and high-level condemnation as well as solidarity for his family. In the question above, Jim Dobbin invites the PM to commend the people of Middleton over their support for Lee Rigby's family, which the PM exactly does. For the PM to endorse such engagements among the people of Middleton is to encourage not only the people of Middleton, but also the people of the United Kingdom to attend to each other in moments of grief and need. Being 'the principal government figure in the House of Commons', the head of the UK government overseeing 'the operations of the Civil Service and government agencies' and departments, and appointing members of government (Royle 2013: 5), when the Prime Minister compliments or condemns in such contexts, it is assumed that it is both a governmental and parliamentary institutional position and shows the support and care the government and the House have for the citizenry. In a sense, the MP's call for compliments to be made also creates a considerate image for himself, while urging the whole nation to stand by Rigby's family. Establishing rapport with the citizenry is supported by the fact that 'people' is a keyword in the UK PMQs. It is the 19th among the first 500 (i.e. 5%) keywords in the data. It occurs 0.46/1000 words as

against the BNC's 0.12/1000 words. However, 'people' does not appear within the first 500 (5%) keywords in the GMQs. This may imply that, as far as questions are concerned, UK MPs show more people-focusing than their Ghanaian counterparts during question time, showing some difference between the UK and Ghanaian MPs in terms of political representation. The UK MPs appear to be more conscious about the needs of their people than their Ghanaian counterparts. 'People' references are discussed in Chapter 6.

Establishing rapport becomes more distinct with *may*-operator interrogatives, especially in the UK PMQs, which function as: requesting/pressing for action, requesting permission; expressing condolences/sympathies or paying tributes; complimenting; thanking or expressing gratitude; drawing attention to or suggesting an issue, and inviting (see Table 17). For example, Figure 24 shows that *May I* collocates with 'add my sympathies ...' (line 1), 'commend ...' (line 3), 'congratulate ...' (line 4), 'join ... in expressing' (line 6) and 'thank ...' (lines 12-13).

N	Concordance
1	Q2. [163657] Clive Efford (Eltham) (Lab): May I add my sympathies to those of my right hon. Friend
2	came into operation last week. 23 Apr 2008 : Column 1308 May I ask the Prime Minister what his priority is? Is it to
3	too. Mr Bernard Jenkin (Harwich and North Essex) (Con): May I commend my right hon. Friend's strong,
4	part of that reform. Dan Byles (North Warwickshire) (Con): May I congratulate the Prime Minister on what appears to
5	at the time. Q9. [77012] Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) (Lab): May I draw my right hon. Friend's attention to the fact that
6	future. Mr. Michael Howard (Folkestone and Hythe) (Con): May I first join the Prime Minister in expressing the
7	2009 : Column 1100 q.20 Mr. David Cameron (Witney) (Con): May I join the Prime Minister and everyone in this House
8	is lucky. Q5. [902837] Mark Menzies (Fylde) (Con): May I put on the record my thanks to the Prime Minister
9	has benefited four out of five households in this country. May I say to him that I am pleased that we are going to
10	will report before the Report stage of the Finance Bill. May I seek the Prime Minister's co-operation in seriously
11	Nov 2008 : Column 226 Mr. David Cameron (Witney) (Con): May I start by thanking the Prime Minister for agreeing to
12	funding and policy, is going to rise next year. Mr Allen: May I thank the Prime Minister and the leaders of all
13	stop charitable air ambulances having to pay VAT on fuel. May I thank the Prime Minister for his actions in the 2014
14	class in Stafford that was led by the Stroke Association, may I urge him to make sure that our health and social

Figure 24: Sample concordance lines showing 'May I' in UK PMQs

Significantly, 51 (84%) of the 67 *may*-operator interrogatives in the PMQs appeared in multipart questions and served as rhetorical questions (or preparatory conditions) towards asking more substantive questions, as in Example 25:

Example 25: 2 Dec 09/Col 1100:

Mr. David Cameron (Witney) (Con): [Qi] *May I join the Prime Minister and everyone in this House in paying tribute to Acting Sergeant John Amer, who died this week in Afghanistan?* [i] He gave his life to protect our country. We should honour

his memory. We should care for his family. Before I go on to other subjects, [Qii] *may I ask a couple of questions about Afghanistan?* [ii] Following President Obama's very welcome speech last night, the British people will want to know what the US surge means for British forces. I think we all accept that one of the problems has been that British troops have been spread too thinly over too much ground. [Qiii] *Will the US reinforcement mean that we will be able to have more of our forces concentrated in fewer places, so that they can protect the population more effectively and turn the tide against the Taliban?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: First, I think that the whole House will welcome the announcement by President Obama both of the objectives of the mission in relation to the Taliban and to al-Qaeda, and of the numbers of troops, a substantial part of whom will go into Helmand province and will be of assistance in dealing with the Taliban insurgency there...

Example 25 is a multipart question with three (3) sub-questions. [Qi] and [Qii] are *may*-operator interrogatives. [Qi] is a rhetorical question that engages the audience and does some group affiliation while showing respect for the soldier and his family. [Qii] is a rhetorical request for permission to 'ask a couple of questions', permission which is granted by virtue of the nature of the interaction. Once the Speaker of Parliament has given an MP the opportunity to ask a question, the MP does not need any further permission from the PM to ask the question. So, requesting permission before asking the question underpins politeness. Having already paid a tribute to the soldier, the change of topic from paying tribute to asking a question is signalled by the introduction of [Qii], which does not require any response from the PM. In other words, [Qii] serves as a transitional element from paying the tribute to asking a substantive question, in this case [Qiii].

The power and authority of the PM, and establishing rapport, is not only recognised by way of requesting him to congratulate, but also to condemn. MPs sometimes push the PM to condemn what they see as detrimental to the course of good governance. Consider Example 26.

Example 26: UK 14 Jun 06/Col. 768:

Miss Anne Begg (Aberdeen, South) (Lab): If my right hon. Friend is serious in his desire to reform public services, it is crucial that the Government value public sector workers and continue to work with the trade unions in effecting change. *Will he condemn the shoddy way in which some Liberal Democrat and Tory councils have treated their work force recently and reject the Tory argument that public sector pensions are unfair?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: It is important to recognise that for all the difficulties in carrying through a tough process of public service reform, we have—as my hon. Friend rightly implies—employed some 80,000 extra nurses in the national health service, and about 250,000 more staff in total. Incidentally, they are not bureaucrats but front-line staff engaged in delivering good care. It is also true that we are paying our nurses, consultants and GPs a lot more. I personally think that that is a good idea and that they are worth it. In return for that, of course, we want to see the necessary changes made. My hon. Friend is right that it is the mixture of investment and reform that is at the heart of the issue, and it appears that the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives oppose both.

Miss Anne Begg requests PM Tony Blair to condemn what she thinks is an unacceptable ‘shoddy’ manner in which Liberal Democrats and Tory councils have treated their workforce. By this request, Miss Begg associates herself with the workforce. She also requests the PM to ‘reject’ the arguments of the Tories against public sector pensions. Miss Begg thinks that the actions and arguments of the Liberal Democrats and the Tories are detrimental to the value, growth and progress of public services. Notice that the question comes from a government MP, whose objective is two-fold: offering the PM an opportunity to attack the opposition and praise the government’s public sector reforms. Miss Begg does what has been called self-legitimation and other-de-legitimation or positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation (Rasiah 2010: 678; van Dijk 1998: 260). The PM tactfully enumerates and touts his achievements in the National Health Service (‘80,000 extra nurses employed’ and ‘250,000 more staff’) as a result of the public service reforms. Even though Tony Blair recognises Miss Begg’s request for him to ‘condemn’ the opposition (e.g. ‘My hon. Friend ‘rightly implies’/‘is right’), he appears a bit hesitant and mild in doing so. His response (‘it appears that the Liberal Democrats and the Conservatives oppose both’) could be described as neutral. The use of ‘appears’ hedges the force of the propositional content of the statement. The neutrality is reinforced by his use of ‘oppose’; after all, as their name implies, in arguments, it is the duty of the opposition to oppose (Rogers and Walter 2006: 13). Blair’s response could be described as only expressing disapproval and dissatisfaction with the opposition – a less confrontational approach, as compared with the import of the question, to ‘condemn’. Figure 25 shows other requests for condemnation.

N	Concordance
1	in Northern Ireland recently. Will the Prime Minister join me in condemning that terrorist activity? As well as supporting the police
2	, so why the deafening silence from the Opposition? Why not a condemnation of that appalling behaviour? Mr David Blunkett
3	is not the British National party and racism, which he has always condemned, but the 4,500 empty houses there. Later this month,
4	. Patrick Hall: Does my right hon. Friend agree that while we rightly condemn some young people for antisocial behaviour, we should
5	. We remember what Labour's Budgets did. Will he stand up and condemn Labour's candidate for Mayor of London who will not pay
6	continue to work with the trade unions in effecting change. Will he condemn the shoddy way in which some Liberal Democrat and Tory
7	justification? Does he further agree that these actions deserve to be condemned unreservedly across the international community? The
8	East) (Lab): Is there a good reason why the Prime Minister will not condemn the tax affairs of Tory-supporting Gary Barlow as morally
9	(Con): I hope that the Prime Minister and the House will join me in condemning the violence that we 16 Jun 2004 : Column 773 have
10	given the opportunity to turn themselves around. Will he join me in condemning Leicestershire county council, which is making the
11	incentive not to improve one's lot through one's own efforts. Will he condemn the Tory politicians who made those comments? The

Figure 25: Sample concordance lines showing request for PMs to condemn in UK PMQs

For example, the Prime Minister is asked to condemn ‘that terrorist activity’ (line 1), the ‘appalling behaviour’ of the opposition (line 2), ‘Leicestershire county council’ (line 10), ‘the Tory politicians who made those comments’ (line 11).

While both government and opposition MPs appear similar in their attempt to establish rapport with the people, they differ in terms of asking *positively-negatively* established questions, which creates an *us* and *them* situation. This is the focus of the next section.

4.5.3 *Us* and *them*, and *positively-negatively* established questions

The creation of an *us* and *them* focus reflects the nature of parliamentary discourse as being between two opposing groups who share ideological differences. Often, the *will/would-*, *can/could-* and *be-*operator interrogatives with verbal processes ask (Prime) Ministers to confirm either a positive/negative situation or an opinion, express commitment to a situation, give assurance or promise to take specific courses of action, with verbs such as: *confirm*, *assure*, *commit* and *promise* (see Table 17). For instance, Example 27 asks the Prime Minister to ‘confirm’ the government’s manifesto ‘commitment’ to ‘a publicly owned Royal Mail’ and the Prime Minister does confirm.

Example 27: UK 22 Jun 05/Col 799:

Mr. John Grogan (Selby) (Lab): [i] Given the importance of manifesto promises, [Q] *will the Prime Minister confirm that our manifesto commitment to a publicly owned Royal Mail fully restored to health means that 100 per cent. of the shares will continue to be owned by Her Majesty's Government?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I can confirm to my hon. Friend absolutely that our manifesto sets out our policy. We have given the Royal Mail greater commercial freedom and have no plans whatever to privatise it.

Asking the Prime Minister to confirm his commitment to the manifesto promise means asking him to give assurance and ensure that he does what he promised to do. Coming from a government MP, the question is an attempt to let the Prime Minister tell the citizenry that he is devoted to his promises, thereby promoting his credibility as a Prime Minister for political points. While government MPs usually push (Prime) Ministers to express positive views about their governments, opposition MPs express and push (Prime) Ministers to admit to negative issues and situations. This is what Wilson (1990: 167) calls ‘*negatively established* (questions of blame and negative responsibility), and *positively established* (questions of praise and positive responsibility)’. It creates an *us* and *them* situation (van Dijk 2011a: 396), ‘ingroup’ and ‘outgroup’ bias (Mullen and Brown 1992: 103), a ‘differential attribution of uniquely human emotions to ingroups and outgroups’ (Leyens, Rodriguez-Perez, Rodriguez-Torres, Gaunt, Paladino, Vaes and Demoulin 2001: 395; 2000: 186). It implies that people who are concerned with their own group would normally ‘attribute different essences to different groups’ to make their essence appear ‘superior to the essence of other groups’ (Leyens, Paladino, Rodriguez-Torres, Vaes, Demoulin, Rodriguez-Perez and Gaunt 2000: 186). It also compares with Jakaza’s (2013: 246-247) observation that Zimbabwean ‘parliamentary debates are in most cases dichotomised either across party lines ... [and that] [p]articipants in these debates employed judgement values to either positively or negatively judge the other’, as observed in Example 28, which is an opposition MP’s question.

Example 28: UK 2 Dec 09/Col. 1101:

Mr. Cameron [Con, Opposition Leader]: [i] ... Let me turn to the economy. [Q] *Will the Prime Minister confirm that figures last week show this Britain is the last country not just in the G7 but in the entire G20 to move out of recession?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: No, they do not confirm that. Spain is a member of the G20 now and it is in recession. Six European countries that are part of the European Union or part of the continent are in recession. I have to say to the right hon. Gentleman that the purpose of asking this question must be that he either has policy that he wishes to put forward so that we can do better, or he is simply talking down Britain.

Mr Cameron's question seeks PM Gordon Brown's confirmation of his (Cameron's) opinion that 'Britain is the last country not just in the G7 but in the entire G20 to move out of recession'. By asking this question, Mr Cameron is imputing failure and suggesting irresponsibility on the part of Gordon Brown. Since this questions his responsibility and credibility, Brown denies and rebuts Cameron's claims and counter-accuses him of bad faith in asking the question: '... the purpose of asking this question must be that he either has policy that he wishes to put forward ... or he is simply talking down Britain'. Brown analyses and 'attacks the question' by indicating that: (i) the 'question is factually inaccurate', as other countries are also in recession; and (ii) the 'question fails to tackle the important issue' (Bull and Mayer 1993: 657), that is, it fails to offer an alternative policy. In other words, Brown talks down the question as it seeks to portray Brown's policies as deficient; he critiques the relevance of the question in order to discredit it (Marris 2010: 282-83). Brown's interpretation of Cameron's question as 'talking down Britain' is an appeal to nationalism (Bull and Mayer 1993: 659) and portrays Cameron as lacking a sense of patriotism.

The use of *will/would* in making requests denotes certainty and willingness, whereas *can/could* involves ability (Gryzb 2011: 31). For example, in Examples 21 and 22 above, *will* marks certainty/likelihood and willingness of the PM to respectively confirm the 'manifesto commitment' and that figures show that Britain is the last in the G7 and the G20 to come out of recession. To ask for the PM's preparedness to express a commitment, an assurance or confirmation of a situation can have either positive or negative implications, depending on the purpose of the question and whether it is asked by a government or an opposition MP. For instance, Mr Grogan (Example 21) knows that the PM is ready or willing to confirm their manifesto commitment, while Mr Cameron (Example 22) knows that the PM will not confirm the assertion. Whereas the former depicts the PM as politically sincere by his willingness to express his commitment to his promise, Cameron attempts to expose him as insincere by his unwillingness to confirm Cameron's assertion.

On the other hand, '*Can*' in Examples 29 and 30 below refers to the (Prime) Minister's ability to give assurance. The use of *can/could*-operator interrogatives in such contexts confirms the dialogic nature of parliamentary interaction, as verbal processes account for 83% of the uses of *can/could* in GMQs and 76% in PMQs. In such instances, MPs normally recount situations in order to contextualise their questions. The use of

can/could in such contexts emphasises the strong feelings that MPs attach to their questions.

For example:

Example 29: GH 2 Jul 10/Col. 1790

Dr Akoto [NPP]: [i] Madam Speaker, I am glad the Hon Minister is accepting that the tender is weak due to old age. It is not actually weak, it is disabled due to old age. It has broken down, and I am hoping that the numbers he mentioned of expected fire tenders, hundred and seventy-five — that Nkawie would be given priority when these tenders arrive. [Q] *Can he assure us that priority would be given to Nkawie station when we receive the next batch of fire tenders?*

Mr Amidu [NDC]: Madam Speaker, the Ministry of the Interior and the GNFS would want to give every fire station a fire tender. What I can assure you is that, when the tenders are received, we will weigh the necessity for each area to have a fire tender and if Nkawie falls within it, I can assure you, Nkawie will be given a fire tender.

In Example 29, Dr Akoto recounts the condition of a fire tender in his constituency and thanks the Minister, Mr Amidu, for agreeing that the tender is not serviceable. The MP goes on to request assurance from the Minister that a fire tender will be given to Nkawie, a town in Dr Akoto's constituency. *Can he assure us...* indicates a possibility/ability for the Minister to give assurance, which is requested to be performed in the House. Coming immediately after establishing the situation of the fire tender, *Can he...* indicates Dr Akoto's strong feeling about the situation. The Minister gives assurance but on condition that Nkawie meets the necessary requirements, meaning the Minister is not able to give full assurance. The conditional statement 'if Nkawie falls within it [the criterion]' is a way of avoiding full commitment. He decides to err on the side of caution so that he cannot be held entirely accountable should he fail to give Nkawie a fire tender, since the request is for an immediate public assurance. Before his request for assurance, Dr Akoto expresses gratitude to the Minister for 'accepting that the tender is weak due to old age'. The expression of thanks mitigates the effect of discounting that the tender 'is not actually weak', [but] 'it is disabled due to old age. It has broken down'. This can also be considered as a politeness marker. Similarly, Example 30 reconstructs a housing problem and requests PM Tony Blair to give assurance that an early decision will be made to tackle the problem.

Example 30: UK 3 Mar 04/Col 895:

Mr. Peter Pike (Burnley) (Lab): [i] My right hon. Friend will know that the biggest single problem in Burnley is not the British National party and racism, which he has

always condemned, but the 4,500 empty houses there. Later this month, the results of the bid for the housing renewal pathfinder project—Elevate—will be announced. While we are waiting for that, a series of houses that are not included in phase 1 are deteriorating rapidly. [Q] *Can my right hon. Friend assure me and people in east Lancashire that we will get an early decision to enable us to tackle the problem quickly?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: My right hon. Friend the Deputy Prime Minister will make an announcement on that shortly. We have set aside a £500 million package for housing market renewal, which is a major issue in east Lancashire and in places such as my hon. Friend's constituency, and the obverse of some of the issues down in the south of the country. That is why we thought it so important to establish the pathfinder renewal fund.

Even though the question requests an assurance to be performed immediately, Tony Blair vaguely defers to a later date. '[S]hortly' is a 'vague, non-specific' term response, which is an evasive strategy (Rasiyah 2010: 673). Tony Blair responds by stating what has been and is being done to address the problem. It is noteworthy that, even though Mr Pike injects some emotions into his question (e.g. '4,500 empty houses', 'houses ... are deteriorating rapidly'), there is no disagreement and argument between Mr Pike and Tony Blair. This is attributable to the fact that Mr Pike is a government MP. Again, notice that, before he raises the housing problem, Mr Pike commends Tony Blair's condemnation of the British National Party and their racist orientation. Mr Pike adopts a bifocal approach of attacking or criticising the British National Party while praising Tony Blair. It is an attempt to lessen the effect that raising the housing problem may have on the Prime Minister and his administration – while raising a problem, he praises an aspect of the Prime Minister's policy, which, according to Murphy (2012c), is a politeness marker. In this sense, Mr Pike is not seen as criticising the Prime Minister. The data show that about 31% of government MPs' questions were confrontational towards the opposition. Let us examine also Example 31.

Example 31: UK 3 Feb 2010/Col 300:

Tony Lloyd (Manchester, Central) (Lab): [Qi] *Can the Prime Minister confirm that inheritance tax cuts of £200,000 for the richest 3,000 families could be achieved only at the expense of spending on schools and hospitals throughout the nation?* [i] If he rejects that policy, [Qii] *can he guarantee that there will be no Cameronian wobble on this side of the House?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: The one thing that the Conservatives have stuck to through this month of muddle and division is their policy on inheritance tax. Like their policy on hereditary peers, it will give the richest people in our society the

greatest amount of additional wealth. That could be at the expense of schools, it could be at the expense of the health service and it could also be at the expense of defence. I think people should know that the Conservative party's first priority, above all others, is to reduce inheritance tax for those who are perfectly able to take care of themselves. We are for the many, they are for the few.

In Example 31, Tony Lloyd adopts a two-pronged approach of supporting the Prime Minister, while condemning the opposition. He urges the Prime Minister to condemn the opposition by confirming his (Lloyd's) opinion *that inheritance tax cuts of £200,000 ... could be achieved only at the expense of spending on schools and hospitals*, a Conservative policy. He further pushes the PM to *guarantee there will be no Cameronian wobble*. Tony Blair condemns the opposition as demanded by the question. The MP and Tony Blair express their attitudes towards the opposition and their (opposition's) policy of 'inheritance tax cuts'. In this regard, the meaning and effect of an interrogative largely depends on who is asking it. This attests to the fact that the relationship between government MPs and Prime Ministers is usually more cordial than that which exists between opposition MPs and Prime Ministers, since usually opposition MPs ask image-discrediting questions, while government MPs ask image-enhancing questions. It largely confirms the claim that parliamentary questions are often planted.

In his BBC report, Parkinson (2014) quotes Conservative MP, Mr Douglas Carswell, as saying, 'Some [MPs] see it as their job to be cheerleaders for the front bench and to ask a planted question'. In *Inside the Commons – Lifting the Lid* (2015), part one of a four-part BBC documentary, Michael Cockerell reports that, before PMQs, 'party strategists from the government and opposition ... [plot] how to turn the day's PMQs to their advantage'. In the same documentary, Labour MP, Sara Champion (opposition MP), says that, before each PMQs, if Labour have specific questions that they want to ask, 'we have a team strategy meeting ... because we are trying to have an orchestrated sort of team approach to it ... [as] it is the only time to hold the Prime Minister accountable'. Conservative MP, Andrew Percy, admits that each week, government MPs are sent e-mails with 'some suggested topics that will be helpful that the Prime Minister will be happy to receive a question on'. This happens in the Ghanaian parliament also. An NDC MP in the Ghanaian parliament confirms that:

Sometimes before debates ... [the] Minority may gather their Minority side and the Majority may gather their Majority side before they enter the Chamber

or sometimes they will discuss that [for] this issue we are all going to take a common voice, whether it is bad or not.

(*Personal Interview*, 28 February 2014)

According to the MP, this Majority-Minority dissensus often reflects in the voting patterns of MPs in the House and it is only on a few occasions that MPs will vote according to their ‘own conscience’, as Whips (MPs selected by their parties to manage legislative business, organise and ensure discipline among their members) normally go round to urge their members to vote in particular directions. An NPP MP (*Personal Interview*, 26 February 2014) also confirms that MPs ‘assume ... overly partisan postures As we [MPs] speak to issues, we allow our partisan influence to override us and so we vote against our conscience’. He thinks that in order to improve parliamentary debates and questions, MPs need to ‘reduce the overbearing influence of party politics’. There is an indication that MPs often adopt and adapt to the group identity and toe the party line in order to belong, signalling the fact that there is a ‘partisan character of the Parliament of the 4th Republic’ of Ghana (CDD-Ghana 2008: 108). The Prime Minister, David Cameron, justifies the practice and thinks people ‘should not be too worried’ about planted questions in PMQs ‘because politics is about the team putting across a team message’ (*Inside the Commons- Lifting the Lid* 2015). All this shows that (Prime) Ministerial questions are habitually leading questions (questions that skew responses in a certain way) (Baxter, Boon and Marley 2006; Dodd and Bradshaw 1980; Loftus 1975) such as to ‘prefer’ a particular response/answer (Heritage 2002: 1430), a(n) response/answer which either emasculates or promotes the (Prime) Ministers’ credibility. It must, however, be noted that some MPs abhor the practice of planting questions. A Liberal Democrat MP, Charles Kennedy, describes it as ‘pathetic’ and wonders

how anybody wants to get elected to a parliament, to any representative body, but least of all to the House of Commons, and then just be handed a note ... written by somebody else and say read this: “Doesn’t the Prime Minister agree ...?” What is the point?

(Charles Kennedy, MP, *Inside the Commons – Party Games* 2015)

According to Michael Cockerell (*Inside the Commons – Party Games* 2015), some ‘independent-minded’ ‘Back-bench MPs are becoming increasingly rebellious as they confront the dark arts of the whips’, as for example, Conservative MP Peter Bone, who, since the 2010 general elections, ‘has voted against’ his own government ‘nearly a hundred and

fifty times'. Michael Cockerell states that these MPs, who are often called and considered by their own parties as 'the Awkward Squad', 'the Whips' nightmare', risk being denied 'promotion[s]'. The aforementioned shows that MPs are supposed to toe party lines, sound positive about and protect their own parties' interests or risk being denied party benefits. It is no wonder, therefore, that MPs do 'positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation' (van Dijk 2011a: 397).

We have pointed out from the foregoing that questions hardly expect *yes* or *no* responses. The (Prime) Ministers' responses are often lengthy and evasive. Wilson (1990: 131) has said that '[t]here is a common sense view of the political response to questions, and it is one which suggests that politicians are evasive attempting to avoid answering questions in a direct manner'. The data show that sometimes the questions demand narrative or explanatory responses, which lead to the lengthy and indirect responses. I have termed such questions as the 'tellex' ('tell'/'explain') group, which I discuss in the next section.

4.5.4 'Tellex' *yes/no* interrogatives and narrative responses

MPs' questions are often designed in such a way that they ask (Prime) Ministers to give narrative, explanatory responses or disclosure of information. The 'tellex' ('tell'/'explain') *yes/no* interrogatives are characterised by narrative-requesting verbs such as 'explain', 'tell' and 'clarify'. *The Oxford English Dictionary* (online) (2014) gives about seven (7) senses for the verb 'explain', of which the relevant ones are (emphasis mine):

- i. To unfold (a matter); to **give details of, enter into details** respecting (Sense 3a).
- ii. To **make plain or intelligible**; to **clear of obscurity or difficulty** (Sense 3b).
- iii. To assign a meaning to, **state the meaning or import of**; to interpret (Sense 4a).
- iv. To **make clear** the cause, origin, or reason of; to **account for** (Sense 5)
- v. To **make one's meaning clear and intelligible, speak plainly**. Also, to **give an account of one's intentions or motives** (Sense 6).

It also defines the verb 'tell' in about 25 senses, among which the relevant ones for our discussion are:

- i. To mention in order, **narrate**, relate. Make known, declare (Sense 1).
- ii. To **give and account or narrative of (facts, actions, or events)**; to narrate, relate (Sense 2a).
- iii. To **make known by speech** or writing; to **communicate (information, facts, ideas, news, etc.)**; to **state, announce, report, intimate** (Sense 3a).

- iv. To **declare, state formally or publicly**; to **announce, proclaim, publish** (Sense 3b).
- v. To **express in words** (thoughts, things known) (Sense 4c).
- vi. To **disclose or reveal** (something secret or private); to divulge (Sense 5a).

The highlighted parts of these definitions of ‘explain’ and ‘tell’ indicate that narratives are required. Particularly, the bold parts of senses 3b and 6 (‘explain’) and 3a, 3b and 5a (‘tell’) imply disclosure of hidden agenda, which is an important part of parliamentary discourse. Such questions are significant because ‘parliamentary dialogue contributes to revealing frames of mind and beliefs as well as exposing instances of doublespeak and incompatible or inconsistent lines of action’ (Ilie 2010a: 337) and it helps to ‘reveal hidden agendas and ideological, tactical, bias’ (Ilie 2010c: 1). These definitions denote that when ‘explain’ and ‘tell’ are used in framing questions, as found in the data, they demand descriptions as responses or answers. They are knowledge-seeking or -establishing questions (Hall 2008: 70-74) and, thus, require (Prime) Ministers to provide details of facts, actions and events. Let us consider Examples 32 and 33.

Example 32: GH 3 Jun 08/Col 259:

Ms. Akua Dansua [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, *can the hon. Deputy Minister tell this august House who the other members of the committee are?*

Dr. (Mrs) Ashitey [NPP]: Mr. Speaker, I do not have my list, but I know that Mr. Eleblu was the chairman of the committee.

Ms Dansua’s question is a request for information, which is designed to reveal the Deputy Minister’s bias in constituting the committee. The substantive question was about measures taken to implement recommendations of a special audit report on perceived malfeasances by the National Health Insurance Council. Some MPs had already raised doubts about the authenticity of the report and its recommendations. Therefore, Ms Dansua’s question about the members of the committee reinforces the doubts, since the authenticity of the report partly depends on the quality of the committee’s membership. For example, was the membership partisan such that it could have ignored issues that could damage the name of the government in the report? Thus, Dr (Mrs) Ashitey’s failure to provide the names of the other members of the committee is evasive, an attempt to avoid further debate about the legitimacy of the report. Consider also:

Example 33: UK 22 Mar 06/Col 282:

Mr. Angus MacNeil (Nah-Eileanan an Iar) (SNP): *Can the Prime Minister explain to the House why, even before the loan scandal and the Metropolitan police investigation, 80p in every pound of individual donations to the Labour party came from people who were subsequently ennobled by him?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I am proud, actually, that the Labour party has the support of successful business people and entrepreneurs. I am quite sure that that is not the case with the Scottish National party—for the very good reason that its policies would wreck the Scottish economy.

The expression ‘Can the Prime Minister explain ... why’ demands detailed information. The question is a directive and a challenge to PM Tony Blair to explain why he ennobled people who donated to the Labour party. The question is also a criticism, as it draws a comparison with ‘the loan scandal’, referring to the ‘loans for peerages’ scandal (Helm 2006: no pagination). Being a narrative- or information-requesting verb, ‘explain’ requires Tony Blair to make plain, clear obscurity or give details of his decision and action. It is an attempt to expose abuse of office by the Prime Minister by asking him to make ‘self-revealing declarations’ in order to embarrass and damage his image (Ilie 2015: 9). This is a parliamentary questioning strategy for political-point scoring. The demand for details is emphasised by ‘why’, an adverb of reason. The question imputes that Blair had had underhand dealings with ‘people who were subsequently ennobled by him’ – it suggests people had paid bribes to get knighthoods. A ‘Yes, I can explain’ or ‘No, I cannot explain’ response without a further explanation would appear rude, strange or demonstrate a lack of understanding of the importance of the question. It would also imply admitting to being paid bribes. Tony Blair, rather sarcastically, explains why and defends his association with ‘successful business people and entrepreneurs’ as a good one, thereby debunking the dishonesty implied by the question.

The ‘tellex’ *yes/no* interrogative types included the following forms.

- GH: Can ... **explain** ... why (1)
 Could ... **explain** what (1)
 Can ... **tell** ... what (3), when (2), which (1), who (1), that (1), whether (1),
 the (5), some of the (2)
 Will ... **tell** ... what (2), how (2)/
 Would ... **tell** ... what (2), which (1), when (1), zero-wh (2)
 May ... ask ... **to tell** ... the form of assistance which ... (1)

- UK: Can ... **explain** ... why (13)
 Could ... **explain** exactly what (1)
 Will ... **explain** ... why (7)/what (1)/that (1)
 Can ... **tell** ... why (5)/what (11)/how (3)/when (1)/whether (2)/of any (1), the number (1)
 Will ... **tell** ... why (1), what (4), whether (5), how (1), which (1), that (2) to-infinitive (2)

Out of all 146 verbal processes identified in the Ghanaian data (see Table 1), ‘tell’ occurred 62 (43%) times while ‘explain’ was three (2%). In the UK data, out of 314 verbal processes, ‘tell’ recorded 102 (33%) and ‘explain’, 23 (7%). Figures 26 and 27 below are sample concordance lines illustrating the use of the ‘tellex’ *yes/no* interrogatives.

N	Concordance
1	"the applicants went through physical body selection". Would he tell this House what he means by "physical
2	4 Feb 11 Q434. Prof. (Emeritus) Amoako: Madam Speaker, would the Hon Deputy Minister tell this House the cause
3	was very specific on certain roads in the township. Would the hon. Minister tell me the location of
4	448, 10 Jun 09 Q308. Mr. Maama Y. Aful: Madam Speaker, would the Hon Minister tell us what is the full cycle of
Concordance	
5	is crucial to the acquisition has not been acquired, can he explain why the Ghana Armed Forces have been
6	Speaker: Let us hear the question. Q375. Mr Hodgobey: Can the Hon Minister tell us, roughly, the estimates for
7	. Col 259, 3 June 08 Ms. Akua Dansua: Mr. Speaker, can the hon. Deputy Minister tell this august House who
8	District has all of a sudden disappeared from his radar? Can he tell us when it is going to benefit, because for
Concordance	
9	Minister what he means by "illegally inserted 192?" Could he explain exactly what that means? Lt. Gen.
10	, I am not the Minister. Madam Speaker, could the Hon Minister tell this House what the
11	which was not, because I have read the document. Could he please clarify and confirm to the hearing
12	who have undergone training under the UTDBE. Could he tell us the basis for sacking the 20,000

Figure 26: Sample concordance lines of ‘tellex’ questions in the GH MQs

In Figure 26, ‘would he **tell** this House **what** he means’ (line 1), ‘can the Hon Minister **tell** us, roughly, **the estimates** for’ (line 6) demand (detailed) pieces of information. However, the former requires a narrative, signalled by ‘**what** he means by ...’ while the latter requires specific information (‘the estimates’). ‘[C]larify’ (line 11) seeks explanation.

N	Concordance
1	arrears or have been bankrupt to take out mortgages, will he please tell Birmingham city council, which is
2	on the German presidency of the European Union, will the Prime Minister tell the House what discussions
3	of home-grown business talent that they can acquire. Will my right hon. Friend tell me what his new national
4	the Budget was to give a £40,000 tax cut to millionaires. Will he tell the House how much collectively, as a result
	Concordance
5	for identity cards will require a complex new IT system, can he tell the House of any major Government IT
6	propose to charge VAT on the Cornish pasty. Can he tell me why that is fair? The Prime Minister: I
7	in power of 16 Jun 2004 : Column 776 the nation state? Can he tell me what the Government intend to do to
8	in Public Life has been without a new chairman. Can the Prime Minister tell us why it has taken so long
	Concordance
9	of more than £2,000 million for 25 years or more. Will my right hon. Friend explain why local authorities
10	the fiancée, family and friends of Gordon Cousland. Will the Prime Minister explain to the House what, in
11	foreign-based media mogul-hear no evil; see no evil. Will the Prime Minister explain why? The Prime
12	for the Prime Minister's use at his headquarters, will he explain why he did not declare this in the
	Concordance
13	in A and E is higher than at any time for nine years. Can he explain to the country why A and E waiting
14	bankers' bonuses: let us try him on the bankers' tax. Can he explain to the British people why he thinks it
15	is the Human Fertilisation and Embryology Bill. Can the Prime Minister explain why votes on
16	that 2,800 people will go blind unnecessarily. Can the Prime Minister explain why the Secretary of

Figure 27: Sample concordance lines of 'tellex' questions in UK PMQs

In Figure 27, 'tell' (lines 1-8) is used to seek (detailed) information, similar to 'explain' (lines 9-16). Designed mostly to seek specific/detailed information, the 'tellex' questions are highly ideologically biased. They are mainly constructed to request information that reveals damaging secrets about the (Prime) Ministers. The 'tellex' questions reflect the adversarial and ideological nature of parliamentary discourse. Asking (Prime) Ministers to reveal secrets and biases is an attempt to discredit them and damage their political career, for the opponents' advantage, which is a political-point scoring mechanism.

The 'tellex' *yes/no* interrogatives can be considered at different levels: by form, they are *yes/no*; by function, wh-questions, and can also be considered as a hybrid, being a combination of a *yes/no* and a wh-question. Tkačuková (2010a; 2010b; see also Rasiah 2010: 668) calls them indirect wh-questions. We need to recognise an unspoken *yes/no* answer embedded in the responses. By giving the information (Example 33), the (Prime) Minister has agreed to give it, which is a silent response to the *yes/no* part of the question. Example 32 can be split into: '*can the hon. Deputy Minister tell this august House*' as a *yes/no* and '*who the other members of the committee are*' as a wh-interrogative. In this sense, there is always a silent response to the *yes/no* part of the question, if the (Prime) Minister does not evade the question. This is similar in structure to quoted questions, such as Example 34.

Example 34: UK 22 Mar 06/Col. 284:

Mr. David Heath (Somerton and Frome) (LD): Last week I asked the Prime Minister a perfectly straightforward question about long-term care of the elderly, and he gave me a totally inadequate reply about pensions. *So can I ask him again: why do elderly people in this country continue to have to sell their homes to pay for their care in old age, eight years after he said that he would leave the country if that was still the case?*

‘So can I ask him again’ is a *yes/no* interrogative that introduces the quoted question: ‘why do elderly people in this country...?’ ‘So can I ask him again’, a metadiscourse structure (Hyland 1998: 437), functions as request for permission to ask the question and shows the emphasis and urgency that Mr Heath attaches to the question. Of course he does not need permission from the PM to ask the question, and, therefore, it could be considered as marking politeness, similar to *May I...*, which we noted in Example 16[Qii].

Politeness marking indicates a significant contrast between how UK and Ghanaian MPs ask questions. The data show that while Ghanaian MPs signal politeness by linguistic form, using *would/could* over *will/can*, UK MPs appear to employ more indirect conventional forms of signalling politeness and, therefore, choose *will/can* over *would/could* (see Figures 26 and 27 and Table 7). Politeness is a cultural phenomenon (see Mills 2009) and ‘[r]presentation and communication of cultural meaning takes place through language’ (Baldwin, Longhurst, McCracken, Ogborn and Smith 1999: 60). It is by studying ‘the underlying socio-cultural factors’ that will ‘determine what constitutes polite behaviour’ (Watts 2005: 61). Remember that the UK MPs are native speakers of English while the Ghanaian MPs are English as a second language (ESL) speakers. Thus, the Ghanaian MPs’ use of *would/could* may have resulted from an accustomed consciousness that ‘the fixed rules for usage represented in grammars and dictionaries are accurate descriptions of a language’ (Mills 2009: 1056). Dzamashie (1997: 191-192) has stated that: ‘ESL teaching in Ghana seems to emphasize grammar at the expense of communicative competence’. The point I am making is that being native speakers of English, the UK MPs may have other culturally-oriented means of expressing politeness rather than purely linguistic forms. For instance, Culpeper (2013: 11-12) observes that the British have moved away from marking politeness by linguistic form to a more indirect form, stating that:

with regard to linguistic form we [the British] have moved away from direct requests to conventionally indirect requests. Given that indirectness has been

thought to be of particular value in doing politeness in British culture, it would seem to be the case that the British, far from becoming impolite, have become more polite.

According to Culpeper and Archer (2008: 66-70) the conventionally polite way of making requests among the British is: *will + subject + VERB*, which is an indirect form, as in Example 33: *Will + the Prime Minister + admit*. This means that it is not the word form that determines that the British are being polite or not, but it is how indirect (or direct) a request is. Watts (2003: 8) notes that (im)polite behaviour does not depend on linguistic expressions that one uses ‘but rather depends on the interpretation of that behaviour in the overall social interaction’. Based on this view, we can say that, while Ghanaian MPs are more likely to mark politeness by means of a word form, the British are likely to mark it by indirectness.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

This Chapter has examined *yes/no* interrogatives characterised by verbs denoting material, relational and verbal processes. In the interrogatives with material processes, MPs cast (Prime) Ministers as wilful initiators and executors of (Prime) Ministerial responsibilities. Through relational processes, MPs depict (Prime) Ministers as possessing certain attributes and values that bear on their positions and responsibilities. MPs use verbal processes to push (Prime) Ministers to make statements and express their views about their responsibilities, actions and attributes as well as to impress upon individuals, groups and institutions to perform specific activities, or compliment them. By thrusting (Prime) Ministers into the various agential positions, MPs portray the power of (Prime) Ministers and remind them of their duties for the execution of specific actions for the benefit of the citizenry thereby putting them under pressure to respond to the questions. By urging (Prime) Ministers to compliment social/political institutions and bodies, MPs try to establish rapport and goodwill from those individuals, groups and institutions. By their questions, MPs make themselves appear as responsible representatives of their constituents. Sometimes, interrogatives with verbal processes request (Prime) Ministers to confirm a situation, an opinion, or express commitment to a situation, give assurance, promise or take specific courses of action. The questions raise, for the benefit of the citizenry and electorate, issues about (Prime) Ministers’ credibility and commitment to duty. Whereas government MPs often urge (Prime) Ministers

to express positive views about their governments, opposition MPs express and push them to concede to negative issues and situations. This near polarity between government and opposition MPs' questions highlights claims that MPs' questions are usually planted. It questions the sincerity of MPs' questions, that is, whether they genuinely ask questions to push for action, promote constituency/sectoral interests, inform/question policy, and hold governments accountable (Proksch and Slapin 2010; Raunio 1996) for the benefit of the citizenry or for their own political interests. There is evidence to suggest that UK MPs are more people-focussing with their questions than the Ghanaian MPs. The analysis also indicates that UK MPs mark politeness by conventional indirect means, which reflects a British cultural practice. However, Ghanaian MPs appear to mark politeness by linguistic form as they choose *would/could* over *will/can* forms. MPs' questions are mostly ideologically biased, especially when they are 'tellex' questions, which are mainly designed to ask (Prime) Ministers to reveal hidden agenda. When (Prime) Ministers are asked to express a phenomenon, they are not just expressing what may be an objective fact, but also their thoughts of how things are or should be. Chapter 5 will explore *yes/no* interrogatives characterised by mental processes (and negative interrogatives) and how they function as expressions of opinions and assertions and force (Prime) Ministers to have particular thoughts.

5 Yes/no interrogatives as mind games, expressions of opinions and assertions

5.1 Introduction

This chapter explores how MPs use mental process *yes/no* interrogatives to compel Prime Ministers (in the UK parliament) and Ministers (in the Ghanaian parliament) to express their feelings and internal states. It looks at dependent/indirect *yes/no* interrogatives as the major difference between the UK and Ghanaian interrogative forms. The chapter also examines the use of negative *yes/no* interrogatives. The interrogatives are discussed in terms of their forms, speech act functions and interactional and political implications. Analyses of the (Prime) Minister's questions show high levels of MPs and (Prime) Ministers deploying 'defensive or offensive strategies to achieve stated or unstated goals' (McDermott and King 1988: 360). In Chapter 4, we saw that reminding (Prime) Ministers of their responsibility, portrayal of (Prime) Ministers' attitudes, personalities and the expression of their views were transacted through *yes/no* interrogatives with material, relational and verbal processes. In their questions, MPs often want the (Prime) Minister to *agree* to, *concede* to or *consider* extremely challenging matters of policy. These mental processes concern an 'understanding that people [as sensors] possess beliefs, thoughts and intentions that are part of their internal world, distinct from the world of observable behaviour and physical events' (Shatz, Wellman and Silber 1983: 301-2; see also Grazzani and Ornaghi 2012: 99). According to Searle (1969: 65) '[w]herever there is a psychological state specified in the sincerity condition' in the performance of speech acts, 'the performance of the act counts as an expression of that psychological state'. The converse is that when a speech act 'counts as an expression of a psychological state' insincerity is possible (Searle 1969: 65). Thus, mental verbs in (Prime) Minister's questions raise questions about the sincerity of MPs' questions. By posing questions which MPs ask PMs to externalise their internal states in parliament and to the public, MPs frame their questions as requests, but include in them assertions which they attribute to the (Prime) Minister as beliefs, thoughts, and intentions which they are coerced into accepting or rejecting, as for example: *does the Prime Minister agree that....? Does the hon. Minister not think that...?* How MPs achieve this is the subject of investigation in this

chapter. First I look at *yes/no* interrogatives that can be considered as finding out what is on (Prime) Ministers' minds and forcing them to have particular thoughts, followed by those that superficially act as a request but, more importantly, function as assertions.

5.2 Probing (Prime) Ministers' minds, forcing them to have particular thoughts

Members of Parliament (MPs) use interrogatives with verbs denoting mental processes to 'enter into' and ascertain what is on (Prime) Ministers' minds. Such questions attempt to convince or make (Prime) Ministers express their thoughts and inner feelings so as to reveal their 'frames of mind and beliefs' (Ilie 2010a: 337) about their political actions and responsibilities. Figures 28 and 29 show some of these verbs (mental processes) in context. For instance, in the Ghanaian context (Figure 28), we have 'will he further *agree* with me ...' (line 2), 'will he *consider* ... opening ...' (line 3), and 'would the Hon Minister *concede* ...' (line 5), 'does he *mean* ... (line 12), where 'he'/'the Hon Minister' are made requested sensers (see Table 19).

N	Concordance
1	North District fall? Or has it disappeared from the radar or will you want to come back to the House to answer the
2	me that these road accidents issue did not start today and will he further agree with me that if there were any
3	can do to solve the problem. Q160. Mr. Kwao: Mr. Speaker, will he consider , in the interim, opening something like a
Concordance	
4	those areas. Q319. Mr Ambrose P. Dery: Madam Speaker, would the Hon Minister agree with me that his Answers
5	with "negotiation". Would the Hon Minister agree, would the Hon Minister concede that the usage of the
6	not have been where we are today? I — [Interruptions.] Would he further agree with me that since the
7	he gave to this House was misleading. That is all. Would he concede because we are dealing with English?
8	he has provided here to the people of Ghana is wrong, would he agree ? Mr. Bagbin — rose — Madam Speaker:
9	, in view of this new information we have given her, would she agree that for us to achieve a comprehensive
Concordance	
10	any urgency attached to the reconstruction of this road? Does he have any urgency attached to the reconstruc-tion of
11	that when we have approved moneys for a certain purpose, does the Hon Minister have the authority without seeking the
12	this House what he means by "physical body selection"? Or does he mean to say "physical body inspection"? What is
13	what is being currently produced it comes only to 44,000m ³ . Does it mean that the requirement of water in Tamale is

Figure 28: Sample concordance lines of mental processes with *will/would* in GMQs

The UK data (Figure 29) indicate similar examples: 'will the Prime Minister *agree* to meet ...' (line 4; see also lines 1, 5, 6), 'will the Prime Minister *accept* any responsibility' (line 3),

and ‘will the Prime Minister *reconsider* the proposed changes’ (line 7; see also 8-11), where the Prime Minister is a requested senser. Mental process clauses encode ‘sensing’, in which the ‘Senser’, ‘endowed with consciousness’, “‘senses” – feels, thinks, wants or perceives’ a phenomenon (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 201). The ‘phenomenon’ is said to exist in the mind of the senser. Thus, questions involving mental processes attempt to find out what is on the mind of the senser ((Prime) Ministers), attribute thoughts and beliefs to them and/or force them to accept policy challenges. Consider, for example, ‘... agree to take urgent steps to have that [matter dealt with effectively?]’ (Figure 29, line 1) and ‘agree to meet... [so that the scale of the problem can be made clear and steps taken to sort it out?]’ (line 5) and ‘... accept any responsibility for the [fact that ... by the time of the election working people will have lost, on average, £6,660 of wages ... while he has been in No. 10?]’ (line 3). These questions have coercively negative assumptions. They assume that the Prime Ministers do not want to take actions against the problems and, therefore, the Prime Ministers are being forced to admit the challenges and take action.

N	Concordance
1	members on the Provisional IRA terrorist army council? Will he therefore agree to take urgent steps to have that
2	needed sooner than we think, it does not actually exist. Will he accept that the G20 now needs to show the same
3	Stephen Doughty (Cardiff South and Penarth) (Lab/Co-op): Will the Prime Minister accept any responsibility for the
4	laid back in 1866. Having seen NHS managers last week, will the Prime Minister agree to meet Labour Members
5	for the force has been inadequate for a number of years. Will the Prime Minister agree to meet a cross-party
6	would refuse to act. Andrew Mackinlay (Thurrock) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister agree to meet a delegation of MPs
Concordance	
7	it was eight or nine years ago. Kate Hoey (Vauxhall) (Lab): Will the Prime Minister reconsider the proposed changes
8	not for today's Budget, but for next year's Budget? Will he consider theming next year's Budget around early
9	latest cost estimates are up around the £2 billion mark. Will my right hon. Friend reconsider recalling Sir Michael
10	grooming in the UK, including in my borough of Rochdale, will the Government now consider ratifying that very
11	that study has shown there is no alternative to Trident, will the Prime Minister consider signing the main-gate
Concordance	
12	that we all face both a personal and a political challenge? Would he consider joining me and other Members who
13	Thalidomide victims will inevitably increase with age, would the Prime Minister accept that a decision to make
14	health care. Sir John Butterfill (Bournemouth, West) (Con): Would the Prime Minister agree that public confidence in

Figure 29: Sample concordance lines of mental processes with *will/would* in UK PMQs

Let us examine in detail Examples 35 and 36 in Table 19 below. In the Ghanaian Parliament (Example 35), the question has a multiple function. First, Mr Kwao asks the Minister to confirm or disaffirm whether he has any intention of establishing a police post at

Akateng. Since the idea of establishing a post must exist in the consciousness of the Minister, the question attempts to determine whether that phenomenon is on the Minister's mind. Second, and more importantly, the question is an indirect request to establish the police post. An examination of the question in relation to the postscript ('Judging from the spate of armed robberies ... Any time they do it, they run away') shows that Mr Kwao is actually making a request that the Minister open a police post at Akateng. The fact that armed robbers have been attacking and killing people, without proper protection implies failure of the Minister to perform his status functions and duties. Thus, the postscript authenticates the request and makes it urgent, which is also reinforced by the second ('is'-operator) interrogative, which has a summarising preface (as signalled by 'So'). Mr Kwao raises a major lack of security in his area, which authenticates and makes the request appear genuine. By using 'consider', a mental verb, Mr Kwao attempts to draw on the mind and attitude of the Minister towards the security situation in the area. In portraying this, Mr Kwao makes the Minister the requested senser of the act of 'considering' and responsible for the 'phenomenon' (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 201; Flowerdew 2013: 19) of 'opening something like a post at Akateng'. Table 19 illustrates participants in the mental process clause. Thrusting the Minister into the senser position is a powerful way of making him mentally experience the phenomenon: it increases the force of the request, as to perceive a phenomenon is the first step towards its material execution. If Mr Kan-Dapaah has not conceived of the requested phenomenon, it somehow questions his competence. The Minister does not only assure Mr Kwao that he 'would definitely bring it to the attention of the IGP [Inspector General of Police]', but also describes the matter as a 'very serious concern'. There are no confrontational positions between Mr Kwao and the Minister, even though Mr Kwao is an opposition MP. This could be attributed to the fact that he took a neutral position in asking the question, making it more successful than one that does the same thing but in an accusatory manner.

The UK example (Example 36) also performs a multiple function. It requests the Prime Minister (David Cameron) to reassess his defence review, asking him to perform his duties. It is also a piece of advice/suggestion to the Prime Minister to 'listen to' the advice of the defence community. It indirectly asserts that the PM should listen to the expert advice. Thrusting the Prime Minister into the senser position is an attempt to let him reflect on the opinion of the defence community. The use of the adverb 'finally' implies obstinacy on the

part of the Prime Minister to heed the defence advice – he has refused to listen to expert advice. Thus, the question becomes an indirect accusation. It pushes Cameron to say what is on his mind concerning what the experts have said about the defence review. To make his suggestion and recommendation plausible, Thomas Docherty quotes experts (‘a leading military academic’ and ‘a leading military think thank’), in the preface, to establish a strong basis for his request to the Prime Minister to rethink his (the Prime Minister’s) position on the defence review. There is an attempt to set the Prime Minister against the military experts, which puts him in a negative light.

Table 19: Participants in the mental clause

Preface	Operator	Requested Senser	Mental process	Phenomenon
<p>Example 35: GH 8 Jun 06/Col. 700:</p> <p>Mr. Kwao [NDC] [i] Mr. Speaker,</p> <p>[ii] Judging from the spate of armed robberies — there have been three already and people have died and none of those armed robbers have been caught. Any time they do it, they run away. So,</p>	<p>[Qi] will</p> <p>[Qii] is</p>	<p>he</p> <p>the hon. Minister</p>	<p>consider</p> <p>considering</p>	<p>in the interim, opening something like a post at Akateng?</p> <p>...</p> <p>opening a post, at least, to be manning the area for the time being?</p>
<p>Mr. Kan-Dapaah [NPP]: Mr. Speaker, these are operational matters which would have to be decided upon by the IGP, and I want to assure my hon. Friend that I would definitely bring it to the attention of the IGP, that this very serious concern has been expressed by my hon. Friend.</p>				
<p>Example 36: UK 2 Nov 2011/Col 923</p> <p>Thomas Docherty (Dunfermline and West Fife) (Lab): [i] This week, yet another military academic has called for the reopening of the defence review, and a leading military think-tank has said: “Britain is now cutting military equipment that might prove vital in future.”</p>	<p>[Q] will</p>	<p>the Prime Minister</p>	<p>finally listen to</p>	<p>the voices of the defence community and reopen his deeply flawed defence review?</p>
<p>The Prime Minister [Con]: We had no defence review for 10 years, and now the Opposition want two in one go. That is absolutely typical of the opportunism of the Labour party. This is a day, as hostilities in Libya are coming to an end, on which we should be praising our armed services and all that they have done.</p>				

Cameron attempts to deflect the negative portrayal by counter-accusing the opposition of doing ‘no defence review for 10 years’ when they were in power, and calling them ‘opportunists’. He calls on the opposition to praise, rather than ignore, the armed services for all they have done, depicting himself as representing the interests of the armed services. Instead of responding to what the defence experts have said as well as Docherty’s advice/suggestion, Cameron sidesteps the question. Both Docherty and Cameron attempt to make each other feel guilty for their actions. Considering that ‘[v]ery often, patriotism is at the roots of wars’ (Leyens et al. 2001: 395), Docherty and Cameron are indirectly accusing each other of not being patriotic, not performing the duties assigned to them in virtue of their respective positions. It is a way to psychologically outmanoeuvre each other for political purposes. Since parliamentarians are supposed to represent the interest of the citizenry, such a demonstration of patriotism in their discourse is crucial. Forcing (Prime) Ministers to have particular thoughts is an important aspect of parliamentary politics, where, for political point-scoring, parliamentarians invariably want to show which party or group genuinely represents the interest of the people.

Table 20 gives a summary of mental processes and their major speech act functions in the GMQs and UK PMQs. The functions were identified by following Searle’s (1969: 66; 1975: 71) speech act (*preparatory*, *sincerity* and *essential conditions*) and Searle’s (2010: 8-9) ‘status function’ and ‘deontic powers’ principles. These were complemented by Coulthard’s (1985: 130-133) principles of determining indirect functions of questions. The Table indicates that the set of verbs denoting mental processes in (a), (b), and (c) in the GMQs and (a) in UK PMQs function mainly as requests for confirmation, information, action and opinion (shown in white font). The majority of the mental processes occur with ‘do’ as an operator in both datasets. It also shows that the questions perform multiple functions. For example, (e)-(f) in GMQs and (b)-(e) in UK PMQs function as requests and assertions.

Note that I have capitalised assertions to show that they are the more profound and deep functions (see section 5.4.1), with the requests being surface meanings. Whereas the functions mainly depend on the Searlean and Coulthard’s principles, it is also important to recognise that the kinds of verbs used impact on the meaning. The functions indicate that it is mainly the specific processes, and not particularly the operators, that impact on the meaning. For example, (b) in both GMQs and UK PMQs show that ‘agree’, ‘concede’ and

‘accept’ function as assertions irrespective of the operator (‘will’/‘do’) they are constructed with. However, in the UK PMQs, ‘agree’ occurs with only ‘do’, while it occurs with ‘will’ as well in the GMQs. All the negative questions ((f) in GMQs and (e) in UK PMQs) function as assertions, such as stating an opinion (see section 5.4.1).

Table 20: Mental processes/negative interrogatives and their speech act functions

GMQs: Mental processes/negative interrogative (182; 43%)	UK PMQs: Mental processes/negative interrogatives (316; 34%)
<p>(a) Requesting confirmation, information, action – with positive or negative orientation</p> <p>Will: <i>consider (1), want (1)</i> May I: <i>know (44), find out (7)</i> I want/would ...: <i>know (73), find out (7)</i> Be: <i>aware (44)</i></p> <p>Do</p> <p>(b) Requesting confirmation <i>mean (3), intend (2), have (2), detract (1), affect (1)</i></p> <p>(c) Requesting opinion <i>believe in (2)</i></p> <p>Will</p> <p>(d) Requesting opinion; ASSERTION – with positive or negative orientation <i>agree (8), concede (2)</i></p> <p>Do</p> <p>(e) Requesting confirmation of opinion; ASSERTION – with positive or negative orientation <i>appreciate (1), get (1)</i></p> <p>(f) Requesting opinion – with negative orientation; ASSERTION <i>not think (5), not mean (1)</i></p>	<p>Will:</p> <p>(a) Requesting confirmation, action <i>(re)consider (10), welcome (3), seek (1), reflect over (2), listen to (4)</i></p> <p>(b) Requesting agreement; ASSERTION – with positive or negative orientation <i>agree (9), accept (6)</i></p> <p>Be: <i>requesting confirmation, information</i> – with positive or negative orientation <i>aware (13)</i></p> <p>Do</p> <p>(c) Requesting opinion, agreement; ASSERTION – with positive or negative orientation <i>agree (151)</i></p> <p>(d) Requesting opinion - with positive or negative orientation; ASSERTION <i>regret (3), consider (1), intend (3), know (1), think (15), believe (11), plan (1), expect (2), accept (11), share (9), understand (8), feel (2), recognise (5), recall (2), appreciate (2), hold (1), welcome (2), wish (1), acknowledge (1), have any idea (1)</i></p> <p>(e) Requesting opinion, asserting, with negative orientation; ASSERTION <i>not ... think (2), not ... understand (5), not regret (1), not ... mean (1), not realise (1), not ... show (7), not illustrate (1), not prove (1), not ... demonstrate (2), not that represent (1), not this go (1), not tell (1)</i></p>

In the use of mental process verbs, as in Examples 35 and 36, the (Prime) Minister is thrust into the senser position. However, MPs can often either thrust themselves (or both themselves and (Prime) Ministers) into senser positions in the clause. This is found mainly in the use of dependent/indirect interrogatives in the Ghanaian data, which are a major point of difference between the Ghanaian and UK interrogatives, as discussed in the next section.

5.3 Indirect *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes: major difference between Ghanaian Minister's and UK PM's questions

One major difference between the GMQs and the UK PMQs is the use of indirect *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes in the Ghanaian data. Out of the 419 *yes/no* interrogatives in the GMQs, there were 108 (26%) indirect forms, while there was only one (1), approximately zero (0) percent in the UK PMQs (see Table 7, section 3.4.2). The use of dependent/indirect interrogative forms as a major source of difference is also demonstrated by the use of dependent/indirect *wh*-interrogatives (Figure 4, section 3.4.2), where the Ghanaian MPs' use (19%) is six times that of the UK MPs' (3%). Indirect *yes/no* interrogatives (also called dependent/embedded interrogatives) are introduced by a requesting clause, and the *yes/no* question is embedded in that introductory clause. In this case, the embedded clause is usually introduced by either *whether* or *if* (Downing and Locke 2006: 105), as illustrated by Example 37.

Example 37: 8 Jun 06/Col. 709

Mr. Moses Asaga [NDC]: [i] Mr. Speaker, in Nabdam constituency, we have constructed a police station, but we do not have the living quarters. Therefore, [Qi] *I want to know from the hon. Minister [Qii] whether there is a central Government budget for the building of police stations since we already constructed one but we need to complete it.*

Mr. Kan-Dapaah [NPP]: Yes, Mr. Speaker, there has always been from time immemorial, a budgetary allocation to the police to provide these facilities. The trouble is that it has not been sufficient enough to be able to meet the many needs of the many districts that we have. ...

In this example, the whole of the red-highlighted structure is a superordinate clause, with an introductory matrix clause, [Qi] *I want to know from the hon. Minister*, and a subordinate clause/an embedded *yes/no* interrogative, [Qii] *whether there is a central Government budget*

for the building of police stations since we already constructed one but we need to complete it. [Qii] contains two more clauses: a subordinate clause, *since we already constructed one*, and a co-ordinated clause, *but we need to complete it*; which form a postscript and a basis for the question. [Qi] is a boulomaic request, that is, an expression of a wish, hope or desire (Hengeveld 1988: 239) or a ‘desiderative’ expression (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 210), which Mr Asaga uses to express a desire ‘to know’ whether there is a central government budget allocation for the building of police stations. The desiderative expression *I want to know* allows Mr Asaga to thrust himself into the senser position. And since it is *want to know from the Minister whether ...*, there is a complex chain of knowing, which allows Mr Asaga to request the opportunity to share in the knowledge of the Minister. There are two pragmatic implications for such a construction. First, the matrix clause (*I want to know from the Minister*) foregrounds the desire. Second, by thrusting himself into the senser position and expressing the desire or wish to know, Mr Asaga makes the question conditionally hearer-oriented (Gryzb 2011: 31), showing his ‘entitlement’ to ask the question and the ‘grantability’ of response (Antaki and Kent 2012; Drew and Walker 2010: 109-110; Curl and Drew 2008; Heinemann 2006: 1101). Parliamentary questions allow MPs to hold (Prime) Ministers and their governments ‘accountable for their political intentions, statements, and actions’ (Ilie 2006: 192). MPs are, therefore, entitled to ask their questions and (Prime) Ministers are obliged to answer/respond to them. Expressing and foregrounding the desire to ask the question, when Mr Asaga is entitled to ask, signals politeness, while it obliges the Minister to answer or respond more positively. Wilson (1990: 62) has said that supporting the use of first-person singular forms by mental-process verbs such as ‘think’, ‘want’, ‘wish’ may reflect ‘intrinsic attitudes, particularly in the communication of *sincerity*’. Such expression of sincerity may scaffold the politeness contained in Mr Asaga’s question.

Other desiderative structures for constructing matrix clauses in the dependent questions are: *I would want to*, *I would like to*, *I will want to*, *I wish to* and *I would be grateful*, which are usually followed by such verbs as *know*, *find out* and *ask*. In other words, the dependent *yes/no* interrogatives have the following structures, as illustrated in Examples 38-43:

Table 21: The structure of dependent *yes/no* interrogatives

	Desiderative	Verb	if/whether + nominal clause
i.	I want to	know(38)/find out(3)/ask(7) ...	+ if/whether + nominal clause
ii.	I would want to	know(12)/find out(8)/ask(3) ...	+ if/whether + nominal clause
iii.	I would like to	know(23)/find out(2)/ask(6) ...	+ if/whether + nominal clause
iv.	I will want to	find out(1) ...	+ if/whether + nominal clause
v.	I wish to	find out(1) ...	+ whether + nominal clause
vi.	I would be grateful	(1) ...	+ if/whether + nominal clause

‘Know’ (73 in all) and ‘find out’ (15) are mental (cognitive) processes, which are knowledge seeking; whereas ‘ask’ (16) is a verbal process, which demands an answer (note: these verbal processes are here only for the purposes of illustrating the dependent/indirect *yes/no* interrogatives). In all, the mental processes account for 85% of these processes in Table 21. The following (i)-(vi) are illustrations.

- (i) I want to know/find out ... + if/whether + a nominal clause

Example 38: GH 1 Feb 07/Col. 100:

Alhaji Pangabu Mohammed [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, *I want to find out from the hon. Minister whether there is good collaboration between the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Ministry of Trade and Industry.*

- (ii) I would want to know/find out ... + if/whether + a nominal clause

Example 39: GH 6 Jul 05/Col 1641:

Mr. John Gyetuah [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, *I would want to ask the hon. Minister whether she could tell the House the stock level of fishes in the marine waters.*

- (iii) I would like to know/find out ...+ if/whether + a nominal clause

Example 40: GH 9 Feb 11/Col. 936

Prof George Y. Gyan-Baffour [NPP]: Madam Speaker, *I would like to know from the Hon Deputy Minister if he is aware that the resettlement programme that is going on now is supposed to be the nucleus of this Bui City concept that he has mentioned.*

- (iv) I will want to know/find out ...+ if/whether + a nominal clause

Example 41: GH 3 Jun 09/Col. 157

Ms. Beatrice B. Boateng [NPP]: Madam Speaker ... He mentioned the wearing of seat belts, et cetera. I know it embraces a lot, but I think there is something very important, like using mobile phones while driving. *I will want to find out whether that is part of the things he is going to enforce....*

- (v) I wish to find out ... + whether + a nominal clause

Example 42: GH 8 Jul 05/Col. 1768:

Mr. Effah-Baafi [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, *I wish to find out from the hon. Deputy Minister whether he is aware that the availability of a police facility is a prerequisite for the establishment of a banking institution, one of which is in the offing at Jema.*

- (vi) I would be grateful + if/whether + a nominal clause

Example 43: GH 3 Jun 2009/Col. 161:

Mr. Joe Ghartey [NPP]: *I will be grateful if the Hon Minister could tell us under what law the police are arresting people for tainted windows.*

Thus, the general structure for these indirect *yes/no* interrogatives can be represented as:

I want to/would like to/would want to/will want to/wish to + verb + (from X) + whether/if + Y.

The *whether/if + Y* is technically referred to as a *yes/no* interrogative nominal clause (Leech and Svartvik 1994: 313). The structure of the questions allows MPs to delay the questions by embedding them in another clause, which is a hedging strategy that reduces imposition and, therefore, marks politeness. This is reinforced by the matrix clauses being hedged performatives (Adika 2012: 159; Downing and Locke 2006: 211), as in Examples (ii), (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi), signalled by *would*, *will* and *wish*. In all about 48% of questions in the GMQs employed these forms of structures. Apart from their pragmatic effects of foregrounding, mitigation and politeness, these interrogative forms may also be accounted for by mother tongue (L1) interference.

According to Adika (2012) most, if not all, indigenous Ghanaian languages lack modals. Anderson (2009: 72) states that when making polite requests, Ghanaian speakers of English ‘do not frequently use modals such as “can”, “could”, “may”, and “might”... [they rather] ‘use more “want”-statements and imperative forms that may be perceived as impolite forms in native varieties of English’. Adika (2012: 159) reports that studies in ways of making request among Ghanaians:

indicate that the syntactic forms combined with the lexical choices that characterise the semantic and syntactic structure of requests made by Ghanaians point to a

uniqueness of use (cf. Bamgbose 1997) that distinguishes these forms from the stylistic preferences of inner circle users. Broadly, GhaE requests forms are characterised by direct request strategies involving the use of imperatives, need/want statements, hedged performatives, and mild hints among others. Also, unlike native speakers Ghanaian users of English do not frequently use modals when they make requests in naturally occurring situations; instead they prefer to use imperatives and ‘want’ statements because there are no modals in any of the indigenous Ghanaian languages.

The lack of modals and other auxiliaries in indigenous Ghanaian languages reflects in the absence of subject-operator inversions in the formation of questions in those languages, as in examples (i)-(vi) above. The implication is that questions in Ghanaian languages are formed by means of declarative structures. Adika gives examples of ways of making requests in Ghanaian English as:

- i. *Imperatives*: Bring me the file of Mr. Ocran, please.; Secretary, bring me Ocran’s file.; Give me some rice please.;
- ii. *Hedged performatives*: Please, I would be most grateful if you sign these letters for me.; I would like it if you gave me a pay-in slip.; Please I would like you to sign my faculty form.;
- iii. *Want statements*: Please I want a pay-in slip.; Please I need a pay-in slip.; Madam, I want you to sign my faculty form please.;
- iv. *Query preparatory forms*: Please, can I have a pay-in slip?; Could you please sign my form for me?; (Sir), could you please give me a pay-in slip?;
- v. *Mild hints*: Please sir, tomorrow is the deadline for registration; Please, I am here to register; Please, I came to register with the department.

Adika (citing Anderson 2006) is quick to add that these are features of spoken rather than written Ghanaian English. To a very large extent, the Ghanaian parliamentary questions support Adika’s claim, as about 48% of the question forms used the ‘would/want to’ structures. There are structural differences between some of Adika’s examples and our parliamentary indirect *yes/no* interrogatives, though. First, apart from *hedged performatives*, Adika’s *imperatives* and *want statements*, which are direct request forms, do not contain *whether/if* subordinators. The presence of *whether/if* expresses a weak obligation. This demonstrates the institutionalised and polite nature of these parliamentary questions. Second, *mild hints* are not found in our data. Third, the *query preparatory forms* are modalised forms and subject-operator inversions, which are also found in our data. This shows that requests made by Ghanaian speakers of English can be both direct and indirect, including a lexical form such as ‘please’ (Anderson 2009: 81). ‘Please’ occurred 40 times (0.27/1000 words) in

the Ghanaian data, while it occurred nine times (0.05/1000 words) in the UK data. The majority of the GMQs (about 52%) were constructed using the subject-operator inversion rule of English. This points to the fact that, as English as second language (ESL) speakers, Ghanaian parliamentarians are conversant with interrogative constructions in English. However, to the extent that the indirect interrogative forms are mainly a spoken feature, this suggests a transfer of L1 features into English in naturally occurring communicative situations and contexts. There is a fusion of English and Ghanaian language features in the parliamentary question forms.

The use of interrogatives with mental processes becomes more interesting, in terms of deep pragmatic meaning, when they are constructed with ‘do’ as an operator. The following section examines *do*-operator *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes and negative interrogatives and how they express opinions and assertions.

5.4 When *yes/no* interrogatives become opinions, assertions and biased

The previous section has shown that MPs construct their questions so as to ascertain what is on (Prime) Ministers’ minds and to force them to express their thoughts and inner feelings. In this section, we establish that the questions become even more coercive when they are constructed as opinions, assertions and create biases. The section is divided into three subsections. Section 5.4.1 looks specifically at *do*-operator *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes, while section 5.4.2 explores negative *yes/no* interrogatives (including those constructed with ‘do’ and ‘be’). I discuss negative *yes/no* interrogatives here because of the close functional relationship they have with the *do*-operator interrogatives. The analysis indicates that these interrogatives perform multiple functions, with requests being surface functions and the more thoughtful, deep and reflective functions being assertions (see Table 20). *Do*-operator *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes are used by MPs to seek (Prime) Ministers’ opinions about and agreement to MPs’ assertions. The examination of the negative forms shows that negative *yes/no* interrogatives are more emphatically biased in asserting rather than requesting. By bias, I mean a preference for a particular response (Sidnell 2010a: 77; 2010b). The last subsection, section 5.4.3, considers epistemic marking as a means by which MPs determine the certainty of and commitment to their opinions and assertions.

5.4.1 Mental processes: seeking Ministers' opinions, agreements, and asserting

Do-operator interrogatives in the GMQs largely involve mental processes, as about 84%, that is, 21 out of the 25 *do*-operator interrogatives (including the negative forms) contained mental verbs (see Table 20). So, while the previous questions (section 5.3) are indirect with the question embedded in a superordinate desiderative structure, these questions are direct *yes/no* questions (which are more coercive and less polite). In the GMQs (Figure 30), the mental process is contained in a direct *yes/no* question, as in: 'Does he *intend* to ...' (lines 2 and 5), 'does he *mean* to say ...' (line 3), 'does the Hon Minister *appreciate* ...' (line 4), 'does he *believe* in ...' (lines 6-7).

N	Concordance
1	to what is being currently produced it comes only to 44,000m3. Does it mean that the requirement of water in Tamale is going
2	that we need more than one regional hospital in such a place? Does he intend to have more than one regional hospital at
3	tell this House what he means by "physical body selection"? Or does he mean to say "physical body inspection"? What is
4	in providing police protection to so many Hon Members, does the Hon Minister appreciate that we are only 230 and that
5	regional hospitals. But Mr Speaker, the substantive Question is, does the Hon Minister then intend to have more than one
6	cycle of the recruitment process; secondly, as an Hon Minister, does he believe in the regional balance used in the
7	Ask one question. [Laughter.] Q308. Mr. Afful: Madam Speaker, does he believe in the regional balance that was used during

Figure 30: Sample concordance lines of mental processes involving *do* in GMQs

The UK PMQs, on the other hand, had a total of 263 (28%) *do*-operator interrogatives (see Table 7, section 3.5.1), almost all of which contained mental processes. About 89%, that is, 231 of the 263 (excluding the negative ones) of all verbs in the *do*-operator interrogatives were mental processes, among which 'agree' was the most important (151/58%), with near synonyms such as 'recognise' (5), 'share' (9), 'accept' (11) and 'appreciate' (2) appearing less frequently. Figure 31 indicates sample concordance lines of mental processes in the UK PMQs, as for example: Does the Prime Minister/he/right hon. Friend *understand/recognise/think/agree* that ...' (lines 1-4), *know/recall/intend/hold* (lines 6-7, 9, 11) and *wish/share/believe* that' (lines 12, 14, 18-19).

N	Concordance
1	. of Divisions, according to the Library? I know that he is busy, but does he understand that, while he asks his colleagues to come here
2	soldiers and officers—many of them brave—in the first world war? Does he recognise that there is overwhelming support in the country
3	here in Britain we are close to experiencing a tyranny of the minority? Does he think that the composition of the House of Commons
4	in Glasgow's successful bid to host the 2018 Commonwealth games. Does he agree that that will regenerate the east end of Glasgow in
5	and spoke for his Fiscal Responsibility Bill last night. Not a single one. Does he not understand that a divided party without a proper plan is
6	of Health, the hon. Member for Leigh (Andy Burnham) to cure MND. Does the Prime Minister know that Britain spends more than £241
7	in the House, I will have further such meetings later today. Dr. Wright: Does the Prime Minister recall that , last year, we had a celebration to
8	basically burns as fuel for Europe what should be food for the poor? Does the Prime Minister recognise that that mandate is driving land
9	are usually people on low incomes and in marginalised economies. Does the Prime Minister intend to put in place any measures to
10	in our desire to tackle child poverty. Mr. Cameron: Consistent? Does the Prime Minister have any idea what a pathetic figure he cuts
11	allow the burning of toxic industrial waste in lime and cement kilns. Does the right hon. Gentleman still hold the view that he expressed
12	, the prestigious award for the most enterprising town in the UK. Does my right hon. Friend wish to 4 Sep 2013 : Column 316
13	and there are very good conditions for young people to get into work. Does my right hon. Friend think that all that would have been
14	has been among the lowest in the country for a long time. Does my right hon. Friend share my view that that is unfair, and will
15	that we do as well. Mr. Gerald Kaufman (Manchester, Gorton) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend recall that when he and I sat together in
16	of England independent. Q10. [303217] Lindsay Roy (Glenrothes) (Lab): Does my right hon. Friend believe that the Post Office should expand
17	, despite the fact that they have registered as a political party? Does my right hon. Friend agree that the electorate are being
18	if it sounds like the sort of place that we are interested in I say yes." Does the Prime Minister believe that the language of that exchange is
19	finance over a period of years. Mr. Tom Harris (Glasgow, South) (Lab): Does the Prime Minister believe that every candidate who stands for
20	case. Q9. [157894] Mr. James Clappison (Hertsmere) (Con): Does the Prime Minister appreciate how fed up people 3 Mar 2004 :
21	might just be some misunderstandings over the next few weeks, does the Prime Minister agree with Baroness Morgan, his old friend
22	their families. Q10. [157895] Sir Nicholas Winteron (Macclesfield) (Con): Does the Prime Minister accept that one of the responsibilities of

Figure 31: Sample concordance lines of mental processes involving *do* in UK PMQs

Due to their concern with ‘states of mind or psychological events’ (Bloor and Bloor 2013: 118), mental processes exhibit high occurrences of statements of opinion. Let us consider Example 44 from the Ghanaian data.

Example 44: GH 2 Jul 10/Col. 1777/1778:

Mr Albert Kan-Dapaah [NPP]: Madam Speaker, I *think* we must thank the Hon Minister for *admitting* that given the nature of the work of MPs, we deserve some police protection. Madam Speaker, talking about numbers and therefore, the logical problems involved in providing police protection to so many Hon Members, *does the Hon Minister appreciate that we are only 230 and that if he is able to provide police protection to well over 170, probably, 200 District Chief Executives (DCEs), he should be able to provide police protection to MPs, the nature of whose work he has just admitted demands police protection?* — [Interruption] —

Mr Amidu [NDC]: Madam Speaker, the DCE's are located in district capitals of this country. The police districts under which they live, raise the police strength and its ability to contain the situation. So that is easier done. We have 230 Hon Members of Parliament concentrated within the capital of Accra. So when we are talking about personnel strength, we are looking at the personnel strength within the vicinity where the protection will be offered. My Hon Friend knows very well the problems which the Ministry of the Interior faces when it comes to Accra and number of men. We have to deploy at short notices, so it has not been possible for us to provide —As I said, we are keeping it in view because we feel it is necessary and as soon as we hit a

target which makes it feasible, I am sure it will be done. But he, more than anybody understands the difficulty, otherwise, I am sure he would have provided this security long time ago.

Example 44 has multiple functions. First, Mr Kan-Dapaah asks Mr Amidu's opinion about MPs' protection; second, he throws a challenge to him to provide protection for MPs if 'he is able to provide police protection to well over 170 ... DCEs'; and third, he makes a request for confirmation of that opinion. In other words, Mr Kan-Dapaah makes an assertion/opinion and requests the Minister to confirm that assertion. The use of the phrase 'only 230' emphasises Mr Kan-Dapaah's challenge that the Minister should be able to provide police protection for MPs. Mr Kan-Dapaah begins his question by thanking 'the Hon Minister for admitting' that MPs 'deserve some police protection'. This shows that he appreciates the Minister's frankness. But notice that 'admitting' connotes wrongdoing, that is, not providing protection for MPs is a serious lack of provision; a face-attack, which is emphasised by repeating 'admitted'. Mr Kan-Dapaah's use of 'I think' in the preface points to the fact that he is offering an opinion. Welcoming the Minister's admission before throwing his challenge (or his attack) is a mitigation or politeness marker, which is emphasised by the weakening epistemic modality 'think'. Again, Mr Kan-Dapaah strategically and coercively expresses his opinion with some facts and figures ('over 170, probably, 200' DCEs receive police protection). This, together with the expression of thanks and the *yes/no* question form, makes it difficult for the Minister to reject that opinion outright. If the Minister can provide security for DCEs, but not MPs as claimed by Mr Kan-Dapaah, it presupposes that he is not sensitive to the MPs' plight. Consequently, the Minister offers a counter argument and rebuts Mr Kan-Dapaah's opinion and the presupposition, since the whole question relates to the Minister's sensibilities and responsiveness. Amidst assurance that he is considering the proposal to offer MPs police protection, the Minister reproaches and face attacks Mr Kan-Dapaah (a former Minister of the same portfolio) in retaliation: 'My Hon Friend knows very well the problems which the Ministry of the Interior faces ... he, more than anybody understands the difficulty, otherwise, I am sure he would have provided this security long time ago'. This is a mind game in which they try to let each other feel guilty for their actions.

The use of mental verbs in the UK PMQs is, perhaps, more interesting, as it appears to raise more argumentation and debate than in the GMQs. In the UK PMQs, MPs' high use of 'agree' (58% of all the mental verbs) clearly substantiates the degree of argumentation and

debate that these questions usually generate. To ask whether a Prime Minister agrees to a situation or not is to ask him/her to (not) admit to that situation, and that is a matter of opinion. The questions are assertions that offer opinions, which is why, probably, ‘Does he agree ...’ (and ‘Is he aware ...’) questions are not permitted by parliamentary rules of questioning (Rogers and Walters 2006: 312). The argumentation and debate that result from such questions may account for the reasons why MPs pursue them, even though they are not allowed by the parliamentary rules of questioning. These questions are mostly biased, similar to the ‘*negatively established*’ and ‘*positively established*’ ones (Wilson 1990: 167), as government MPs habitually ask the PMs to admit to positive things about their government and, normally, negative ones about the opposition; while oppositions MPs do the reverse. Let us consider Example 45, which is a UK government MP’s question:

Example 45: UK 20 Jun 07/Col 1375

Ms Gisela Stuart (Birmingham, Edgbaston) (Lab): [i] Over the years, my right hon. Friend has visited my constituency on a number of occasions— [Interruption.] Some visits have been more memorable than others, but on his most recent visit he came to the £2 million local improvement finance trust scheme at Woodgate Valley primary care centre, one of 200 LIFT schemes across the country. [Q] *Does he agree such schemes demonstrate real investment in the NHS and real commitment to our patients, compared with the half-baked ideas that we get from the Opposition?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I recall the LIFT scheme in my hon. Friend’s constituency, and it is one of the many around the country that have led to some 2,500 GP premises being renovated. In 1997, 50 per cent. of the NHS estate was older than the NHS itself, but today that figure is 20 per cent. As a result of that massive capital investment, waiting times are falling and we are also able to provide the most up-to-date equipment for our constituents. I deprecate the Opposition’s policy to scrap the target of an 18-week maximum wait for NHS treatment, with an average of seven or eight weeks. That policy would be a disastrous and retrograde step, whereas we intend to keep to the targets and make sure that we deliver on them.

Example 45 seeks confirmation of Ms Stuart’s opinion of a supposed appreciable improvement in National Health Service (NHS) performance and delivery. The question is an assertion. Ms Stuart positively touches on the emotions of the PM, Tony Blair, by recalling the good work being done by his government. Because the question promotes the credibility of Blair, he responds by recalling and praising some of his government’s initiatives such as the ‘LIFT scheme’. In her question, Ms Stuart does not only praise Blair, she launches an

attack on the opposition, calling their ideas half-baked. According to Ilie (2006: 191), '[a]sking a question is usually a pretext to attack or praise the government and involves information that is already known'. Ms Stuart's question seeks two responses from the PM: to commend his own government's investments in the NHS and attack the opposition. Tony Blair does just that, stating, 'I deprecate the Opposition's policy to scrap the target of an 18-week maximum wait for NHS treatment, with an average of seven or eight weeks'. Thus, while the question glorifies the PM, it vilifies the opposition. This points to the politico-ideological and partisan nature of parliamentary questions in particular, and parliamentary discourse in general. Parliamentarians seek to legitimise themselves, while they delegitimise their opponents (van Dijk 2011a: 397), in this case in a spectacularly evaluative way: 'that policy would be a disastrous and retrograde step'. The question can be said to have 'design-based', 'action-based' and 'type-conformity' preferences (Sidnell 2010a: 86-87). A design-based preference question anticipates a particular response based on how the question is framed. Action-based preference question expects the performance of a particular action; for instance, 'an invitation prefers an acceptance' (Sidnell 2010a: 87). Sidnell (2010a: 87) further states that on the basic fact that a *yes/no* interrogative expects a 'yes'/'no' as a response makes it a 'type-conforming' question. Ms Stuart knows that the Prime Minister will confirm her view that there has been an appreciable improvement in NHS performance and delivery. This implies that the design of the question can directly impact on both action-based and type-conformity preferences, especially when the respondent expects a particular kind of question, as it happens in these parliamentary questions. Example 46, an opposition MP's question, exhibits a similar feature.

Example 46: UK 26 Jan 11/Col 291:

Mr Ian Davidson (Glasgow South West) (Lab/Co-op): The Prime Minister, the Chancellor and the majority of the Cabinet grew up in secure worlds of economic wealth and privilege. *Does the Prime Minister agree that today's young people face economic uncertainty and high youth unemployment? Is youth unemployment a price worth paying?*

The Prime Minister [Con]: It never is-but youth unemployment has been a structural problem in our country for years. Under the previous Government, when the economy grew for many years, youth unemployment was worse at the end of that growth than it was at the beginning. Then, of course, it rocketed during the recession. We need a serious examination of how we can reduce the number of people who are not in

education, not in employment and not in training. Rather than trading slogans across the House, it would be better to work out why the number has gone up in good times and in bad.

This opposition question indirectly asserts that ‘today's young people face economic uncertainty and high youth unemployment’ and asks the Prime Minister’s view on it. Mr Davidson indirectly coerces the PM to ‘agree’ with him: you have to agree with me that ‘today’s young people face economic uncertainty’. By juxtaposing the economic world of ‘the Prime Minister, and the Chancellor and the majority of the Cabinet crew’ with that of ‘today’s young people’, Mr Davidson is raising questions of legitimacy and accountability, denouncing and decrying what he considers as lack of care on the part of the government towards the plight of young people. In other words, he is accusing the government of irresponsibility. The question indirectly asserts that youth unemployment is not a price worth paying. This implies that the PM has failed to fulfil his deontic obligations towards young people. The emphatic deictic reference to the PM and his being ‘thrust into a [senser] position’ result in a conflictual political ‘relation’ between Mr Davidson and the PM (Hanks 2005: 193). This is because, while Mr Davidson portrays himself as being concerned with the plight of young people, he presents the PM as not being interested in the affairs of young people. By asking the question and asserting irresponsibility, Mr Davidson demonstrates his *deontic power* (Searle 2010: 9). According to Duranti (1995: 139), ‘the very act of using assertions with explicitly mentioned agents – especially when coinciding with accusations or blamings – constitutes an assertion of a participant’s power to speak his or her mind’. Such show of power normally ignites counter-attacks (Duranti 1995). Because Example 46 concerns the sensibilities (and challenges the power) of the PM and his government, the PM counter-accuses the opposition and says ‘Under the previous Government ... youth unemployment was worse’. The PM throws down a challenge: ‘Rather than trading slogans across the House, it would be better to work out why the number has gone up in good times and in bad’. This points to the fact that questions of opinion raise substantial argumentation and debate, leading to confrontations and name-calling, which is why, perhaps, the rules of questions do not allow them. The PM’s reference to the state of the economy ‘Under the previous Government’ is instructive, as it indicates the conflict of ideas, beliefs and opinions between the PM and the opposition, which is a major characteristic of parliamentary discourse.

In the use of *do*-operator interrogatives, ‘do’ functions in a similar way as it does in tag questions (see Leech and Svartvik 1994: 14, 328), in which normally ‘the speaker asserts something ... then invites the listener’s response’. In both cases, ‘do’ is used to introduce the question that seeks a confirmation or denial of a statement previously made. The difference in design is that because MPs express extended assumptions, the statements are usually lengthy and separated from the interrogatives. In Examples 44, 45 and 46, the MPs make statements and then ask the (Prime) Minister’s agreement to or confirmation of those statements. These questions are leading questions, which are skewed towards specific responses. Because they are biased, that is, slanted, with strong opinions, attacks and accusations (or praising), they elicit counter-attacks and counter-accusations. There is some evidence (see section 5.5) to suggest that in asking such questions, the UK MPs are stronger in their opinions than Ghanaian MPs. This could be attributed to the fact that, sometimes, Speakers in the Ghanaian parliament disallow opinionated questions, while Speakers in the UK parliament allow all such questions to be asked and answered, even though the parliamentary rules of engagement in both parliaments forbid MPs from asking opinion questions, such as ‘Does he agree ...’ (Rogers and Walters 2006: 312; Ghanaian Parliamentary Standing Orders 67 (1) (b)) (see section 5.5 for a detailed discussion of these).

Opinion questions do not always generate disagreements, accusations and counter-accusations between MPs (especially opposition MPs) and the Prime Ministers. Example 47 illustrates this:

Example 47: 12 Mar 08/Col 281:

Mr Robert Goodwill (Scarborough and Whitby) (Con): [i] I am holding up a can of beef from a ration pack issued to the Yorkshire Regiment in Afghanistan, where I recently had the privilege of meeting many of those there. On the base of the tin it reads, “Produce of Argentina”. [Q] *Does the Prime Minister agree that our troops deserve the best, which in this case means British, or even Scottish, beef?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: We continue to look at how we can improve procurement. I will take what the hon. Gentleman says and look at it with the Chief of the Defence Staff and others. It is very important that we do the best by our forces, and we will do so.

In this example, Mr Goodwill indirectly suggests that the ‘Yorkshire Regiment in Afghanistan’ had not been offered ‘the best’, as they had been fed with beef from Argentina, rather than the UK, and requests the Prime Minister’s opinion on that. By making such a

claim, Mr Goodwill portrays himself as a patriotic citizen and legislator, who is concerned with the welfare of the soldiers. However, the Prime Minister assures him that he will ‘look at it with the Chief of the Defence Staff’. He waters down the sensation in the question in quite a neutral way: ‘We continue to look at how we can improve procurement. I will take what the hon. Gentleman says ...’ Harris (2001: 458; see also Wilson 1990: 167) has observed that ‘more usually on agreed non-partisan matters’, MPs and Prime Ministers appear neutral in their questions and answers. This is what appears to be happening here. The use of ‘our troops’ and ‘our forces’ respectively by Mr Goodwill and the Prime Minister makes the issue an all-party affair.

This section has demonstrated that *do*-operator *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes make assertions and opinions, generating argumentation, debate, accusations and counter-accusations between MPs and (Prime) Ministers. Those questions are more coercive and less polite, as a result of their face threats. However, when they are based on all-party, non-partisan and nationally sensitive issues, they exhibit some neutrality of opinion. While *do*-operator interrogatives are opinionated and leading, negative interrogatives are even more opinionated and biased. Section 5.4.2 examines negative *yes/no* interrogatives.

5.4.2 Negative *yes/no* interrogatives expose MPs’ tactical biases

Perhaps, the most thought-provoking of parliamentary questions are negative interrogatives. Possibly, the use of negative *yes/no* interrogatives in GMQs and UK PMQs offers the strongest proof that English negative polar interrogatives are ‘always quite strongly biased’ (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 881). While the GMQs had only 12 negative interrogatives (Table 20) and consisted of *do* (6), *be* (5) and *have* (1) (see Figure 34), the UK PMQs had 96, which comprised *do* (27) and *be* (69). Clearly, negative interrogatives in both datasets invariably involved *do* and *be*. Figure 34 shows negative forms in the GMQs, as, for example: ‘does the Hon Minister *not think* ... (lines 1-2), ‘does it *not mean* ...’ (line 3) and ‘does he *not think* ...’ (lines 4-6).

N	Concordance
1	of the security agencies. Q388. Mr Agyapong: Madam Speaker, does the Hon Minister not think giving these culprits to the
2	time line of 2010 for the oil to come out at Cape Three Points. Does the Hon Minister not think that having scheduled 2009 for
3	not included in the 1,590 whom they are organizing to train, does it not mean that we would come back to the same
4	of revenue or tax, if it had slapped heavy taxes on them, does he not think it would deter others from doing the same
5	are not visibly seen. In Ghana here, they are in our houses; does he not think it would have a long-time effect on the
6	million households have to depend on 66,000 litres per day, does he not think that ab initio, that is the basis for the
Concordance	
7	we should be discussing it the way we are doing it here. Is it not sub judice ? Madam Speaker: Well, I have been
8	of Economics (LSC) and Havard and what have you . And so, is it not better to have these people teach some of the
9	— That it is likely. Madam Speaker, in view of this, is it not advisable for the Hon Minister to consider banning
10	and one of the busiest centres along the Volta Lake. Is it not a ploy to buy time, for the Ministry to be saying
11	: Madam Speaker, I want to ask the Hon Deputy Minister: is it not a fact that the NPA has already taken some punitive

Figure 32: Sample concordance lines of negative mental processes involving in GMQs

Figure 33, on the other hand, represents examples of negative forms in the UK PMQs, such as: ‘Does he *not understand/think* that ... (lines 1-2), ‘does that not *show/prove/illustrate/demonstrate* that ...’ (lines 3-7), ‘Does not ... *show* that (line 8-11) and ‘Does he *not understand/think/realise* ... (lines 13-15). Note that the negative forms do not involve only mental verbs.

N	Concordance
1	they need in Downing street; it is a photocopier. On boom and bust, does the Prime Minister not understand that, because he cannot be
2	previous record and that two of his vice-presidents are ex-warlords, does the Prime Minister not think that it would be better to have a
3	by 35,000 and employment go up by 53,000 but no welcome from him. Does that not show all his priorities? Will he now welcome the
4	with the design effects for that amazing British film, “Gravity”? Does that not prove that Bournemouth leads the way in digital media,
5	left office with unemployment lower than when they came to office? Does that not illustrate in this area, as in all others, the importance
6	on the side of the energy companies and united against a 50p tax. Does that not demonstrate to the Prime Minister that what people
7	say that the current reliance on means-testing is “not sustainable”? Does that not , coming from him, demonstrate the need for genuine
8	for a knee operation; 60 miles away, they could be treated in 33 days. Does not this show that patients should have the right to choose
9	now informed, are all on the police national computer. Mr. Cameron: Does not this go to a much bigger problem about the Home Office?
10	, and there are now more cancelled operations than for a decade. Does not the scale of those problems show that, on his watch,
11	not available in the House of Commons Library—I have just checked. Does not that show complete contempt for the House and will you
12	. The Prime Minister has taken more positions than the “Kama Sutra” Does he now regret not killing off the European constitution at the
13	spoke for his Fiscal Responsibility Bill last night. Not a single one. Does he not understand that a divided party without a proper plan is
14	feel insecure and half of them feel that they pay far too much in rent. Does he not think it is time to end the social cleansing of inner-city
15	getting parole as a direct consequence of his policies. That is wrong. Does he not realise that fewer people are getting parole because the

Figure 33: Sample concordance lines of negative processes involving *do* in UK PMQs

Whereas in all the negative interrogatives in the GMQs, ‘not’ was placed in post-subject position, 33 (34%) of the UK PMQs, placed ‘not’ in pre-subject position (lines 8-11, Figure 33) and 63 (66%) being post-subject (lines 1-7 and 12-15). Putting ‘not’ before the subject makes the expression of opinion more emphatic. According to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and

Svartvik (1985: 809), constructions with ‘not’ before the subject are formal and occur ‘in formal contexts where the subject is lengthy’. However, in the UK PMQs, the subjects include short forms such as ‘this’ and ‘that’ (Figure 33, lines 8, 9, 11). This, to a large extent, shows the emphatic nature of such questions in the UK PMQs. The preponderance of negative interrogatives, together with the pre-subject positioning of ‘not’, in the UK PMQs as against the GMQs could partly account for the UK PMQs appearing more biased and confrontational than the GMQs as noted before. Consider Example 48 from the Ghanaian data.

Example 48: GH 1 Feb 11/Col. 433:

Mr Agyapong [NPP]: Madam Speaker, *does the Hon Minister not think giving these culprits* [illegal operators whose SIM cards were seized, which led to the loss of revenue to the Government] *to the police for investigation alone would not solve the problem?* If the company had sanctioned them, in terms of revenue or tax, if it had slapped heavy taxes on them, *does he not think it would deter others from doing the same thing?*

Mr H. Iddrisu [NDC]: Madam Speaker, we are dealing with it at two levels: one, in accordance with the laws of Ghana; that is certainly a criminal matter which is being properly investigated for prosecution by the Ghana Police Service. The National Communications Authority (NCA) as the regulator, also has a responsibility to what the Hon Member is *suggesting*. They do have an anti-fraud committee which established even the dealings of the two other individuals who were arrested and the anti-fraud committee is continuing its work as and when is appropriate...

The design of Mr Agyapong’s question, *does the Hon Minister not think*, makes it an assertive *yes/no* question that ‘giving these culprits to the police for investigation alone would not solve the problem’ and that slapping ‘heavy taxes on them ... would deter others from doing the same thing’. What the question does is ask Mr Iddrisu for confirmation of that opinion. Rightly, Mr H. Iddrisu understands the question as ‘suggesting’ a solution rather than eliciting information, as he confirms in his response. According to Heritage (2002: 1428), negative questions of this nature are assertions, which slant opinions and express ‘a position or point of view’ rather than seek information. Mr Agyapong expects a positive response, an affirmation of his assertion, from the Minister. This, in Huddleston and Pullum’s (2002: 880) terms, is a ‘deontic bias’, ‘the speaker [Mr Agyapong] judging that one answer ought to be the right one’. Even though the question offers an opinion, the interaction between Mr

Agyapong and Mr Iddrisu is cordial and non-confrontational, as compared with Example 49 from the UK PMQs.

Example 49: UK 3 Jun 09/Col 270:

Mr. Nick Clegg (Sheffield, Hallam) (LD): ... We can now see that the Government are in total meltdown. The Prime Minister is thrashing around, fighting for his own political survival, but *does he not understand the extreme danger to our democracy when people start feeling that there is simply no one in charge?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: The dangers are when one does not deal with the problems that are before us. One of the problems is to deal with the expenses system in the House of Commons, and the second is to deal with the problems and challenges of the economy. I thought that the Liberal party would support us in the action that we are taking to help the unemployed, to help home owners, and to help small businesses, and I hope that the right hon. Gentleman will not join the other party in talking only about things other than policy. The country wants us to talk about what we are doing to help it.

Mr Clegg's negative question carries the presupposition that there is an *extreme danger to our democracy* because people have started *feeling that there is simply no one in charge*. What Mr Clegg does is request the Prime Minister (PM) to believe and affirm this presupposition. The question is biased with a negative orientation. Mr Clegg's bias becomes clearer when we examine the question in relation to the preface where he alleges that the 'Government are in total meltdown'. In other words, Mr Clegg, indirectly, makes an assertion that relates to the PM's cognition, that is, his knowledge, consciousness and acquaintance with governance. Mr Clegg reproachfully doubts the PM's ability to lead his government. To this end, the question can be said to be a 'design-based' preference question (Sidnell 2010a: 86-87), even though Mr Clegg knows that, by the mere fact that the question is contemptuous and comes from an opposition MP, the PM will not conform to his (Clegg's) preference. Having sensed the challenge to his mandate as a PM, Gordon Brown launches a rebuttal by averring that there is no such danger as he and his government are dealing with all problems at hand. Brown counter-accuses Mr Clegg and his Liberal party of not supporting measures they are 'taking to help the unemployed, to help home owners, and to help small businesses', stating that 'The country wants us to talk about what we are doing to help it'. Brown portrays himself as a socially-committed Prime Minister. He attempts to ideologically control the discourse to his advantage (van Dijk 2011a: 389), that is, to show that he is more concerned with the people's wellbeing than Mr Clegg and his party, thereby countering and neutralising

Mr Clegg's claim. Mr Clegg's reference to 'people' in 'people start feeling that ...' appeals to the overhearing audience, in the form of the citizenry. In parliamentary discourse, such as parliamentary questions, MPs know that what they do and say has significant implications for their political chances in the 'next' elections. Therefore, appealing to the conscience of the populace by way of 'positive self-representation and negative other-presentation' (van Dijk 2011a: 397; 1998: 260) is an important element of the discourse. This means that the 'inference that a question is biased towards a particular answer may be based simply on the context, together with assumptions about the speaker's intentions' (Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 881). This is a parliamentary context, where different political parties challenge and attempt to prove that they have better acumen and policies to improve the wellbeing of the people than other political parties. This, together with the disparagement in Mr Clegg's question, makes the question biased.

Apart from being biased, Examples 49 above and 50 below are 'person targeted' and 'idea targeted' respectively (Gibbons 2003: 112). Recall that in Chapter 4, section 4.3, we examined person- and idea-targeted questions, which queried (Prime) Ministers' attitudes. However, Examples 49 and 50 do not just query the (Prime) Ministers, but rather emphatically make assertions. What is being questioned in Example 49 is the PM's understanding, while in Example 50, it is the proposition of a simple choice that is being questioned.

Example 50: UK 3 Jun 09/Col 270:

Mr. Clegg [(Sheffield, Hallam) (LD)]: The Prime Minister just does not get it. His Government are paralysed by indecision, crippled by in-fighting, and exhausted after 12 long years. It is a tragedy that exactly at a time when people need help and action, the country does not have a Government; it has a void. Labour is finished. *Is it not obvious that the only choice now is between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats?*

The Prime Minister [Lab]: I seem to remember the Liberals saying that at every election that I have ever fought. The right hon. Gentleman is right to say that the country needs action, and the action is coming from this Government. If he will listen to what we are doing, I think that he will find it very difficult to oppose the measures that we are taking to help the car industry, to help the banks, to help the unemployed, and to help those people who are home owners. We are the party with the ideas about how to take this country out of recession; neither of the main Opposition parties has anything to offer us.

Example 50 makes an assertion and, therefore, it is biased. It seeks to compel the PM to accept the implied assertion that ‘the only choice now is between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats’ because the ‘Labour [Government] is finished’. This supposition is supported by the preface, in which Mr Clegg emphatically says that the PM has no control of his government. Mr Clegg presupposes only one answer to the question, an affirmation. Mr Clegg, in fact, indicts the PM. Based on this, it is clear that the interrogative asserts a position rather than truly attempting to elicit information from the PM, making it highly opinionated and attacking the competencies of the PM. It is unsurprising, therefore, that the PM defends himself and his government, challenging Mr Clegg to re-examine, in order to understand, what the government is doing: helping the car industry, the banks, the unemployed and home owners. The PM ideologically contrasts the competencies of his government and the opposition: ‘We are the party with the ideas about how to take this country out of recession; **neither of the main Opposition parties** has anything to offer us’, where he distinguishes ‘We’ from the ‘Opposition parties’. This is stancetaking which points to ‘*ideological polarisation*’ of ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ (van Dijk 2011a: 396). He makes a choice between his party and the opposition parties, just as Mr Clegg makes a choice in his question. Of course, one could argue that it is legitimate to advocate one’s own point of view in a debate where there are other points of view in play, and, therefore, Clegg’s standpoint would naturally be that ‘the only choice is between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats’. However, the issue here is that the question violates the parliamentary questioning rules, which disapprove of questions that ask opinions or offer information (Jack 2011: 358-359; Rogers and Walters (2006: 312).

The ‘face attacks’ (Culpeper 2011: 20, 18) in Examples 49 and 50 are not just person-centred (as in ‘The Prime Minister’) but whole party-centred (His government’ and ‘Labour’). Mr Clegg’s statements are highly disparaging: Brown’s ‘Government are in total meltdown’; he is ‘thrashing around, fighting his own political survival’; ‘he does not understand the extreme danger to our democracy’ (Example 49); and he ‘just does not get it’ and his ‘Government are paralysed by indecision ...’ (Example 50). Mr Clegg ‘attacks’ Brown’s ‘face’ and his ‘social identity’ (Holmes, Marra and Schnurr 2008: 196), negatively evaluating Brown’s political behaviour and performance. According to Culpeper (2011: 22):

[i]mpoliteness involves (a) a mental attitude held by a participant and comprised of negative evaluative beliefs about particular behaviours in

particular social contexts, and (b) the activation of that attitude by those particular in-context behaviours.

Mr Clegg's attack has 'emotional consequences' (Culpeper 2011: 21) for Brown as a Prime Minister. If the attack and accusation of failure goes un-refuted, it has negative consequences for Brown's electoral fortunes, as Mr Clegg openly asserts that *the only choice now is between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats*. This is particularly important since 'much of the present political rhetoric revolves around individuals and their respective competencies and personalities' (Wilson 1990: 66). Thus, Brown's counter-attack is a deflective strategy.

The examination of the negative *yes/no* interrogatives has shown that, because of their assertive nature, they are highly biased. They demonstrate the fact that 'negative interrogatives' that begin 'with such frames as "Isn't it", "Don't you", "Shouldn't you"' should be 'contested as "assertions"' 'expressing a position or point of view' (Heritage 2002: 1427-8). The bias is also revealed by the emotive nature of the interrogatives, as for example the accusation and counter-accusation between Mr Clegg and Gordon Brown in Example 50, pointing to the difference of opinion between them. This is a key feature of parliamentary discourse, where, in asking and answering questions, MPs and (Prime) Ministers demonstrate one-upmanship in order to politically outdo each other. To this end, the firmness with which MPs express their opinions and statements is crucial. In the next section, we examine epistemic marking as a means by which MPs affirm their commitment to their opinions and statements.

5.4.3 How MPs epistemically strengthen their opinions, assertions and biases

We have indicated above that MPs are often tactically biased with their questions. The questions are mainly assertions. This section examines how MPs use certain epistemic expressions to strengthen their opinions and assertions in order to enhance their believability and to control responses from (Prime) Ministers. As indicated in Chapter 4, section 4.2, the structure of parliamentary questions is:

(i. preface/a pre-question statement) + Question + (ii. post-script/post-question statement)

which means that questions are either preceded or followed by one or more declarative statements. These statements explicitly express MPs' assumptions and then questions are asked to seek or establish the addressee's confirmation, agreement, awareness (or otherwise) of those assumptions. A noteworthy aspect of the prefaces and postscripts to questions is epistemic marking, that is, indicating the MPs' certainty or commitment to the truth of their propositions or statements (Kosur 2010; Pontner 2009; Mayr 2008; Papafragou 2006; Bybee and Fleischman 1995; Palmer 1986; Halliday 1970). Epistemic expressions such as 'the Minister is aware/sure' or 'the Minister knows/believes' in the prefaces are used by MPs to set out their assumptions in order to make it difficult for the (Prime) Minister to deny those assumptions, thereby controlling the discourse to strengthen their biases. I have grouped the epistemic expressions identified in the data into four, namely: ... *is/will/may/might be aware (that)...*, *I am sure (that)...*, ... *know(s)/will know that...* and *I/we/people believe (that)...* I discuss them in turn.

The first group of these epistemic patterns can be represented as: *Minister/My right hon. Friend/he is/will/may/might be aware ...* (75 found in the Ghanaian data; 48 in UK data) (see Table 22 below).

Example 51: GH 1 Feb 11/Col. 436:

Mr Frederick Opare-Ansah: [i] *Madam Speaker, the Hon Minister is aware that the law as was crafted by this House does not permit the installation of equipment that would have the capability of monitoring the content of voice, video or data traffic. It is just supposed to be able to monitor the traffic volumes. [Q] How can he assure this House that due diligence has been done on the equipment that is being installed to ensure that it does not have this capability?*

Example 52: UK 18 Apr 2012/Col. 316:

Stephen Gilbert (St Austell and Newquay) (LD): [i] *The Prime Minister will be aware that no VAT is chargeable on caviar, yet the Government propose to charge VAT on the Cornish pasty. [Q] Can he tell me why that is fair?*

In Example 51, the italicised *is* is part of the preface in which Mr Opare-Ansah says *the Hon Minister is aware that...* This is an epistemic phrase that allows him to affirm his position relative to the statement and the proposition of the question that the law does not allow installation of the equipment referred to. Example 52 shows a similar characteristic when Stephen Gilbert says *The Prime Minister will be aware that...*

The second epistemic group is: *I am sure...* (7 occurring in the Ghanaian data; 19 in the UK data).

Example 53: UK 15 Jun 2005/Col. 258:

Colin Burgon's (Lab): ... [Q] *does he agree—* [i] *I am sure that he would—* [Q] *that only public ownership of what is left of our deep mine coal industry can guarantee its future in the years ahead?*

Example 54: GH 2 Feb 11/Col. 511:

Dr. A.A. Osei [NPP]: [i] *Madam Speaker, my good Friend, Hon Bagbin has been around a long time, so I am sure he can help us in this sense.* The way the Answer is given, [Q] I want to know whether the Local Government Act was what precipitated the World Bank loan or it was a World Bank loan that precipitated the ceding of the function.

'I am sure' indicates a firm belief that something is or is not the case. Using it in this context shows that Colin Burgon and Dr A.A. Osei have already taken firm and definite stances before asking their questions. 'I am sure' has the tendency of pushing the Minister into agreement.

The third set of epistemic expressions found in the data can be represented as: *Minister/My Right hon. Friend know(s)/will know that...* (52 recorded in the Ghanaian data; 82 in the UK).

Example 55: UK 2 Apr 14/Col. 881:

Siobhain McDonagh [Lab]: [i] *We all know that the bobby tax is wrong,* [ii] *but* [Q] *will the Prime Minister now accept that...?*

Siobhain McDonagh's proposition that 'the bobby tax is wrong' is strengthened by projecting onto the question 'We all know', which makes the assumption appear as a general belief. When MPs use 'know' in these contexts they indicate a high level of certainty about their propositions or statements. *I/We know* has a higher epistemic certainty than *The (Prime) Minister will know* because the addition of *will* reduces the certainty of the proposition, which in turn serves as a mitigator and a politeness marker. *I know* limits the truth or verification of a proposition to the knowledge of only the speaker, which weakens the recognisability of such a proposition. Thus, MPs often mark the high level of certainty by making the construction 'people' or generic 'we' oriented, making the proposition appear as common knowledge, as in Example 55 above.

The fourth and last set of the epistemic patterns we identified is represented as: *I/We believe...* (23 found in the Ghanaian data; 33 in the UK data).

Example 56: GH 5 Jun 09/Col. 290:

Mr. Joseph Boahen Aidoo [NPP]: [i] Madam Speaker ... *I believe given the rainfall pattern in the area, the road has already deteriorated.* [Q] Is there any urgency attached to the reconstruction of this road? Does he have any urgency attached to the reconstruction of this road?

Example 57: UK 3 Jun 09/Col. 272

Louise Ellman (Liverpool, Riverside) (Lab/Co-op): [Q] Can the Prime Minister say when a decision will be taken about granting a pardon to Michael Shields, following the High Court's decision last December? [i] *Michael has now been in prison for four years, following what I firmly believe to be a gross miscarriage of justice.*

'I (firmly) believe' in Examples 56 and 57 indicates Mr Aidoo's and Ellman's firm judgment of the propositions in their questions. In Example 56, *I believe* is part of the preface, which prepares the ground for the question. In Example 57, it is in the postscript, and evaluates the injustice of the imprisonment as 'a gross miscarriage of justice'. Louise Ellman heightens her proposition with the use of *firmly* as well as the statement of fact, the High Court decision. The use of 'believe' in these contexts shows what they think is or should be the situation.

Sometimes, these epistemic expressions are part of the main question itself, rather than being part of the preface or postscript. Consider this:

Example 58: GH 8 Jun 06/Col. 699:

Mr. Kwao [NDC]: Mr. Speaker, [Q] *is the hon. Minister aware that the only police vehicle for the Aseewa District Police Headquarters has been taken away to Accra for the past three years?*

Even though *is the hon. Minister aware that...* is in a question form rather than a statement, Mr Kwao is only requesting a confirmation of his claim that the police vehicle has been taken away – he, in fact, knows the answer to the question. Franklin and Norton (1993: 112) have argued that 'Few members [of parliament] would run the risk of asking' 'a question without knowing the likely answer'. In the questions to Ministers, asking a Minister whether he is aware of something invariably implies the MP knows the proposition of his/her question to be the case. In this sense, saying *The (Prime) Minister/My right hon. Friend/he*

is/will/may/might be aware ... in a preface to a question is semantically similar to embedding it in the question such as *Is the (Prime) Minister/My right hon. Friend/he aware that ...?* even though the latter may be more aggressive.

The above-mentioned epistemic patterns are similar to epistemic expressions such as ‘*I suppose, believe, guess, bet, assume*’ [sic], which, according to Downing and Locke (2006: 203), are ‘**markers** to “draw out” the desired information by reinforcing the speaker’s assumption’ in declarative questions, similar to coercive force in tag-questions (Gibbons 2008: 121-123). On a scale of certainty and strength of conviction of epistemicity, ‘know’, being a ‘factive’ reporting verb (Coulthard 1994: 6), is the strongest, followed by ‘aware’ (an adjective), then ‘sure’ (an adjective) and ‘believe’, which are non-factive (see Hazlett 2010).

Table 22: Epistemic markers and their orientations

Orientation and frequency									
Epistemic Marker		People/We	%	Addressee	%	Speaker	%	Total	%
Aware	GH	1	<i>1</i>	72	46	2	<i>1</i>	75	48
	UK	2	<i>1</i>	45	25	1	<i>0</i>	48	26
Sure	GH	0	<i>0</i>	3	2	4	<i>2</i>	7	4
	UK	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	19	<i>10</i>	19	10
Know	GH	14	<i>9</i>	10	<i>6</i>	28	<i>18</i>	52	33
	UK	32	<i>18</i>	26	<i>14</i>	24	<i>13</i>	82	45
Believe	GH	0	<i>0</i>	0	<i>0</i>	23	<i>15</i>	23	15
	UK	12	<i>7</i>	12	<i>7</i>	9	<i>5</i>	33	19
Total	GH	15	9	85	54	57	36	157	100
	UK	46	26	83	46	53	28	182	100

In using the above-mentioned epistemic structures, which are metadiscourse structures (Ilie 2003b: 87; Hyland 1998), MPs adopt three main orientation approaches to their propositions: (i) ‘people’/‘we’ oriented; (ii) addressee oriented and (iii) speaker oriented. In other words, MPs make the truth of their statements (see Halliday and

Matthiessen 2004: 53-55) rest with ‘people’/‘we’, the addressee or the speaker. We illustrate these in turn. Examples 55 above and 59 below are ‘people’/‘we’ oriented:

Example 59: UK 4 Sep 2013/Col 309:

Alun Cairns (Vale of Glamorgan) (Con): ... [Q] Is he *aware* that *4% of people believe* that Elvis is still alive? [i] That is double the number we hear today who think that the right hon. Member for Doncaster North (Edward Miliband) is a natural leader.

‘People’/‘we’ marking allows MPs to ‘use generalizations to shift the location of epistemic authority from the individual to the societal level’ (Jaffe 2009: 7), and ‘predict[s] or presuppose[s] the interlocutor’s [(Prime) Minister’s] ... agreement’ (Ilie 2003b: 87). If a proposition or statement is ‘people’/‘we’ oriented, (Prime) Ministers have comparatively very little room to deny the proposition, as a denial may imply being out of touch with the people and their interests. This is where the significance of the presence of the ‘overhearing audience’ (Heritage 1985) comes into play. MPs’ questions and (Prime) Ministers’ responses have major political effects on the overhearing audience in the form of the electorate. In terms of parliamentary interactions, whoever shows more concern for the interest of the citizenry has, at least in principle, an electoral advantage since the electorate would normally vote for politicians who show care and empathy for the welfare of the people. In effect, ‘people’/‘we’-oriented marking would appear to contain more pressure than addressee orientation, because, by indexing its claim to knowledge ‘as shared and compelling through the use of generalizations’, ‘people’/‘we’-orientation marking ‘can indirectly strengthen speakers’ stances’ (Jaffe 2009: 7). However, in terms of frequency, ‘people’/‘we’ orientation occurred 15 (9%) and 46 (26%) times, compared with addressee and speaker orientations (Table 22), in the Ghanaian and UK data respectively, which means it was the least frequent in both datasets. ‘People’/‘we’-oriented marking may be populist, a hasty generalisation or a sweeping statement.

While Example 60 is addressee oriented, Example 61 is speaker oriented. Rhetorically, ‘people’-oriented marking has the strongest believability, while speaker orientation appears weakest. Addressee orientation recorded the highest frequency in both datasets, with the GMQs recording 85 (54%) and the UK PMQs recording 83 (46%).

Example 60: UK18 Apr 2012/Col 315:

Stephen Gilbert (St Austell and Newquay) (LD): [i] *The Prime Minister will be aware* that no VAT is chargeable on caviar, yet the Government propose to charge

VAT on the Cornish pasty. [Q] Can he tell me why that is fair?

Example 61: GH 13 Jul 05/Col 1860:

Mr. Haruna Iddrisu [NDC]: ... [i] *I am aware that* the last Parliament approved some funding to take care of self-help electrification programme...

Addressee orientation usually puts some level of pressure on (Prime) Ministers, as they are made the source of verifiability. However, it allows them the possibility of denial or affirmation. Speaker-oriented epistemic marking had the second highest frequency in both datasets: 57 (36%) in the Ghanaian data and 53 (28%) in the UK data. The high frequency of the two reflects the interactional nature of the question and answer session.

Table 22 indicates that even though addressee-orientation marking was the highest, it did not occur with ‘believe’ in the Ghanaian data and ‘sure’ in the UK data. Speaker-orientation marking being the second highest occurred across all four epistemic markers – ‘aware’, ‘sure’, ‘know’ and ‘believe’ – with ‘know’ being the greatest in size. This may mean that MPs portray themselves as being on top of the issues about which they ask questions and accept personal responsibility for the truth of their claims. In terms of ‘people’/‘we’ orientation, ‘know’ has the highest frequency. This confirms ‘know’ as holding the strongest level of conviction when used as an epistemic marker, since ‘people’/‘we’ orientation contains the greatest appeal to believability.

Our analysis so far indicates that the parliamentary *yes/no* interrogatives are highly biased as a result of the way they are designed and the actions they anticipate from (Prime) Ministers. The questions’ preferences for particular responses are even more forceful as a result of the statements on which they ‘verge’ (Sidnell 2010b: 26). As Sidnell (2010a: 87) asserts:

a YNI [*yes/no* interrogative] establishes preferences for particular kinds of response based not only on the action it embodies and the manner in which it is designed, but also on the more basic fact that it is a YNI.

We have explored how *yes/no* interrogatives with mental processes are used by MPs to find out what is on (Prime) Ministers’ mind and coerce them to accept certain propositions. We have explained that indirect *yes/no* interrogatives are the major difference between GMQs and UK PMQs. We have observed how *yes/no* and negative interrogatives function as assertions rather than genuine elicitation of information. We have also discussed how MPs

enhance the strength of their claims by means of certain epistemic structures. Considering that parliamentary question time is an engagement between two opposing groups of socio-political actors who are ideologically inclined and competing for political power and dominance, it makes it understandable why MPs use questions as a conduit to make statements and attribute certain propositions to (Prime) Ministers in order to either enhance or discredit their credibility. MPs and (Prime) Ministers take conflictual positions and express ‘attitudes, feelings, judgments, or commitment concerning the propositional content of’ their ‘message[s]’ (Biber and Finegan 1989: 93). By constructing their questions to offer opinions, make assertions and indicate their lines of thought as well as (Prime) Minister’s, MPs demonstrate a mind game and a competitive behaviour to psychologically outdo each other for political point scoring. In order to make their assertions, opinions and propositions more plausible and convincing, MPs use epistemic expressions. Such epistemic uses portray the MPs as being on top of the political issues and game.

While it appears that the construction of MPs questions is influenced by the nature of parliamentary politics and interactions, there is evidence to suggest that such questions contravene the parliamentary rules for questions (Rogers and Walters 2006: 312). In the next section, we examine how MPs’ questions ignore the parliamentary rules and how the Speakers of parliament manage the interactional rules.

5.5 Parliamentary rules of questioning: realism or idealism?

While we have observed in the last section that parliamentary questions often explicitly contain assertions and opinions, the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary rules of questioning stipulate that these questions ‘are not in order’ (Jack 2011: 359). In *Erskine May’s treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of parliament*, Jack (2011: 358-359; see also Champion and Cocks 1950: 342-343) provides ‘the rules of order regarding form and content of questions’ in the UK parliament as:

The purpose of a question is to obtain information or press for action; it should not be framed primarily so as to convey information, or so as to suggest its own answer or convey a particular point of view...

Questions which seek an expression of opinion, or which contain arguments, expressions of opinion, inferences or imputations, unnecessary epithets, or rhetorical, controversial, ironical or offensive expressions, are not in order.

Similarly, Rogers and Walters (2006: 312; see also Harris 2001: 456-7) state that parliamentary questions in the Commons ‘must not offer information (‘Is she aware that ...?’) or be argumentative (‘Does he agree that it is unacceptable that ...?’). The Ghanaian Parliamentary Standing Orders also state in Order 67 (1) (b) that ‘a Question shall not contain any arguments, expression of opinion, inferences, imputations, epithets or controversial, ironical or offensive expressions or hypothetical cases’. Subsection (e) states that ‘a Question shall not solicit the expression of an opinion...’ The question is: to what extent do MPs adhere to these rules of questioning and how practical is the application of the rules? It appears that in the UK parliament these rules are not enforced as there was no instance in the PMQs where the Speaker disallowed a question for offering information, being argumentative, insinuating or imputative. We observed from the previous sections that most of the parliamentary questions are, in fact, ‘framed so as to suggest [their] own answer or convey a particular point of view’, in direct contravention of the rules.

One area where the Ghanaian parliamentary questions differ from the UK ones is in the use of opinionated and argumentative questions that involve mental verbs and adjectives such as ‘agree’, ‘accept’ and ‘aware’. For example, a keyword analysis of ‘agree’ as in ‘Does X agree that...?’ indicates a positive keyness value (+1,044.15) in the PMQs, but a zero keyness value in the GMQs (Table 23). The Table indicates that ‘agree’ and ‘accept’ did not appear in the first 500 (i.e. first 5%) of keywords in the GMQs when compared with the ICE-Ghana. However, ‘agree’ is highly frequent (0.15/1000 words) and significant (keyness value of 1,044.15) in the PMQs as against 0.02% in the BNC. ‘Accept’ and ‘aware’ are also Key in the PMQs. ‘Aware’ is more key in the GMQs (637.96) than the PMQs. This indicates that, even as Ghanaian Speakers of Parliament try to disallow opinion, argumentative and information-offering questions (as I show in the subsequent paragraphs), MPs do sometimes succeed in asking them. Mental verbs/adjectives such as ‘agree’, ‘accept’ and ‘aware’ promote argumentation by asking (Prime) Ministers for their opinions about situations and propositions raised by MPs in their questions. To ask (Prime) Ministers whether they agree to or accept a situation is to ask their opinions.

Table 23: Frequencies and keyness of ‘agree’, ‘accept’ and ‘aware’ in PMQs and GMQs

UK Keyword	PMQs Freq.	/1000	BNC Freq.	/1000	Keyness	P-value
Agree	267	0.15	8,060	-	1,044.15	0.00000
Accept	53	0.03	9,629	-	47.20	0.00000
Aware	60	0.03	10,478	0.01	56.65	0.00000

GH Keyword	GMQs Freq.	/1000	ICE-GH Freq.	/1000	Keyness	P-value
Agree	-	-	-	-	-	-
Accept	-	-	-	-	-	-
Aware	151	0.10	69	-	637.96	0.00000

There were instances in the Ghanaian Minister’s questions where the Speakers disallowed questions that flouted the rules. Consider the following exchange between the Speaker of the Ghanaian parliament and Mr Felix-Twumasi-Appiah:

Example 62: GH 3 Jun 09/Col. 164:

Mr. Felix Twumasi-Appiah [NDC]: [i] Madam Speaker, the question to the Minister — the main Question was to ask of him what measures were being taken to curb the current spate of road accidents. Madam Speaker, my question to the Minister is, [Qi] *would he agree with me that these road accidents issue did not start today and* [Qii] *will he further agree with me that if there were any practical measures that were put in place by the previous Administration, we will not have been where we are today?* I — [Interruptions.] [Qiii] *Would he further agree with me that since the assumption of power, his Ministry has done enough to curb the spate of accidents on our roads?* [Interruptions.]

Madam Speaker: Hon Member, since your question should not provoke a debate, can you reframe it?

Mr. Twumasi-Appiah: Madam Speaker, for the benefit of those who did not hear, I will repeat the question. [Interruption.]

Madam Speaker: Do not repeat it, re-frame it so that it does not cause a debate. What do you want to know?

Mr. Twumasi-Appiah: Madam Speaker, my question is that, if the Hon Minister would agree with me that the spate of the accidents, did not begin today and that — [Interruption.]

Madam Speaker: You cannot ask him for his opinion. [Interruptions.] So please, come to the question and not an opinion.

Mr. Twumasi-Appiah: Madam Speaker, my question is, if the Hon Minister would agree with me that a lot more had been done under his administration to curb the spate of road accidents and if these things were done in the past, these current road accidents would not have happened. [Interruptions.]

Madam Speaker: I will not allow that question, it does not arise from the main Question. Unless you want to frame it in another way, I will disallow it. Let us have two more questions.

Mr Twumasi-Appiah's question is a multipart question with three sub-questions, each of which contains 'agree' – [#i] 'would he agree with me that ...', [#ii] 'will he further agree with me that' and [#iii] 'Would he further agree with me that ...'. Since these are opinion and argumentative questions, the Speaker requests Mr Twumasi-Appiah to rephrase the question. The exchange goes on until the Speaker says, 'I will not allow that question'.

Sometimes, it is the MPs themselves who draw the Speakers' attention to the contraventions of the rules, as exemplified in the exchange between Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu and Mr Bagbin below:

Example 63: GH Col. 452, 10 Jun 09:

Mr. Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu [NPP, Minority Leader]: [i]... Madam Speaker, when the exercise started from Greater Accra, which was the first region, the letter from the General Headquarters, PA/GAF/Burma Camp, dated 15th February, 2008 commenced the process on 4th March 2008. [Q] *Is he aware?* [Q] *Is he aware of it that this letter from the Ghana Armed Forces indicated that the process was starting on 4th March 2008?* [ii] And if he is aware, [Q] *would he admit that the Answer he has provided here to the people of Ghana is wrong, would he agree?*

Mr. Bagbin [NDC, Majority Leader] — rose —

Madam Speaker: Hon Majority Leader, is it a point of order?

Mr Bagbin: Madam Speaker, **we are guided by our rules.** And Standing Order 67 is very clear as to what this question should comply with. And clearly, my Hon Colleague is using a document and trying to say that once the document has stated 4th March, the exercise necessarily started on the 4th March and that the Hon Minister stating 10th March, he has deceived the good people of Ghana. [Interruption.]

Madam Speaker, this, definitely is caught by 67 (1) (b): "... a Question shall not contain any arguments, ..." He is already arguing with the Hon Minister as to the date — [Uproar] — "...any arguments". That is one — arguing. Two: "...expression of opinion, inferences, imputations, epithets or controversial, ironical or offensive expressions or hypothetical cases"... The second thing is that he is reading some imputations into the Answer. So if he has to rephrase his question, I think he should better do that, if not, Madam Speaker, you should not allow this question. [Hear! Hear!]

...

Madam Speaker: Hon Member, rephrase your question?

On realising that Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu is offering information and asking the Minister's opinion on that information, Mr Bagbin intervenes to challenge him. Mr Bagbin quotes from Standing Order 67 (1) (b) and asks the Speaker to rule out the question. After quite a long debate between the two as well as the Speaker, the Speaker asks Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu to rephrase the question. The concordance lines of 'rule' (17 times), 'not allow' (8 times), 'rephrase' (9 times) and 'reframe' (3) in Figure 34 below reinforce the practice of disallowing questions which contravene the rules of questioning in the Ghanaian parliament. In the UK data, there was only one (1) instance of 'rule' that showed the Speaker disallowing a question and one (1) instance of a 'point of order' (Figure 35) to challenge a question for being *sub judice*. The control and policing of the GMQs considerably reduces argumentative and opinion questions, thereby lessening confrontations. This is probably why GMQs appear to be less confrontational than the UK PMQs.

1	that, that is unacceptable in this House. It offends against our rules . Would he consider amending the statement to be fair to
2	judgement in this matter. [Laughter.] Madam Speaker: Before I rule , can I have the question again? What was the question? Mr.
3	, I have not argued, I have not imputed anything, but you may rule and I believe Madam Speaker, I can trust your judgement in
4	and therefore, what was I supposed to withdraw? Mr Speaker had ruled ; so it is a ruling. Mr First Deputy Speaker: In fact, I have
5	. "In case" — No, he cannot answer the question. It is against the rules . Mr Kwabena Appiah-Pinkrah — rose — Madam Speaker:
6	. 11.15 a.m. Mr. Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu: Madam Speaker, before you rule , the Majority Leader refers to Order 67 (1) (b) and with your
7	in this context is totally wrong and I would plead with you to rule him out of order and allow the Minister to answer the
8	had ruled; so it is a ruling. Mr First Deputy Speaker: In fact, I have ruled him out . Mr Owusu-Agyemang: Exactly. I would now ask the
9	question is completely out of order. My hon. Colleague knows the rules , that questions which are asked of Ministers should not be
10	trying to argue his case. Mr. Speaker, that is not permitted by our rules . Mr. Speaker : Hon. Member for Upper Manya, could you ask
11	point of order? Mr. Bagbin: Madam Speaker, we are guided by our rules . And Standing Order 67 is very clear as to what this
12	are the President of this House and you, in your wisdom, have ruled that that was out of order and therefore, what was I
N	Concordance
1	Speaker: Your question was a hypothetical one. So, I did not allow it. Mr Appiah-Pinkrah: And also the valuation of
2	to tell us what he wants to do with us. So thank you. I will not allow the question . [Pause] I want everybody to make a
3	he should better do that, if not, Madam Speaker, you should not allow this question . [Hear! Hear!] Madam Speaker: Hon
4	which is contrary to the court's decision — So I would not allow the question . Q338. Mr Kyei-Mensah-Bonsu:
5	. [Interruptions.] Col. 165, 3 Jun 09 Madam Speaker: I will not allow that question , it does not arise from the main
N	Concordance
1	. Col. 1823, 5 Jul 10 Mr Owusu-Bio: Madam Speaker, I will rephrase it. Madam Speaker, I will put the question again
2	the Order Paper and the Answers he has given but let me rephrase it now . Since the Hon Minister is saying that the
3	Speaker: Hon Member, can you ask the question again? Rephrase the question . Mr Nayan: Mr Speaker, my
4	as a basis of your foundation — [Interruptions] — So, rephrase your question . Mr Owusu-Agyemang: Mr Speaker,
5	the Question? Mr First Deputy Speaker: Hon Member, rephrase your question because there is no evidence on
N	Concordance
1	your question should not provoke a debate, can you reframe it? Mr. Twumasi-Appiah: Madam Speaker, for
2	, then the question you are asking would be admitted. Reframe . Mr Nayan: Mr Speaker, the Hon Minister's
3	Speaker, I am actually asking — Madam Speaker: Can you reframe your question ? Dr. Dakura: Madam Speaker, I

Figure 34: Concordance lines indicating questions being disallowed in the GH MQs

N	Concordance
1	, Lord Harris, was referred to as a spiv. Will you rule , Mr. Speaker , that that is inappropriate language
N	Concordance
1	continue. Mr. Michael Fallon (Sevenoaks) (Con): On a point of order , Mr. Speaker . During the recent

Figure 35: Concordance lines of two occasions when questions were disallowed in UK PMQs

The power of the Speaker in Ghana's parliament can be observed in the frequent references to the Speaker during the Minister's Questions, as shown in Table 24. Jack (2011: 356) states that the Speaker of the UK parliament 'is the final authority as to the admissibility of questions' and his 'responsibility is limited to their compliance with the rules of the House'. While the UK data show much less reference to the speaker, it seems that the UK Speaker's power is less frequently called upon.

Table 24: References to Speakers in Ghanaian MQs and UK PMQs

Parliament	Address	%	Intervention	%	Total	%/1000 words
Ghana	1,959	80	474	20	2,433	16.59
UK	30	21	111	79	141	0.80

The title ‘Mr (Deputy)/Madam Speaker’ occurred 2,433 times (16.59/1000 words) in the Ghanaian data, with 1,959 (80%) occurring as address terms, 474 (20%) being the Speakers’ intervention. Sixteen (16, i.e. 3%) of the 474 appeared in the context of the Speakers calling MPs to ‘Order’. However, in the UK PMQs, Mr (Deputy) Speaker appeared 141 times (0.80/1000 words), with 30 (21%) being address terms and 111 (79%) as interventions. Thirty-one (31, i.e. 30%) of the 111 occurred when the Speakers called MPs to ‘Order’. In both parliaments, MPs address (Prime) Ministers through the Speakers of Parliament (SoP). It shows that Speakers have the power to either allow or disallow a question if it violates any rules of engagement. The higher frequency of address and intervention by SoP in the GMQs signifies that Speakers controlled questions more than in the UK PMQs. While the control is an attempt to make MPs ask issue-based questions, it also demonstrates how the Speakers exert their authority as controllers of proper parliamentary behaviour and admissibility of questions. Considering that ‘the MPs of a country share a set of cultural expectations, which are closely related to social and communicative activities’ (Săftoiu 2013: 47), the MPs parliamentary behaviour and the Speakers’ desire to control (or not to control) the questions would have cultural underpinnings. The ability of the Speakers to control questions reflects the Ghanaian and ‘African value of respect for authority’ (Banda 2009: 231; see also Tomaselli 2003). That kind of respect makes it imperative for MPs to obey the authority of the Speaker, as we saw in Example 63, where the Majority and Minority leaders invite the Speaker to ‘rule’ in their favour as well as the willingness by the MPs to ‘rephrase’ their questions (see Figure 34).

Further, the higher percentage (79%) of interventions (with 30% being calls to ‘Order’, as in Figure 36) in the UK PMQs may point to the rowdiness (Bates et al 2012: 20) and ‘yobbery and public school twittishness’ (Parkinson 2014) at the PMQs, as the House of Commons Speaker, John Bercow, is quoted to have said. The sample concordance lines

in Figure 36 show that the Speaker calling MPs to ‘order’ occurred in the context of ‘interruptions’, which reflects the rule-breaking by the MPs.

N	Concordance
1	that the Prime Minister—[Hon. Members: “Answer.”] Mr. Speaker: Order . Let the Leader of the Opposition speak. He does not need to
2	on small businesses, let us— Hon. Members: Answer. Mr. Speaker: Order . The Prime Minister is answering. I can hear him answering. [
3	booms that we had under the Labour Government. Mr Speaker: Order . Before the right hon. Member for Rotherham (Mr MacShane)
4	new chairman is being announced today. [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . Hon. Members should listen to what the Prime Minister has
5	, Derek Scott. He was asked— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . The Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Cameron: He was asked
6	(Devizes) (Con): Today, a group of MPs— [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . Hon. Members should not be yelling at the hon. Lady. It is
7	David Lammy (Tottenham) (Lab): The— [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . The House must calm down. I want to hear Mr David Lammy.
8	Prime Minister does not have to listen— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . I call the Leader of the— [Interruption.] Order. I call the
9	been released early— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . The hon. Member for Wirral, West (Stephen Hesford) must
10	and fiscal policy. He has forgotten— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . The Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Cameron: He loves to
11	shut up and listen to the answer. [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . Other Members can now follow the Prime Minister’s advice
12	, but I think that it is profoundly wrong. [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . I want to accommodate Back Benchers. Andrew Percy (Brigg
13	any changes in the health service at all— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . Let the Prime Minister speak. The Prime Minister: As for
14	, and we should continue with that. [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . [Interruption.] The House must come to order. I want to
15	this question, because the shadow— [Interruption.] Mr. Speaker: Order . The Prime Minister is in order. The Prime Minister: As far as
16	, one of the best ways of helping— [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . Mr Hughes must be heard. Simon Hughes: Does the Prime
17	Carswell (Clacton) (Con): A few weeks— [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . Let us have some order in the House. I want to hear Mr
18	schools, he will learn a few manners. [Interruption.] Mr Speaker: Order . Some people are going to burst they are getting so excited,
19	difficult downturn that they face. Hon. Members: More! Mr. Speaker: Order . The Leader of the Opposition. Mr. Cameron: The Prime
20	absenteeism from school, and perhaps look to— Mr. Speaker: Order . The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend raises the important

Figure 36: Sample concordance lines showing Speakers calling MPs to order in UK PMQs

The rule-breaking and the subsequent confrontations it causes between MPs and PM’s in the UK parliament has been recognised by previous research. Bates, Kerr, Byrne and Stanley (2012: 22) have said that ‘the Westminster system’ has been historically criticised for encouraging ‘aggressive, bullish, adversarial and “macho” style of politics’, a claim which Bates et al. say has been confirmed recently in interviews by David Cameron (PM) and Ed Miliband (Leader of Opposition). Again, Bates et al. (2012: 20) quote Bercow (2010) as saying (highlight mine):

A Procedure Committee report in 1995 noted that PMQs no longer served its original purpose and had instead ‘developed from being a procedure for the legislature to hold the executive to account into a partisan joust between the **noisier** supporters of the main political parties’.

Bates et al. seem to affirm this view as they claim that PMQs appear to have become ‘both rowdier and increasingly dominated by the main party leaders’. Consider Example 64 (which represented in Figure 36, line 11):

Example 64: UK 30 Mar 2011/Col. 342:

The Prime Minister [DC]: I completely understand the point that the hon. Lady makes, particularly in relation to Stoke, where the Potteries—
[*Interruption.*] *I wish that the shadow Chancellor would occasionally shut up and listen to the answer.* [*Interruption.*]

Mr Speaker: *Order.* Other Members can now follow the Prime Minister's advice to the shadow Chancellor. *We need a bit of order.*

Example 64 seems to support Bates et al.'s claim of rowdiness, as David Cameron is interrupted twice here by MPs, forcing the Speaker to rebuke and call them to *Order*, saying '*We need a bit of order*'. The interruption is usually in the form of jeering from opposition MPs to the PM in the course of answering a question, or government MPs to opposition MPs drawing their attention to a perceived 'good' response from the PM. The PM's statement, *I wish that the shadow Chancellor would occasionally shut up and listen to the answer*, also points to the rowdiness that characterises the session.

During a BBC One's political debate programme, *Question Time* (2014), panellists were asked: *Is the petty adversarial nature of politics causing its own decline?* The panellists (including Penny Mordaunt, MP; Mary Creagh, MP; Nigel Farage, European Parliament and leader of the UKIP; Russell Brand, a popular comedian and campaigner; and Camilla Cavendish, *Times Columnist*) and the audience almost unanimously agreed that PMQs had become 'very petty'. A member of the audience said that PMQs had lost any 'sense of decency' as MPs often shouted 'across to each other', were 'rude' and used 'ridiculous and stupid words'. It was said that PMQs had become a 'blame game', 'everyone tries to blame everyone else' and '*the idea of the general good had been forgotten*' (emphasis mine), with the debates being about MPs own self-interest. Similarly, in a recent *BBC Newsbeat* (2015) programme, six young voters, after watching the final PMQs before the 2015 General Elections, were asked what they thought of the PMQs. The six of them described PMQs respectively as:

- i. Kodjo, 23 years – 'PASSION[ATE], INFORMATIVE, GAGS';
- ii. Keesha, 21 years – 'Disrespectful', 'Unpassionate, Football Match';
- iii. Mel, 24 years – 'Childish, Pathetic, Old fashioned';
- iv. Jodie, 23 years – 'PANTOMIME, ONE-UPMANSHIP, ARCHAIC';
- v. Royce, 23 years – 'CHAOTIC, DISRESPECTFUL, INFORMATIVE'; and

vi. Matt, 19 years – ‘CONTRIVED, POINT-SCORING’, OPPORTUNITY’.

The public condemnation of MPs’ behaviour suggests some ‘dissonance’ between the MPs’ mandate ‘to serve the people’ and their practice (Moshe 2010: 179), which ‘in recent decades’ has led to ‘a trend decline in levels of trust and confidence in politicians’ (Hay 2007: 28). Notwithstanding such decline in trust, the UK general election turnout, for example, has increased steadily from 2001 (59.4%) through 2005 (61.4%), 2010 (65.1%) to 2015 (66.1%) (UK Parliament 2015d), suggesting some difference between people’s attitudes towards politicians and voting patterns. Similarly, about 62% of the Ghanaian public (Mensah 2015) see the Ghanaian MPs as people in pursuit of personal interest rather than the general good of the people. Thus, the rule-following behaviour does not seem to make any difference in terms of the public perception. This could be attributed to the fact the majority of Ghanaians have little or no access to the parliamentary proceedings. The televising of the Ghanaian parliamentary proceedings by *GTV Govern* is a recent practice. Again, as we observe in Chapter 6, there is less control of the parliamentary debates and, therefore, the behaviour of MPs appears to be more confrontational than the Ghanaian Minister’s questions (GMQs). The Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates we study in Chapter 6 attracts more media and public attention than the GMQs because of its national appeal, as it deals with the president’s annual address. Thus, MPs’ behaviour in those debates may have been overshadowed by that of the question time.

It must be acknowledged that the UK Speakers’ inability to disallow questions that contravene the rules may result from practical constraints. In fact, Jack (2011: 455) states that the Speaker, ‘may refrain from intervening if he thinks it unnecessary to do so’. An attempt not to allow questions could generate discord between the Speakers and the MPs, which in turn could create some challenges for backbenchers to hold the executive to account. On the other hand, the Ghanaian Speakers disallowing questions could be a means of protecting the image of the government and the Ministers from questions that are critical and damaging. Since the Ghanaian Speakers of parliament are normally appointed by the government either from among the Majority MPs or someone from outside parliament (and approved by parliament), they owe allegiance to the government and are more likely to protect the image of the government. However, Example 62, which was disallowed was a government MP’s question that sought to project the image of the government by urging the

Minister to express a positive opinion about the government. Unlike the Ghanaian Speakers, the UK Speakers are MPs. The Speakers and the MPs are, therefore, likely to see each other as peers, which could account for the more liberal approach adopted by the Speakers. These practical issues present a conflict between the parliamentary rules of questions as to whether they are realistic or idealistic.

5.6 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated how MPs use mental process *yes/no* interrogatives and negative *yes/no* interrogatives to control (Prime) Ministers' responses. MPs habitually construct these *yes/no* interrogatives such that they make assertions and offer opinions rather than seek information. The high density and predominance of mental process verbs, especially in the case of *do*-operator interrogatives, and the employment of negative interrogatives (which are 'strongly biased' – Huddleston and Pullum 2002: 881), lead to emotionally loaded opinionated statements that result in argumentation between MPs and (Prime) Ministers. There is a kind of mind game, that is, a struggle for psychological one-upmanship in which MPs and (Prime) Ministers use 'defensive or offensive strategies to achieve stated or unstated goals' (McDermott and King 1988: 360). In Chapter 4, we saw how question design affects the interpretations and meanings of questions and how MPs use the prefaces/postscripts to make either face-attacking and face-threatening or face-enhancing propositions and presuppositions, which, along party lines, either attempt to undermine or enhance the (Prime) Ministers' or their governments' image or credibility. That question design is even more effectual in the construction of interrogatives with mental processes and negative interrogatives, as MPs mainly seek (Prime) Ministers' agreement/disagreement to the propositions or presuppositions in the questions. Thus, the questions become not only leading questions (see Baxter, Boon and Marley 2006; Dodd and Bradshaw 1980; Loftus 1975) so as to prefer a particular response, but also, and more importantly, assertions. In order to make their assertions and opinions believable, MPs use epistemic structures to enhance the authenticity of their propositions. To this end, they employ three kinds of orientation: 'we'/'people', addressee and speaker orientations. We observed that 'we'/'people' orientation had the highest level of believability followed by addressee orientation.

The chapter further examined how MPs' questions contravene the parliamentary rules of questioning. We have seen that while Ghanaian Speakers of parliament police and control the questions and disallow questions that violate the rules, the UK Speakers allow all such questions. Our conclusion has been that while the control of the questions is an attempt by the Speakers to exercise their power, they are influenced largely by the Ghanaian and African value of respect for authority. Controlling the questions may also be a means of protecting the image of the government from being damaged by critical and challenging questions. We have also said that certain practical constraints affect the ability of the UK MPs to apply the rules, including the possibility of creating discord between them and the backbench MPs.

The chapter also looked at dependent/indirect *yes/no* interrogatives. These interrogatives are characterised by matrix clauses in which the interrogatives are embedded. Their complexity is influenced by Ghanaian language (L1) interference as Ghanaian languages lack explicit modals. The matrix clauses usually contain 'want'-statements which mark politeness, instead of the use of modals as markers of politeness by the UK MPs. Thus, the dependent/indirect *yes/no* interrogatives are a major source of difference between the Ghanaian Minister's questions (GMQs) and the UK Prime Minister's questions (UK PMQs). Considering the rules for questioning in both GMQs and the UK PMQs, there is evidence to suggest that the GMQs are more strictly controlled and policed by the Speakers of Parliament, making the questions less hostile and antagonistic than UK PMQs. The hostilities, personal attacks and confrontations between MPs and (Prime) Ministers appear to pay credence to the view that politicians generally (and MPs specifically) are motivated by self-interest rather than a concern for developmental needs of the people (Question Time 2014). However, remember we hinted at 'people' being a keyword in UK PMQs in section 4.5.2. This is supported by the 'we'/'people' orientation that we discussed. Against this backdrop, and deploying the principle of evaluation in the next chapter, we investigate how, in their parliamentary debates, MPs make references to 'people' to demonstrate a sense of care for what I have called *the people concern*.

6 Parliamentary debates as evaluation

... political discourse ... is driven by the challenge and wish to argue in order to influence people's minds, to motivate people to act and even to manipulate people. That is why speakers do not only advance their own arguments in favour of their positions, but they also provide arguments discarding the other side's arguments.

Ilie (2009: 35)

6.1 Introduction

The above quotation offers a view on the nature of political discourse, which illuminates the parliamentary debates that we examine in this chapter. While debating, MPs engage in extensive people-referencing and people-focusing, which entails mentions of 'people' for political ends. For parliamentarians deliberating government policies, debating is evaluating. It is about assessing, usually along party lines, whether or not government policies are right. The UK Queen's Address debates (UK QADs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONADs) involve politically- and ideologically-oriented evaluation in which MPs 'offer an account or critique of the existing order', undertake to 'provide a model of a desired future' and outline why the status quo should be maintained or 'how [and why] political change can and should be brought about' (Haywood 200: 22). These parliamentary debates are about judging the effectiveness of key government policy objectives and wide-ranging political, economic and social matters that concern the wellbeing of the citizenry, and

it becomes possible to see ... how adapting to the beliefs and values of the audience [the citizenry] and producing an argument that is comparatively better, rhetorically speaking, than another, might give an arguer [an MP] a considerable advantage in mobilizing the support of a greater proportion of the audience.

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 59)

People is a *Wordsmith* keyword in both debates and these uses attempt to put people at the forefront of policymaking. *People* is about four times as frequent in the UK QADs as it is in the BNC and about three times as frequent in the GH SONADs compared with the ICE-Ghana. While government MPs judge the policies outlined in the UK QADs and GH SONADs as helping (or having the potential) to lift people out of poverty, opposition MPs mainly disagree. The sense of putting people's concerns at the forefront of policy is what I

call *the people concern*. This concept includes a wider view of *people* than the word itself and includes such related words and hyponyms as: *country, nation, men/women, children, youth, constituent(s)/constituency, Ghana, Ghanaian(s), UK/United Kingdom, (Great) Britain, and British*, as used in the debates. For illustration purposes and to maximise the use of space, I use only Ghanaian examples in i-vii below. Sometimes, *people* references are expressed in multiword phrases, as in *iii* and *v*.

- i. ... if the President really knows the struggles out there. **PEOPLE** are suffering.
(4 Mar 2010/Col. 1703)
- ii. We are all now enjoying our constitutional and democratic rights as **a country**.
(1 Mar 2011/Col. 1774)
- iii. ... so that **the entire nation** will realise that the President has realised that ...
(1 Mar 2011/Col. 1753)
- iv. ... the President is being forthright with **Ghanaians** and telling the truth.
(26 Feb 2009/Col. 822)
- v. ... which I think is for **the whole Ghana** and not for any particular individual...
(4 Mar 2011/Col. 2117)
- vi. ... a conscious effort on the part of policy designers to make room for **the youth**
...
(8 Feb 2005/Col. 307)
- vii. This is because we are here representing **our constituents** and they need to know
...
(26 Feb 2013/Col. 990)

Through componential analysis (Belfarhi 2013), all the highlighted words have a semantic feature of ‘people’, denoting the masses. In their debates, MPs’ use of ‘people’ encompasses those who need economic and social interventions for the improvement of their lives, as in example (i) above. I use the term *the people concern* to refer to the idea, as usually echoed in the parliamentary debates, that the focus of governments, governmental or public policies should be to cater for the socio-economic wellbeing of the entire populace. In other words, governments (must) provide (or at least create the environment), for the needs of the people: general public goods and services, defence, public order and safety, economic development, health, education, social protection, among others.

The chapter identifies and discusses the kinds of needs and concerns MPs ascribe to different classes of people. It also examines ways in which MPs evaluate people's concerns during GH SONADs and UK QADs in order to examine the linguistic manifestations of evaluation alongside *the people concern*. It first looks at the context of the debates and their rhetorical structure in order to demonstrate the 'interpretive frame' of the debates, that is, the '[b]roader general ideas about "what's going on"' or what the debaters are doing (Jones 2003: no pagination).

6.2 Contexts of the Ghanaian State of the Nation Address and the UK Queen's Address debates

Like most democratic governments and countries around the world (for example, the United States, the Federal Republic of Nigeria and the Republic of South Africa), every year, the president of the Republic of Ghana (in either February or March) gives an address to the Parliament of Ghana, and by extension, the people of Ghana, on the economic, social and political state of the country in compliance with Article 67 of the Ghanaian constitution. The address, referred to as the State of the Nation Address (SONA), and with a similar focus to that of the Republic of South Africa (see Parliament of the Republic of South Africa 2015; Imbea 2010: 71), does the following.

- i. The President gives his opinion of the condition (in health, education, security, economy, among others) of the country and sets out the government's key policy objectives and deliverables for the year ahead.
- ii. The President highlights the achievements and challenges experienced over the past year and maps the year ahead and beyond.
- iii. The Address focuses on the government's programme of action for the year and beyond.
- iv. The Address covers wide-ranging political, economic and social matters and considers the general state of Ghana.
- v. The Address is an important means for the government to account to Parliament and Ghanaians for what has happened over the past year, and to inform as well as involve the public in the political agenda of the coming year.

The address is a major occasion when the people of Ghana are officially informed about the state of affairs of the country, hence the significance of the address. In line with Order 58 of the Standing Orders of the Ghanaian Parliament (2000), following the address as delivered by the President, MPs debate its content, with the motion: ‘That this House thanks H.E. [His Excellency] the President for the Message on the State of the Nation which he delivered to this honourable House on [the date on which the address was delivered]’. The motion is usually proposed by a government MP and seconded by an opposition MP. The debates span a number of days. It is the Hansards of the SONADs of 2005 through 2015 (excluding 2007 and 2014) which form the Ghanaian data for study in this chapter (see section 3.3.2, Chapter 3).

According to the UK Parliament (2015a), the Queen’s Speech, which is written by the government,

marks the formal start of the parliamentary year [and] sets out the government’s agenda for the coming session, outlining proposed policies and legislation. It is the only regular occasion when the three constituent parts of Parliament – the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons – meet.

Before 2011, it used to be held in November or December, but since 2012 it has been held in either May or June. As in the Ghanaian context, following the Queen’s address, both Houses (the Lords and the Commons) debate ‘the Government’s legislative programme as presented in the Queen’s Speech’ for about five or six days, which is the first debate of the new session (Priddy 2014). This research focuses on the House of Commons debates. Priddy (2014) states that:

The motion is phrased as “an Humble Address” to Her Majesty thanking her for her gracious speech. The task of proposing and seconding the motion is regarded as an honour and is given to two government backbenchers.

After both the proposing and the seconding, the leader of the opposition makes a statement on the address, followed by other MPs joining in the debate. It is Hansards of the debates of 2006, 2009 and 2013 from the periods of Prime Ministers Tony Blair, Gordon Brown and David Cameron respectively that form the UK data for my study in this chapter (for a detailed description of the data, see section 3.3.2).

6.2.1 Starting the debates

The official starting of the debates is announced by the Speaker, by calling the House to *Order* and stating the standard procedures, as in Example 65 from the UK (italics mine).

Example 65: UK 15 Nov 06/Col 7

Mr. Speaker: Before I call *the mover and seconder*, I want to announce the proposed pattern of debate during the remaining days on the Loyal Address: Thursday 16 November—health and education; Monday 20 November—communities and local government, and environment, food and rural affairs; Wednesday 22 November—foreign affairs and defence; Thursday 23 November—home affairs and transport; Monday 27 November—Treasury, and work and pensions.

Here the Speaker announces *the proposed pattern* and topics of the debate for each day; even though ‘it is in order to discuss anything in the whole range of the Government’s legislative programme, as outlined in the Queen’s Speech, without being limited to the topics announced by the Speaker’ (House of Commons 2010). However, the Ghanaian Speaker, after announcing the assumption of the debate, does not state specific topics to be debated, giving the MPs room to choose which areas of the speech they prefer to address.

After the Speaker has announced the opening, usually, a government MP moves the motion for the commencement of the debate in order to thank Her Majesty the Queen (UK), or His Excellency the President (Ghana), for delivering the address, as in:

UK:

Most Gracious Sovereign, We, Your Majesty’s most dutiful and loyal subjects, the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in Parliament assembled, beg leave to *offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty* for the Gracious Speech which Your Majesty has addressed to both Houses of Parliament.

Ghana:

Mr. Speaker, *I beg to move, that this House thanks His Excellency the President* for the Message on the State of the Nation which he delivered to this honourable House on Tuesday, 31st January 2006.

The purpose of the debates is to thank the Queen of England and the President of Ghana, respectively, and this is clearly stated in the proposal: (UK) *We ... offer our humble thanks to Your Majesty ...*; and (GH)... *that the House thanks His Excellency the President*

6.2.2 The actual debating

The proposers follow the moving of the motion with statements which put forward a constellation of propositions and claims that seek to exalt the policies outlined in the addresses, as in Examples 66 and 67.

Example 66: GH SONAD 8 Feb 06/Col. 543-4

Nana Akomea (NPP, government MP, proposer)

1. Mr Speaker, the President's report in summary is that **the state of our nation is good and**
2. **the spirit of our nation is optimistic;**
3. I am happy to note that **this is continuing a very positive trend of continuous and**
4. **consecutive growth...**

Example 67: UK QAD 15 Nov 2006/Col 7

Alun Michael (Lab/Co-op, government MP, proposer):

1. I am **confident that the Government are on the right lines;**
2. I am **proud of what the Government have achieved.**
3. **Since 1997, we have had a golden age of radical domestic legislation: the minimum**
4. **wage—delivered after 100 years of campaigning...**

It is these statements that set the tone for the debates and to which the seconder in the GH SONADs and the third speaker in the UK QADs negatively react and criticise the address. Remember that while the proposer in the GH SONADs is a government MP and the seconder an opposition MP, in the UK QADs both the proposer and the seconder are government backbench MPs and the third speaker is an opposition MP (usually the leader of the opposition). After the proposal and the initial statement by the proposer, the seconder seconds the motion, as in: *I rise to second the motion*, and then follows it with a statement that puts forward either a positive or a negative standpoint. After the seconder and/or the third speaker has/have made their arguments, other MPs join the debates as and when the Speaker gives them the opportunity.

In the debates, MPs critically express their views regarding the crux of the policies outlined in the addresses, and argue whether, as in the Ghanaian context, the address reflects the socio-economic situation of the country and whether the policies outlined have the potential to salvage the problems at hand or envisaged. In other words, MPs argue the merits of the address, as, for instance, Nana Akomea's statements 1-2 above. This is similar to what

the proposer, Mr Osafo-Marfo (NPP, Minister for Education and Sports), said in the previous year's debate:

... Mr. Speaker, as I listened to His Excellency the President last Thursday, I told myself, as a Ghanaian, that Ghanaians must be proud of His Excellency and what he stands for. And as he rightly put it, and with your permission, I beg to quote: "This is a good time to be a Ghanaian." This is because Ghanaians have a President who is a true leader with a clear vision for the development of this country.

(Hansard: GH 8 Feb 05/Col. 278)

Similarly, Alun Michaels (UK, Example 67) praises the government. The exaltations by the proposers suggest a sense of responsible governments which are making and implementing policies that are beneficial to the general population. This is observed through the use of such 'people'-reference terms as highlighted in red in Examples 68, 69 and 70 as well as the positive evaluation (shown in green).

Example 68: GH SONAD 8 Feb 06/Col. 543-4)

Nana Akomea (NPP, government MP, proposer):

1. ... the President's report in summary is that the state of **our nation** is **good**...
2. the President chooses four main areas to illustrate the **optimistic** state of **the nation** ...
3. President mentioned issues that affect trade and industry and to illustrate the **support** that
4. they would give to **move our nation forward**.
5. Mr. Speaker, if you look at the figures in 1993 **this country** **grew**...

Example 69: UK QAD 15 Nov 2006/Col 7)

Alun Michael (Lab/Co-op, government MP, proposer):

1. **The public** are **more impressed** when the Opposition **give credit** where it is due...
2. In my constituency, under the Conservatives a generation of **young people** were denied
3. hope and opportunity, but since 1997, unemployment and long-term youth
4. unemployment have both **more than halved**. Behind those statistics are individual **young**
5. **people standing tall**...
6. The Queen's Speech **promises to protect victims**... our determination to **continue**
7. **improving** the lives of **people** in **this country** is **undiminished**.

These positively evaluated references to the people suggest a sense of care for the wellbeing of the people, as for example, **young people** who were denied hope and opportunity being assisted now (lines 2-4, Example 69). Whereas the government MPs positively evaluate the addresses and policies, opposition MPs mostly evaluate them negatively. The opposition MPs (second in GH SONADs and third speaker in UK QADs) attempt to refute claims made by the proposers, suggesting that the 'people' are facing problems and challenges, as

Mr Haruna Iddrisu (seconder) does: *I rise to second the motion* (Example 70, line 1), which is the official/institutional response expected from the seconder. Mr Iddrisu's general negative assessment of the address is that *[i]t was not only unimpressive but not comprehensive ...* (lines 4-5) and goes ahead to cite specific examples, through spatial referencing, where he talks about security problems and disturbances in some areas in his constituency (Bimbilla, Nanumba, Wa, Upper West Region, Dagbon). These are referred to through spatial referencing. Mr Iddrisu implies that the government has not been responsive to the plight of the 'people' of these places.

Example 70: GH SONAD 8 Feb 06/Col 556

Mr. Haruna Iddrisu (NDC, Opp. MP, seconder):

1. Mr. Speaker, I rise to second the motion and with the indulgence of Mr. Speaker, to make
2. a few preliminary comments about the President's State of the Nation Address and some of
3. the issues raised by hon. Akomea. Mr. Speaker, I would like to describe the President's
4. State of the Nation Address with just two words. It was *not only unimpressive but not*
5. *comprehensive* enough to have captured the true state of the nation; and in many respects
6. I will demonstrate it, Mr. Speaker. Mr. Speaker, for instance, the Address *failed* to state
7. anything about the Forestry sector, the *threat of desertification* and many other...
8. Mr. Speaker, also about security and the state of *our country*, there have been some
9. *disturbances* in Bimbilla, the Nanumba area that the hon. Member referred to. There have
10. been some *disturbances* in Wa in the Upper West Region, the Dagbon tragedy remains
11. *unresolved*, but *no comment whatsoever* came from the President about that. What he chose
12. to do was to describe the *state of the nation* as good.

Parliamentarians represent constituencies and their core responsibility is to represent the interest of their constituents. As Alun Michaels (MP) puts it: '[a]ny legislature must look like the people whom it represents' (Hansard: UK QAD 15 Nov 2006/Col. 12). In their debates, MPs make place/spatial references to show their concerns for the needs of such places. This is important because, as Chilton (2004: 57) says: '[i]f politics is about cooperation and conflict over allocation of resources, such resources are frequently of a spatial, that is, geographical or territorial, kind'. When Mr Iddrisu says that *there have been disturbances* (lines 8-9) in those areas to which he refers, the underlying reference is *people*, for it is people who cause disturbances and it is people who suffer from them. His concern is, therefore, for the people. His main point is that the President failed to comment on the disturbances (line 10), suggesting that the President did not care about the people of those areas. It is government and opposition MPs' arguments about whether or not government policies are

responsive to the concerns of the people which are the subject of investigation in the rest of the chapter.

During the debates, government and opposition MPs each present themselves as being more concerned with the collective good of the people than the other. In doing so, they undertake to reconstruct the conditions and circumstances in which people find themselves. It is the ‘circumstances’ in which people find themselves that become the premise (Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 44) on which MPs base their arguments. Thus, MPs presume that:

- i. people find themselves in certain ‘circumstances’ (either desirable or undesirable socio-economic situations);
- ii. people have a ‘goal’ (most probably reaching a better socio-economic future); and
- iii. if the government takes the necessary ‘action’ or policy that ‘goal’ will be achieved.

(see I. Fairclough 2016: 58; Fairclough and Fairclough 2012: 45)

MPs’ debates, thus, become good/positive-bad/negative evaluation of people’s living conditions and concerns. In the sections that follow, I first present the needs and circumstances which MPs ascribe to various classes of people and how they evaluate them. I then discuss how MPs deploy evaluative structures such as relational structures, adjectives, adverbs, nouns and numerals as well as deictics/indexicals as a means of assessing government policies and people’s concerns.

6.3 Different people, different concerns: classes of people and their needs

If parliamentary debates are significantly about what concerns the people, identifying different classes of people with their corresponding needs is a crucial step towards making a fair distribution of state resources and social goods. MPs normally classify people according to their socio-economic needs. They include, in descending order, UK: *young people, youth, pensioners, old/older/elderly* (which are age-based) and *disabled/vulnerable, local, (hard-)working, ordinary, poor/poorer/poorest* and *unemployed people* (which are condition-specific); and GH: *youth, young people* (age-based) and *poor, rural, local people, ordinary Ghanaian* and *working people* (condition-specific) (see Figure 37, which represents *young*

people). The age-based classification considers age groups, while the condition-based classification depends on the circumstances of the people.

6.3.1 Rising youth unemployment, jobless young people

Young people are the most frequently mentioned group by UK MPs. I use *young people* to include *young workers*, *young men/women*, *youngsters*, *young teachers*, *youth*, etc. (see Figure 37, which represents L1 collocates that mostly classify *people*). Figure 37, which is a wordcloud generated by *Wordsmith*, shows that *young* is not as prominent in the Ghanaian as in the UK data, indicating that UK MPs are particularly more concerned about the *young people*. The frequency of occurrence in the GH SONADs indicates that *youth* (233; 0.04/1000 words) is more frequent than *young* (103) – *young* did not appear in the first five percent keywords. These will be discussed presently, but first I discuss *young people* and *youth* in the UK data. In the UK QADs, *young* occurred 678 times and was more significant than in the BNC, making it a keyword. For instance, *young* (excluding, for example, ‘youngsters’, ‘younger’, and ‘youngest’) had a keyness value of 177.92 with a frequency of 0.06/1000 words, twice as frequent as in the BNC, which was 0.03/1000 words. Unless otherwise specified, I will use *the young* to refer to both *young people* and *youth*.

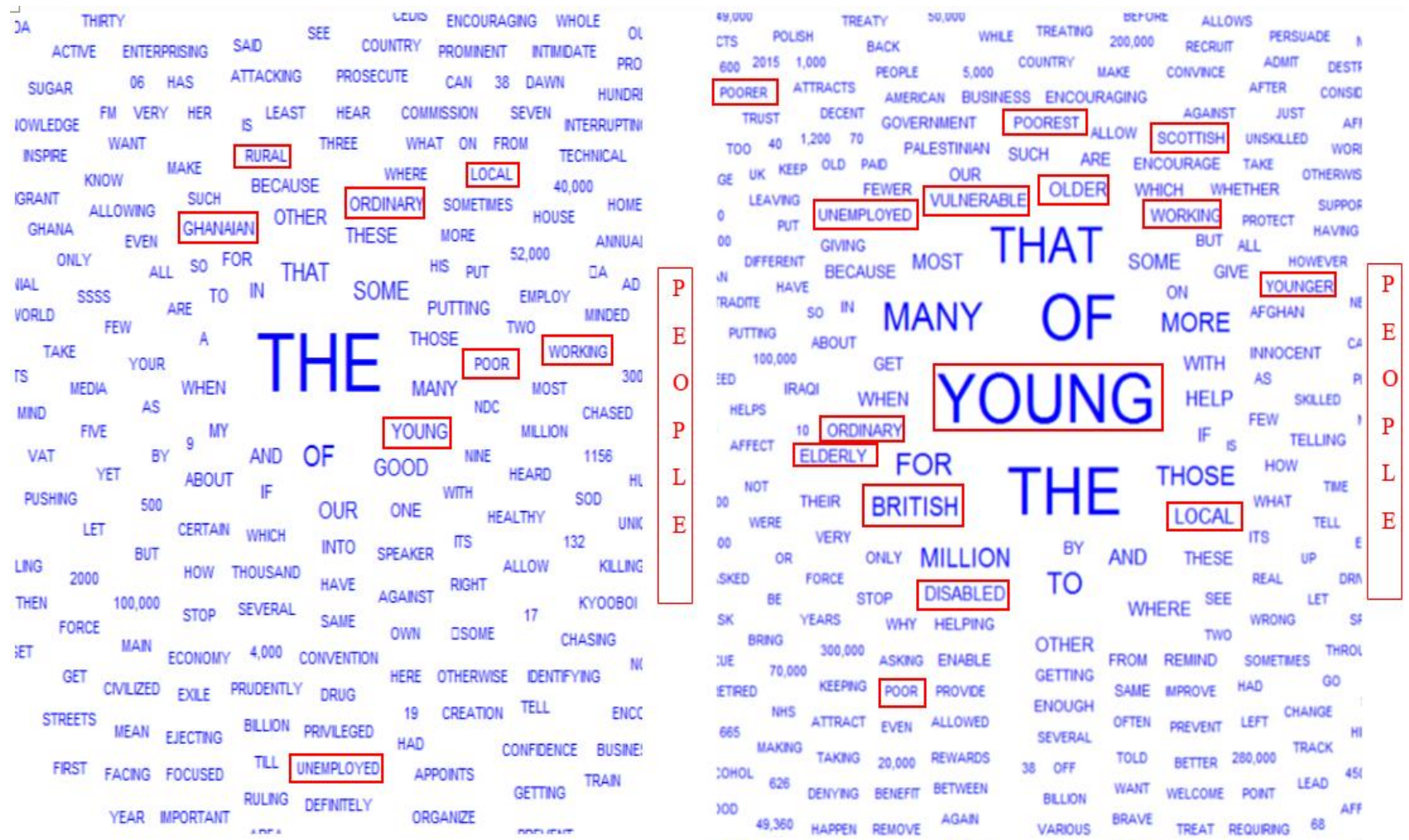


Figure 37: L1 Collocates of *people* in GH SONADs (left) and UK QADs (right)

In the wordcloud (Figure 37), L1 refers to the words that appeared at the immediate left of the word *people*. The larger the appearance of the word and closer it is to the centre, the higher its frequency, making *young* the most frequent class of people referred to by UK MPs. *Young* occurred in several thematic contexts and concerns among the following in the UK QADs.

i.	(un-)employment/jobs/skills	35%	v.	Hope/future	7%
ii.	Crime/crime-related	18%	vii.	Help/support	7%
iii.	Carers/care services	15%	viii.	Problems/difficulties	6%
iv.	Education	9%	ix.	Others	3%

Young people are evaluatively and negatively represented as people among whom there is *rising, long term unemployment* (see Figure 38, lines 1-3) and therefore need, positively, the *right skills* (line 4) for *job guarantee* (line 5) and *employment opportunities* (line 13). They are also associated with *crime/crime-related* themes, including being *offenders sentenced by the courts* (line 6), the *use of drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines* (9), *gang injunctions* and *gang violence* (10), smoking (7) and alcoholism (8), which are all negative characterisations. They are seen as *carers* (16-17) who need help, protection (16) and *support* (17), which have a positive outlook. In order to overcome the *problems* and the challenges (15) they face, young people need *education* (11-12) and encouragement (12) to give them *hope and a chance* (12) *now and into the future* (14). The concerns associated with young people are seen as massive, indicated by descriptive evaluative phrases such as *rising number of long term unemployed* (line 1), *more than 1 million* (2), *a whole generation* (3), *persistent* (6), *copious amount* (8), *tremendous career* (12) and *thousands of* (13) (section 6.5 discusses evaluative expressions in more detail). While the negative evaluations describe problems, the positive ones are possible solutions to those problems. Whereas government MPs think that the problems are being tackled (as in Figure 38, lines 4, 11, 13), opposition MPs disagree (as in lines 1, 2, 3, 5).

N	Concordance
1	to help the rising number of long-term unemployed young people, in the lack of action to cap rail fares
2	of the Government's policies that more than 1 million young people are unemployed Caroline Flint: My hon.
3	fear is that we are writing off a whole generation of young people to long-term unemployment amid low
4	towards addressing employers' concerns that some young people lack the right skills attitudes or
5	change. Where is the job guarantee for Britain's young people? It is not there. Where are the rules
6	have made a difference. The number of persistent young offenders sentenced by courts in England and
7	on to say: The evidence suggests it is going to deter young smokers There is going to be legislation.
8	A minimum price for alcohol will lessen the number of young people who drink copious amounts of it.
9	use of drugs such as cocaine and amphetamines by young people? A total of 1.5 billion has been paid
10	subject of gang injunctions Although the number of young people involved in gang violence is small, the
11	rewarded, to improve the quality of education for young people, to support those who have saved for
12	their lives to encouraging, enthusing and educating our young people. It is a tremendous career, but a
13	thousands of new employment opportunities for young people now and into the future, and about
14	into work so that we can give people, in particular young people, hope and a chance to make a
15	hyperactivity disorder or any of the problems that lead young people into a life of antisocial behaviour and
16	that the bulk of the changes needed to protect young carers need to be made in the Children and
17	. That is where improved identification and support for young carers is valuable, because it can prevent

Figure 38: 17 of 678 concordance lines of thematic and evaluative contexts of *young* (UK QADs)

On the other hand, *youth* occurred 102 times, mostly in the negatively evaluated context of *unemployment* (76%) followed by *crime* and *crime-related* issues (20%) (*crime, offender/offenders/offending, gang, justice*) (see Figures 39 and 40). Examples of expressions from L1 and L2 collocates of *youth* include: *massive* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2), *long term* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2), *tackle* (L1) *youth unemployment* (L2), *youth crime* (L2). *Unemployment* was key in the UK data, with a frequency of 0.03/1000 words as compared to the 0.01/1000 words in the BNC. These contextual words have negative semantic prosody (the meaning acquired by a word in association with its collocates (Louw 1993: 157)), which puts young people in an undesirable situation, and constructs them as a threat.

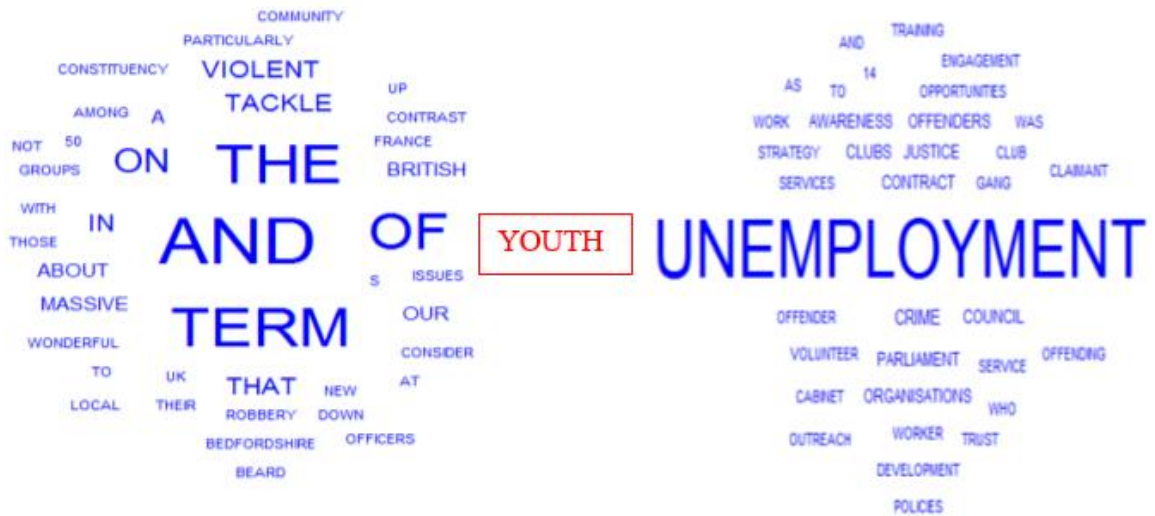


Figure 39: L1 and L2 collocates indicating main contexts of *youth* in UK QADs

Youth unemployment is evaluatively described as a *crisis* (line 1, Figure 40), *massive* (line 2), *unacceptably high* (line 5) and *long term* (line 7), with the young facing *very high levels* and *15% rise in long term youth unemployment*. It, therefore, needs *further steps to tackle* (6, 1) and *bring it down* (4). *Violent crime* such as *robbery* and *drug-related crime* is said to have increased, and *among offenders the figure is 73 per cent* (8). However, crime is being tackled (10). The afore-mentioned indicates that *young people* and *youth* largely show similar concerns. They are also negatively constructed as a threat to society, which makes the call on government’s intervention genuine and urgent.

N	Concordance
1	to me. There is nothing on tackling the crisis in youth unemployment , nothing on housing when
2	whatever the figure is now and the massive youth unemployment that we see in my local
3	West (Mrs Hodgson), face very high levels of youth unemployment in their constituencies. To
4	the absence of any measures to bring down youth unemployment and the number of people
5	to justify the unacceptably high figures on youth unemployment he will sound incredibly
6	announced last week further steps to tackle youth unemployment in order to avoid at all
7	should regret the 15% rise in long-term youth unemployment in his constituency, which
8	of an offence within two years. Among youth offenders the figure is 73 per cent , and
9	the incidence of self-harm in both prisons and youth offender institutions increased by more
10	council the local authority is tackling violent youth gang crime by sharing its power with the
11	our communities. The problem is not just violent youth crime I hope he agrees that the
12	better. Violent crime has doubled and robbery, youth crime and drug-related crime is

Figure 40: 12 of 102 concordance lines indicating thematic contexts of *youth* in UK QAD

There is some research evidence to suggest that, over the years, public policy for the young and youth has focussed on employment and training opportunities. In the decade before 1990:

Public policy towards youth employment and training in Britain ... has[had] been dominated by two themes: the quest to reduce youth relative pay, as part of a wider deregulation of the labour market, in order to increase access to jobs and training; and the neglect of apprenticeship in favour of the Youth Training Scheme.

Marsden and Ryan (1990: 351)

Years later, such focus has not changed, as, according to Barry (2005: 2), ‘young people experience relative deprivation’ in terms of ‘opportunities for personal and social development’. Such deprivation has in recent years prompted ‘[s]everal major government policy interventions (e.g. the Connexions Service, developed by the Department for Education and Skills)’ that ‘have focused on attempting to combat social exclusion ... and on improving services for children and young people’ (Barry 2005: 2). These are attempts to create employment opportunities for young people. It could, thus, be argued that the key references to young people and youth and the expression of concern over unemployment and joblessness among them is MPs’ re-affirmation of such commitment, which explains the larger concern with young people in the UK data. Young people are represented by MPs as people who need jobs, education and support to overcome the challenges facing them in order to have hope and brighter futures. The expression of concern for the young in the debates signals some political manoeuvring. From 1997 when the Labour government came to power, ‘young people’s relationship to work and to the labour market’ had ‘been the subject of intense scrutiny and policy activity’ and the young held ‘a special significance for New Labour’ (Mizen 2003: 453). As Mr Hutton, the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions, Labour, claims (*italics mine*):

The previous Conservative Government’s welfare reform policies were a *total failure*. The number of children living in *poverty doubled*. The number of people claiming lone parent or incapacity benefit *trebled*. *Twice in a decade*, the number of people unemployed *exceeded 3 million*... Things are different now. The new deal has helped *more than 1.7 million* people into work. Today there are *more people in work than ever before*. Employment is up by *more than 2.5 million since 1997* ... The *biggest falls* in unemployment have been among those who were on benefits for the *longest*. Long-

term claimant unemployment is down by more than 70 per cent. and long-term youth claimant unemployment has been *virtually eradicated*.

(Hansard: 27 Nov 06/Col 929)

Consider Mr Hutton's negatively evaluative phrases in describing the previous Conservative government's performance: *total failure, poverty doubled, trebled, twice in a decade ... exceeded 3 million*; and his positive description of the Labour government's performance: *helped more than 1.7 million, more people ... than ever before, biggest falls and virtually eradicated*. He demonstrates a huge contrast between the two governments' performances. This is rhetorically striking as Mr Hutton attempts to prove that his government has outperformed the Conservative government. His contrastive evaluation creates an ideological construction of 'us' and 'them' (van Dijk 2011a: 396) as we saw in section 4.5.3.

As part of its campaign promises in the 1997 UK general elections, the Labour party, led by Tony Blair, promised a programme of action called *The New Deal* to give young people job and employment opportunities. The New Deal, which promised 'eventual reform of welfare assistance for all benefit recipients', had four thematic areas, namely: 'New Deal for Young People (NDYP)', 'New Deal for the Long-term Unemployed, New Deal for Lone Parents' and 'New Deal for the Disabled', with *young people* receiving the 'greatest proportion of New Deal funding' (Beaudry 2002: 8-9). Three years later in 2000, Prime Minister Tony Blair 'hailed the government's New Deal as a success, saying it has offered real hope and opportunity to thousands of young people' (BBC 2000). However, it was counter-argued that the 'government's New Deal programme to tackle youth unemployment is not working' (Field 2007). In its 2010 manifesto, the Conservative Party (2010: 15) alleged that '[u]nder Labour, youth unemployment has reached over 900,000, with one in five young people unable to find a job' and promised to 'reduce youth unemployment'. In the 2015 manifesto, while commending itself that it had achieved the highest employment rate among 27 other European countries, the Conservative Party (2015), having been in power for about five years, promised to 'abolish long-term youth unemployment'. It is clear that each party tries to show that it is more concerned with youth employment than the other. This has been a consistent concern in UK politics for the last decade. The question is whether this is mere rhetoric or reality. In its *Third Report of Session 2010-12*, volume 1, on *Services for Young People*, the House of Commons Education Committee (2011: 15, 3), acknowledges that 'youth unemployment is at a record high', while 'the Government's lack of urgency in

articulating a youth policy or strategic vision is regrettable'. It shows some level of dissonance between political rhetoric and reality. When the reality is stark, MPs need more powerful rhetoric 'to spread out and colour' the 'phase of' the 'discourse' (Martin and White 2005: 42) in order to 'control' what 'people think' (Jones and Wareing 1999: 36).

As crime and crime-related subjects are second to (un-)employment as the most frequent theme associated with the young, it perhaps suggests some interconnectedness between unemployment and crime commission among the young. The representation of the young as perpetrators of crime and crime-related problems reflects the often-held view that they are 'rebellious and troublesome' (Barry 2005: 1), as well as the 'recurring and ongoing preoccupation with the perceived threat to social stability posed by unregulated, undisciplined and disorderly youth' (Brown 1998; cited in Barry 2005: 1). MPs appear to think that the lack of work for young people renders them prone to the commission of crime and other offences like smoking, drinking and radicalism. The assumption is that offering young people job and employment opportunities will help fight crime among them, as:

Youth work helps young people consider and make different choices about risky behaviour. Currently there is a nationwide concern about the involvement of young people in violent and gang related crime. Youth work is recognised as a process through which young people can be supported to take a different path.

Mckee, Oldfield and Poultney (2010: 17)

This idea is reiterated by Mr Mark Oaten (MP, Winchester) that:

There is merit in considering a scheme that would allow our youngsters to get involved in different projects across the country. They could move away from their peer group ... and take part in a national programme of volunteering. That may be a way of providing benefit ... giving them a change of experience ... Sadly, many youngsters start on a life of crime and end up in prison.

(Hansard: 23 Nov 06/Col. 757)

There is clear suggestion that job and employment opportunities for young people reduce crime. It is manoeuvring, as linking unemployment to crime increases the urgency for the government to act. It is a means by which MPs legitimise their calls for governmental interventions.

The high frequency of references to young people could also be the result of a conscious attempt by MPs to win the hearts of young people for political purposes. The

dispersion plot in Figure 41 shows the frequency of references to *young* across the datasets. It indicates that there is an increase in *youth*-referencing from 2006, 2009 to 2013. For example, the ‘hits’ column shows that the highest occurrence of *young* in 2006 and 2009 is 68 (1.15/1000 words) and 73 (1.59/1000 words) respectively, but it is 109 (1.64/1000 words) in 2013.

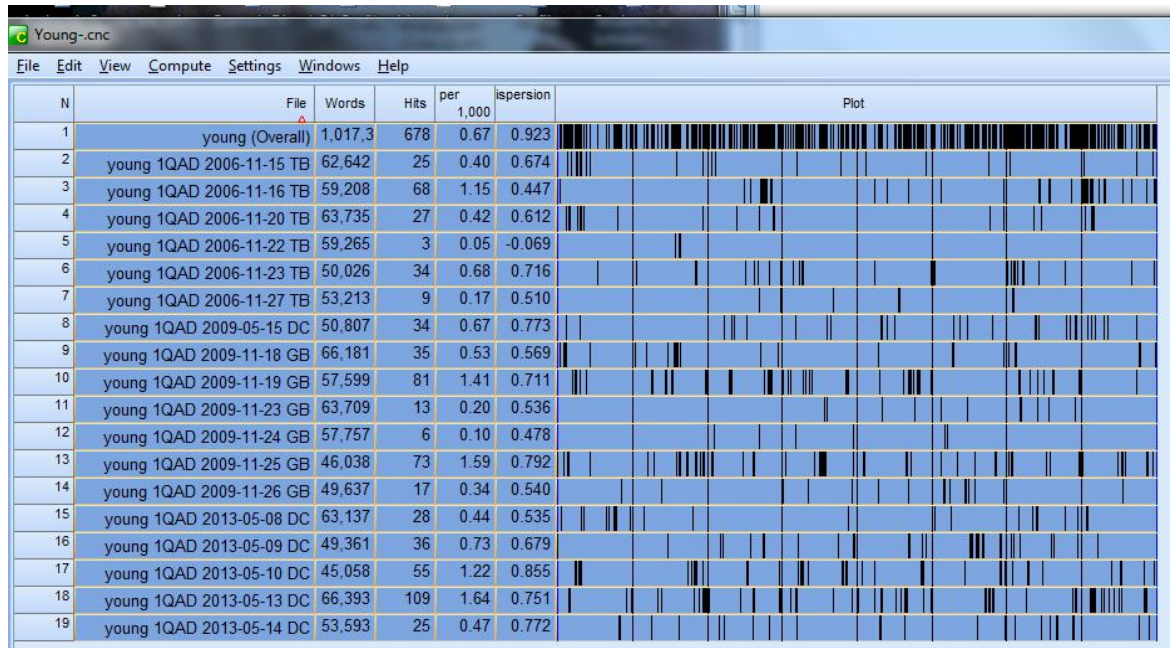


Figure 41: Plot of *young*- across 2006, 2009 and 2013

Before the May 2015 UK general elections, research had shown, for example, that young people (under-25 year olds) had ‘[a]pathy or antipathy’ towards voting (Lewis 2015). Lewis reports that while ‘many’ young people gave ‘very political’ reasons, ‘most’ felt ‘profoundly alienated and ignored’. There were therefore campaigns to encourage young people to vote in the 2015 general elections (Carter 2015; Sims 2015).

Other contexts in which *young* and *youth* occur, such as *education*, *future/hope*, *support/help*, reinforce the point that MPs recognise the *problems/difficulties* that young people face. The MPs express the kinds of interventions needed to help young people. MPs undertake to encourage young people that, as MPs, they acknowledge their problems, which is political rhetoric. It is political posturing, which alerts young people to government policy decisions for political-point scoring.

In the Ghanaian data, on the other hand, *youth* was more frequent and significant than *young* (note however that considering the young as including youth makes discussing both important). *Youth* occurred 233 times, with a keyness value of 324.97 and frequency of 0.04/1000 words; while it was 181 times, with a keyness value of zero in the ICE-Ghana, making *youth* a keyword in the GH SONADs. *Young* (as in *young: people, men, adults, girls, graduates, etc.*) occurred 103 times but did not appear in the top five percent of keywords, that is the first 500 keywords. Both terms appeared to be fairly uniform in frequency across all the years in the GH SONAD, which means that the MPs’ focus on the young has been consistent over the years, but less crucial than in the UK. *Young* occurred in contexts such as (Figure 42 illustrates them):

- | | | | | | |
|------|-----------------------------|-----|-------|---------------------|----|
| i. | (un-)employment/jobs/skills | 45% | vi. | Crime/crime-related | 3% |
| ii. | Education | 19% | vii. | Problems/challenges | 2% |
| iii. | Hope/future | 8% | viii. | Self-referencing | 7% |
| iv. | Support/help | 8% | ix. | Others | 2% |
| v. | Emulating the elderly | 6% | | | |

(Note: included in ix. (Others) are poverty, migration, roaming the streets).

N	Concordance
1	would show systematically, the provision of jobs for young people. It is a very dangerous omission and
2	measures that will generate employment for our young people in that document and I would like the
3	education is about the spiralling unemployment of young graduates. Yesterday, Hon Akua Dansua
4	place the needed infrastructure that denied a lot of young people basic education, a lot of them were
5	John Dramani Mahama has put in place to get these young people back in school. Mr Speaker, 24,117
6	of all people in the nation would give us hope that young girls who are trailing behind in schools —
7	, certainly, is very encouraging and motivating for young people everywhere in Ghana and beyond the
8	Development Fund to encourage and support young people to become successful entrepreneurs
9	support the Government, to support the training of young entrepreneurs and for which reason he
10	, and say that the police with haste arraigned the young man before court. Mr Second Deputy
11	, unemployment is the biggest problem facing young people in this country and young people
12	must talk in such a way that the young men and young women will emulate us. Is that a crime? Is
13	to be an old man, so that some of them who are young could learn from us. When he comes to tell
14	to the Members of this House. Mr. Speaker, as young as I am, history tells me that if indeed, Mrs.
15	us that he will do everything possible to remove young people on the streets people leaving senior
16	ensure that migration of a lot of our able-bodied young people to the southern part of this country

Figure 42: 16 of 103 concordance lines of thematic contexts of *young* in GH SONAD

Both youth and young people are mostly presented as lacking or needing employable skills/employment/jobs for which reason they need education to prepare them for the future (see Figures 42, 43 and 44). Unemployment among young people (and youth) is negatively evaluatively described as the ‘biggest’, ‘spiralling’ problem (lines 3, 11, Figure 42).

Unlike the UK, education is the second most important context in which young people occurs in the GH SONADs. It appears to suggest a close link between education and the fight against unemployment, as compared with unemployment and crime in the UK data. Crime among young people does not appear to be a major concern for the Ghanaian MPs. This means the Ghanaian MPs seem more optimistic about young people than the UK MPs. Of course, it should be recognised that, as a developed country, the UK has a far better educational system and standard than Ghana. Thus, it is the different ideological stances taken by UK and Ghanaian MPs that produce this difference between them: the two groups of MPs prioritise issues according to their needs. Whereas the UK MPs see unemployment and crime as those which need immediate attention, the Ghanaian MPs see education as the most urgent issue that can reduce unemployment. The role of formal education in personal and national economic and social development has long been recognised (Psacharopoulos 1998), especially in Sub-Saharan Africa (Palmer 2005). Apart from encouraging and supporting young people towards realising a better future, the MPs also talk about how young people emulate them (that is, copy their behaviour) as MPs (Figure 42, line 12), which reflects a Ghanaian cultural value. The impact of culture in the socialisation process has been acknowledged (Twum-Danso 2010). In the Ghanaian social system, children are seen as dependent on their parents for their wellbeing and ‘every effort is made to ensure that each child is taught her place from a very early age’ (Twum-Danso 2010: 135), one of which is that the child is supposed to learn from the parent. In fact, ‘traditionally, child care was a collective social enterprise in which both parents and other kin were active participants’ (Twum-Danso 2009: 419). Thus, when MPs remind their fellow MPs that they should be circumspect in their parliamentary speeches because children are learning from them, they are giving meaning to their *in-loco-parentis* role, since ‘the training of the children is not exclusively their [parents’] (Nukunya 2003; cited in Twum-Danso 2009: 419).

The thematic contexts in which *youth* occurred include the following.

- | | | | | | |
|------|----------------------------|-----|-------|---------------------|----|
| i. | (un-)employment/job/skills | 70% | v. | Problem | 3% |
| ii. | Future/hope | 10% | vi. | Leadership | 2% |
| iii. | Education | 4% | vii. | Crime/crime-related | 2% |
| iv. | Sports | 3% | viii. | Others | 3% |
| v. | Help/support | 3% | | | |

Similar to *the young* in the UK and Ghanaian debates, the biggest concern of *youth* in Ghana is (un-)employment/jobs/skills (70%) such as: *job(less)*, *(un)employment*, *manpower*, *agriculture*, *training*, *skills*, *work* and *mining* (see Figures 43 and 44 lines 1-5); with 10% occurring in the context of future and/or hope for the future: *future*, *leadership*, *leaders*, *aspiration*, etc. (lines 6-7, 12). These are represented in L1 and L2 (Figure 43) as: *teeming* (L1) youth *unemployment* (L2); *unemployed* (L1) youth; *develop* (L1) youth *policy* (L2); youth *development* (L2); youth *unemployment* (L2) and youth *leadership* (L2). It is recognised that the youth need *empowerment* and *development* (L2).

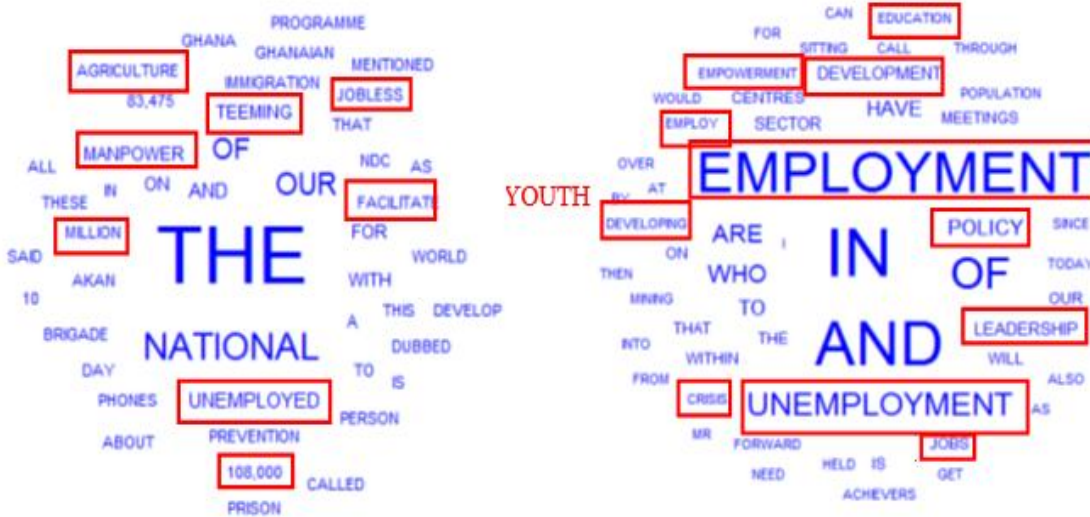


Figure 43: L1 and L2 collocates indicating main contexts of ‘youth’ in GH SONAD

N	Concordance
1	are making either in terms of skill development or training for our youth and the impact on the economy. We have untransparent
2	has seen the need to address the unemployment problem among the youth ; and it is a step in the right direction. Mr. Speaker, I fervently
3	.] When unemployment in the country is escalated with more jobless youth and graduates roaming our streets , can we say that the
4	lower interest rates to expand their businesses to create jobs for the youth and also to pay taxes to Government for development. Mr.
5	, where is the evidence of the job creation? Where is the law on youth employment? When H. E. President Agyekum Kufuor's
6	. Mr Speaker, we are told that the future belongs to the youth and the youth of our country, we know, are in education , such that they would
7	of this country that under his leadership , under his guidance, the youth of this country has a brighter future . Therefore, I would urge all
8	has also started waning. Now, if we are going to promote the issue of youth education as the largest reservoir of human resource potential,
9	was meant to address the issue of lack of access by many of our youth to higher education . When the census on unemployment was
10	involved in this subject must co-ordinate very efficiently, so that our youth are insulated from this very hazardous drug system . This is not
11	that we face in the cities now. Crime is on the increase and if the youth have other alternatives of making their lives in the rural areas,
12	deliberative mechanism. He also stated that he would revamp all youth leadership training institutes and utilize them for year-round

Figure 44: 12 of 233 concordance lines of *youth* in GH SONAD

The idea of unemployment is reinforced by the fact that *the youth and graduates are roaming the streets* (line 3), which has the potential to lead them to commit *crime* (line 11) or become victims of the *very hazardous drug system* (line 10). According to the MPs, *the future belongs to the youth* (line 6) and, therefore, they need *leadership training institutes* (line 12) to prepare them for the task ahead. To achieve that and overcome all the problems, the youth, like young people, need *education* (lines 6, 9), which is positively evaluated as *the largest reservoir of human resource potential* (line 8).

Like their UK counterparts, Ghanaian MPs recognise that ‘youth unemployment is one of the *biggest* challenges’ facing the country (Hansard: 21 Feb 12/Col. 1157); the ‘serious challenge that this economy now faces is the *rising levels* of youth unemployment’ (Hansard: Mar 2010/Col. 1462). Notice the rhetorical evaluation: *teeming* (Figure 43 L1), *escalated* (Figure 44, line 3), *largest* (8), *very hazardous* (10), *on the increase* (11), including *serious challenge*, *rising levels*. These evaluative descriptions intensify the extent of the problems and concerns associated with the *youth*. As in the UK, the issue of unemployment has been a major concern among the youth and young people in Ghana. In 2011, an association called Unemployed Graduates Association of Ghana was formed. It epitomises the extent of joblessness among the youth. Its aim has been to engage government and stakeholders to tackle youth unemployment. In 2006, the New Patriotic Party (NPP) government established the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP), an interventionist programme that sought to identify projects with economic potential that could generate employment for as many youth as possible. Later, when the National Democratic Congress (NDC) government came to power, it changed the name to the Ghana Youth Employment and Entrepreneurial

Development Agency (GYEEDA). In 2015, under the same government, it was again changed to Youth Empowerment Programme (YEP), a more euphemistically positive name, signalling affirmation and attention given to the programme by the government. The programme highlights the problems faced by the youth and various governments' attempts to tackle them. As the Deputy Minister for Manpower, Youth and Employment (NPP), put it:

... since 2006 when the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) was launched over 108,000 youth are engaged in various types of work. The NYEP has demonstrated beyond doubt that it is one approach that can within a relatively short time contribute effectively to providing jobs and a good training ground for the youth to make them more marketable.

(Hansard: 26 Feb 2008/Col. 1050)

MPs, in their debates, endeavour to show which government has better tackled youth unemployment, which points to the acknowledgement that youth unemployment is a major problem, as indicated by Dr Dakura (NDC MP):

We know that the National Youth Employment Programme (NYEP) was started by the previous Government and at the time that we came to power, we had 43,000 youths on the NYEP. As we speak today, this figure has risen to 97,510 beneficiaries on the list and the payroll of the Programme. We have got 150,000 beneficiaries of this Programme, if you add the Youth in Agriculture Programme.

(Hansard 24 Feb 11/Col. 1597)

Notice that while acknowledging that the youth employment programme was initiated by the previous (NPP) government, Dr Dakura gives his government much more credit for improving it. This points to the political-point scoring nature of the debates.

In both the UK and Ghanaian parliaments, MPs try to show 'professional commitment towards young people' (Bright 2015: xvii). The MPs see the young as people who need appropriate interventions from government, such as avenues for training and acquiring entrepreneurial/employable skills to equip them for the job market. What government and opposition MPs disagree on is the response being offered by their governments to address such problems. While the government MPs argue that the government is 'motivating' young people/the youth, giving them 'incentives', 'creating' and 'providing' the 'opportunities' for them to face and reduce such challenges to prepare them adequately for the future, opposition

MPs think the governments are not doing enough. Thus, there is extensive ideological stancetaking and posturing aimed at exploiting the concerns of young people for political ends.

So far, we have observed the issues that MPs ascribe to young people in the course of their debates and the positive and negative evaluation of those issues. Young people and the youth are generally recognised as people facing problems and challenges; they are disgruntled and suffering as a result of unemployment and joblessness. Young people are also seen by MPs as a threat, which is a means of exploiting them for political purposes. When there is a threat, MPs have a course to act and create policies to respond to it. The next section discusses the issues MPs think affect other people's lives.

6.3.2 Providing excellent welfare, care and benefits for others, empowering local people

MPs recognise other classes of people, which appear to reflect the increased focus of the UK's *New Deal*. According to Beaudry (2002: 9), the New Deal programme was 'used as a pilot phase for the more ambitious New Deal reforms with other groups'. In 2006, the Blair government's reformed programme, *a new deal for welfare: empowering people to work*, included other thematic areas, viz: *helping ill or disabled people, helping lone parents, helping old workers, delivering welfare reform, a radical new approach to housing benefit and long-term benefits reform*. This reflects the other classes of people identified in the UK QADs, which include, in descending order:

i.	Pensioners	32%	v.	(hard-)working people	6%
ii.	Old(er)/elderly	17%	vi.	ordinary people	5%
iii.	disabled/vulnerable	17%	vii.	poor/poorer/poorest people	5%
iv.	local people	15%	viii	unemployed people	3%

These groups generally seem to be economically-challenged. Pensioners, old(er)/elderly and disabled/vulnerable people (Figure 45) are seen as facing *financial problems* (lines 1, 3). They, therefore, have similar needs: social support, care and benefits, such as *fuel* benefits (lines 2, 9, 10) and *free bus travel* (lines 5, 7). This is evidenced by the fact that these people were mentioned in the same sentences, as, for example: *Elderly and disabled people are*

facing huge increases in home care charge; reducing cost of travel for pensioners and disabled people (lines 17-18). MPs believe that these groups should be given excellent (line 11) social care services (lines 6, 15-16) and benefits to lift them out of poverty (line 1). These direct interventions reflect the fact that these groups are seen as not personally 'responsible for their vulnerability', which provides some moral grounds for politicians to directly intervene with 'appropriate social policies' (Mechanic and Tanner 2007: 1222). They are seen as a form of social capital, a network, whose interrelationships allow them to 'claim access to resources possessed by their associates' (Portes 2000: 45).

N	Concordance
1	. A citizen's pension would ensure that all our pensioners are lifted out of poverty and have a decent
2	energy market. They have cut winter fuel payments for pensioners, despite promising not to. They have
3	Chope) about the financial problems in his area, where pensioners will end up paying higher council tax to
4	proposals on the use of universal benefits for wealthy pensioners? I know that he has produced a pamphlet.
5	Gracious Speech that will extend the rights of old age pensioners to free bus travel is also a helpful
Concordance	
6	might be taken to finance enhanced care services for older people and people with a disability. The Green
7	its political colour, on introducing full free travel for older people and 50p fares for younger people.
8	wanted to cut benefits and support for vulnerable and older people. [Interruption.] He is saying that again
9	the Government have cut the winter fuel payment for older people by £50 for the over-60s and £100 for
10	We will not tax winter fuel or assumed benefits for older people because older people vote in very
Concordance	
11	or private provider, the law should ensure that elderly people's care is excellent and respect
12	detrimental impact on the care received by our elderly people. Age UK states that the widening
13	down the country who look after sick, disabled and elderly people, the NHS and social services would
14	planning to scrap the benefits on which millions of elderly people rely-attendance allowance and
Concordance	
15	refer to the proposals on care for the elderly and for disabled people-the personal care at home Bill. I
16	are getting their care for free, and more older and disabled people are being forced to pay for more
17	to get the support they need right now. Elderly and disabled people are facing huge increases in home
18	and reducing the cost of travel for pensioners and disabled people. I would be the first to support that

Figure 45: Sample concordance of pensioners, old(er)/elderly, disabled people

Generally, MPs think that *local people* (Figure 46, lines 1-3) need to be empowered, giving them *more control over their lives* (line 1) and regenerating *local democracy* (line 2) for them to control the development of their local areas. They are constructed as agents of their own development. Working people are evaluatively described as hardworking people

who need governmental support *to get on in life* (line 5), giving them ‘a cash boost to minimum wage workers of £250 a year’ (Hansard: 14 May 13/Col 579); even though the opposition thinks that support such as *tax credits* (line 4) is being reduced and the people have *seen pain all the way, hurting* (line 6). MPs believe that working people need tax reliefs and decent wages to enable them to cater for their families. Considering that the ‘Government [is] giving people *who earn millions of pounds a huge tax cut while ordinary people in his constituency suffer* (line 10), *ordinary people* implies those who are comparatively disadvantaged. As Ian Taylor (Con MP: Hansard: 15 Nov 06/Col. 53) puts it: ‘Ordinary people doing ordinary jobs on average pay simply cannot afford to pay that rent without assistance’. Like ordinary people, the unemployed are seen as needing support and *opportunity*, as they face *problem[s] and a real challenge* (line 16). The MPs recognise poverty as a societal and world problem (lines 11, 12, 23), which reflects the foreign policy and the globalised political culture of the UK, indicating that the UK political identity is connected to not only the UK, but also the rest of the world. The absence of this from the Ghanaian data portrays the Ghanaian MPs as being preoccupied with Ghana’s own concerns.

N	Concordance
1	public services. The challenge now is to give local people more control over their lives and to
2	a reality of the regeneration of local democracy local people need to feel that it is worth while
3	service. We need a communities Bill that gives local people control over money spent in their
Concordance	
4	to millionaires and reducing tax credits for working people, we will liberate individual
5	that Government Members are supporting hard-working people who want to get on in life
6	it most. It has been pain all the way, hurting working people, families, pensioners and even
Concordance	
7	. We are seeing real cuts in the living standards of ordinary people in this country. There has been
8	or groups of people. Our job is about representing ordinary people whose voice would otherwise not
9	. Friends have focused on the real challenges that ordinary people face. For example, over the past
10	who earn millions of pounds a huge tax cut while ordinary people in his constituency suffer because
Concordance	
11	climate change, which will affect millions of the poorest people in the world. Compassion
12	the chance to transform the lives of some of the poorest people in the world, who always suffer
13	. That would be worth precisely nothing to the poorest people in our society, but would be
Concordance	
14	will tax jobs that otherwise would have gone to unemployed people. Does he not agree that that
15	can get people back to work. Instead of forcing unemployed people on to prescriptive DWP
16	problem and a real challenge. If young and other unemployed people were given the opportunity

Figure 46: Sample concordance of local, working, ordinary, poor and unemployed people (UK QADs)

In the GH SONADs, there were 32 occurrences of other classes of people, viz: *poor, rural, local, ordinary Ghanaian* and *working people*. Poor/rural/local and ordinary people are presented by the Ghanaian MPs as people who are lacking the needed infrastructural access (e.g. roads and water) and who cannot access justice and therefore need financial assistance. The reference to road and water infrastructural problems, which is absent from the UK QADs, is a reflection of Ghana's status as a developing country, as developing countries are said to lack road and water infrastructure (Calvert and Calvert 2007: 4, 103-4, 111). UK MPs, however, feel that these people need more empowerment and control over their lives, including direct monetary interventions such as tax credits, which reflects the welfare system of the UK. Similar to their description in the UK context, working people are described and evaluated in the GH SONAD as hardworking people who need decent wages.

N	Concordance
1	tremendously from it and particularly, those poor people in the urban and rural areas . To
2	Kufuor, he said that "the worst enemy of the poor people is inflation" . Measure this
3	fees thereby making it very inaccessible to many poor people but public institutions like the
	Concordance
4	towards the construction of water for our rural people . Mr Speaker, this conditionality is one
5	. I believe it is up to us as leaders to help our rural people to know that such facilities and others
6	a project is going to a rural community , the rural people are made to contribute monies. It is
	Concordance
7	that has affected the coconut; in fact, our local people call it "the coconut AIDS" because it
8	— that some flexibility should come in so that local people who stay in a locality and who
	Concordance
9	process is time consuming and cumbersome. Ordinary people cannot access justice . The
10	what is happening, they cannot see what the ordinary people feel . In our streets , in our
11	have lost their jobs . I am talking about very ordinary people in B.U. (Butimabuju) in Esikado
12	not attach any value to discrimination between ordinary people and so-called important people,
	Concordance
13	is determined to provide skills for people who are unemployed . And we should join the President in
14	of creating employment for every single unemployed person. Nevertheless, our
15	give directions as well as give hope to the army of unemployed people on the streets of Ghana . Mr
16	go a long way to creat skills for the long-term unemployed . These are the things that we should
	Concordance
17	said they are going to provide decent wages for working people , vigorously promote and support
18	countries. One country with very enterprising and hard-working people and another country of

Figure 47: Sample concordance lines of other classes of people and their concerns (GH SONAD)

The classification of people with specific needs hints at political responsibility as being about the needs of the people and tailoring policies to meet every person's concerns. In the two parliaments, both government and opposition MPs recognise the issues confronting the different classes of people. The UK MPs, however, acknowledge a more specific and multilayered classification than their Ghanaian counterparts. For example, the UK data contain categories such as *pensioners*, *older/elderly*, *disabled* and *vulnerable* people (see Figure 45), which are absent from the Ghanaian data. Whereas in the UK vulnerability is

observed in terms of pensioners, the elderly and the disabled, Ghanaian MPs seem to recognise vulnerability only in terms of rural communities. In Ghana, rural communities lack infrastructure and facilities such as roads, water and healthcare facilities, making them the least privileged group. Both groups of MPs construct vulnerability as part of the socio-political discourse, making it an ideological construct and a manipulative tool. Where there is vulnerability, there is a need for political action. The UK MPs' recognition of the multilayered classes of people mirrors the longstanding view of the British political culture as 'the creation of a welfare state and the achievement of full employment' (Eatwell 1997: 57). As noted by Harkins (2013: no pagination): '[a] renewed focus on social class has been one of the features of contemporary political debates in Britain since the financial crash of 2008'. It demonstrates 'the increasing scale and complexity of [the] modern [British society]' (Baldwin et al. 1999: 138). It is pertinent to appreciate that different classes of people have different needs. Such acknowledgement is important for political actors like MPs. It shows inclusiveness and the fact that no-one will be discriminated against in policy formulation and implementation. The classification of people and ascription of difference needs to them reflects the essentialist 'doctrine that ascribes a fixed property or "essence" as universal to a particular category of people' (Baldwin et al. 1999: 139). This has the tendency of stereotyping and prejudicing one group against the other. For instance, constructing young people as a threat to society predisposes them to aversion.

In identifying the different classes of people and their concerns, MPs display a considerable level of attachment to the people through the use of person references (see Figures 48 and 49). *Our country, our nation, our people*, etc. indicate inclusiveness and sharing in the plight and needs of the citizenry and suggest emotional bond with the people.

N	Concordance
1	. Mr. Speaker, also about security and the state of our country , there have been some disturbances in
2	we took over power in 2009, the production of rice in our country was only 30 per cent of the demand;
3	is that the state of our nation is good and the spirit of our nation is optimistic — [Hear! Hear!]. Mr. Speaker,
4	the President's report in summary is that the state of our nation is good and the spirit of our nation is
5	to illustrate the support that they would give to move our nation forward. Mr. Speaker, the President
6	given us, today, our cultivation is 50 per cent of our needs . We have produced yam, maize and the
7	that has managed to deliver so much on the needs of our people . [Interruptions.] Madam Speaker, when
8	in terms of delivery to the needs of Ghanaians in our recent history. [Hear! Hear!] [...] [...] Within three

Figure 48: Sample concordance lines of *our*-references in GH SONAD

N	Concordance
1	the work that they are doing. What matters now is that, with our allies , we take the right actions to maximise the
2	, yet hospitals have closed; more laws on immigration, yet our borders are still completely out of control. Every year,
3	[...] Our thoughts are with their families. They died serving our country and we honour their memory. I also pay tribute
4	matched by failure on crime. After nine years, every part of our criminal justice system is in a shambles. The chairman
5	has been a privilege. The Queen's Speech shows that our determination to continue improving the lives of people
6	; Vol. 250, c.14-15.] What better description could there be of our Government today? The tragedy of this Prime Minister is
7	to link the basic state pension to earnings; we had that in our last manifesto. The Treasury has finally been forced to
8	men and women who were killed in Basra on Sunday [...] Our thoughts are with their families. They died serving our
9	, I have seen for myself the extraordinary work that our troops are doing as part of a NATO operation—now

Figure 49: Sample concordance lines of *our*-reference in UK QAD

The use of *our* makes MPs ‘sound like the collective voice of’ the people (Heinrichs 2010: 46), ‘signal[ling] closeness’ to people (van Dijk 2011a: 398) and ‘establish[ing] empathy by demonstrating that’ the MPs share ‘the same values as the audience’ (Charteris-Black 2014: 17). Being ‘proximal’ references, their use is ‘attitudinal’ (Glover 2000: 915), which humanises the conditions MPs describe and seeks to establish goodwill and trust with the people.

The deliberative nature of parliamentary debates means that they are about persuading people (especially, the electorate) to make choices between policies that will (presumably) determine their future. For Heinrichs (2010: 107), it is ‘the audience’s own beliefs, values, and naked self-interest’ that determine the outcome of deliberative discourse and ‘[t]o persuade them, you offer a prize ... which is the promise that your choice will give the judges [in this case the people] what they value’. Thus, in the debates, MPs construct a sense of desirable and undesirable conditions of the people (Fairclough 2003: 177). They create a contrast, the effect of which is a polarisation along government-opposition lines. There is a high level of posturing and display of concern for the needs of the people. In doing so, MPs manipulatively construct conditions and put people in circumstances that justify political action. Each group of MPs attempts to show that their policies are more desirable and are more people-focused than the other. This is what we explore in the next section.

6.4 *People are better off, people are worse off*: evaluative construction of people's concerns

One of the underlying reasons for delivering the Ghanaian State of the Nation Address and the UK Queen's Address is to show how governments have managed/are managing the socio-economic affairs of the country, and how they are responding/will respond to the needs of the people. The addresses and MPs' debates, thus, show a considerable level of people-focusing. Fore-fronting people's concerns is crucial. As van Eemeren and Garssen (2009: 6) have said, in parliamentary debates, MPs 'are in fact out to gain the support of a broader ... usually non-interactive and heterogeneous audience ... [that is] supporters, opponents and neutral bystanders ... [who are] their primary addressee[s]'. Apart from demonstrating, among other things, how responsible governments are, the debates have some bearing on the government's fortunes in the next elections as well as MPs' chances of getting re-elected. Governments and MPs are aware that to be (re)-elected, they

have to be able to persuade the electorate that they are capable of doing relevant and 'vital things' which not everybody is capable of. They have to perform and construct themselves discursively in ways that inspire confidence in their ability to implement policies responsibly, to establish and retain order, protect the citizens from danger, keep the economy going, be competitive on the world stage and so forth.

(Wodak 2011: 202)

Persuasion is a key political instrument for achieving support from the electorate. Thus, apart from rhetorically engaging in reasoned arguments (logos) and appealing to people's emotions (pathos), MPs also do character construction, their 'ethos – practical wisdom, goodwill and virtue' (Charteris-Black 2014: 8, 10, 14). This is the image each group of MPs tries to project, resulting in arguments and counter-arguments about whether or not the government's policy interventions will help (or have helped) improve the lives of the people. It is an engagement designed to persuade people that they care about them. The contention leads to contrastive evaluative constructions such as *people are getting better*; *people are worse off*. Figure 50 below illustrates this divergent evaluation of *the people concern* (note: even though there are other hyponyms of *people* such as *men/women*, *youth*, *elderly*, *Ghana(ians)* and *Britain*, I use only *people* for illustration purposes). For instance, while Ghanaian government MPs say *people are getting better* (lines 3, 7), opposition MPs say *everyday people are struggling ...* (lines 17, 18), *seriously, people ... are hurting* (line 26). Similarly, whereas UK government

MPs assert that *[w]e have cut taxes for people ...* (line 33), *people can take home free of income tax* (line 41), *to continue improving the lives of the people ...* (line 37); opposition MPs claim *people are worse off ...* (line 51), *people are not better off* (line 52), *people are desperate for changes* (line 53). These are syntactically parallel structures that emphasise the contrast of views. Both groups express concern for the wellbeing of the people, but in different ways. This suggests that MPs, at least in principle, are ‘concerned ... with the construction and, ideally, the realization of a sense of the collective good’ (Hay 2007: 2), which underlies the value system of democratic governance. As Ed Miliband (leader of the opposition) admonishes:

Let us think of the young people we all met during the election campaign and imagine what they feel, looking for a job in Britain 2013, and how their families feel when they cannot find one. Britain cannot afford to waste their talents.

(UK 8 May 2013/Col. 14)

This statement hints at the social contract that the government and the MPs owe the people. *Let us think of the young people ... what they feel, how their families feel and Britain cannot afford to waste their talents* display sincerity. Miliband seems to be ‘having the right intentions’, ‘thinking right’, ‘sounding right’, ‘looking right’ and ‘telling the right story’ (Charteris-Black 2014: 93-94), as he links the statement to personal experience (... *we met during the campaign*). This is a moral character construction, which appears to prioritise the concerns of the people. It makes Miliband sound persuasive. However, MPs’ expression of concern for the wellbeing of the people also indicates how the people are exploited for political posturing purposes.

Concordance 1: government MPs - GH SONAD

1 the President mentioned *investment in people* and *investment in jobs* as a major
 2 cess – to make sure that movement of *people* and goods around and on the
 3 quadrupled and you can see clearly that *people* are getting better. Madam Speak
 4 economy was still managed prudently; *people* did not give in to excesses. Mr.
 5 for this gap, this loophole that young *people* have been falling through. It pro
 6 resources are used for the benefit of the *people*. His Excellency, having realiz
 7 have four, clearly indicating that the *people* in this country are getting better
 8 deliver so much on the needs of our *people*. [Interruptions.] 21 Feb 2012/Col
 9 achieving this optimum investment in *people* is through the new educational re
 10 look at physiological needs of the *people*, it is talking about food and wat
 11 n salt and natural gas — I believe the *people* of Ada might be smiling by now
 12 ity given to this Government by the *people* of this country, so much has been
 13 ted and this has brought relief to the *people* of Kasoa, Awutu, Senya Bereku,
 14 you come to the safety needs of the *people*, there cannot be better safety than
 15 talking about the health needs of our *people*. This was extensively discussed
 16 and security and protecting the *people* will remain the cornerstone

Concordance 3: government MPs - UK QAD

33 ted completely. We have cut taxes for *people* in work and we are also cutting
 34 businesses, to build a society in which *people* who work hard are properly re
 35 We also share a belief in giving the *people* of Wales and Scotland a greater
 36 success in inspiring progress for the *people* of Wales. However, the greatest
 37 tion to continue improving the lives of *people* in this country is undiminished.
 38 ecent, hard-working families. It is the *people* and their sense of community
 39 engineering skills. Not enough young *people* in the UK understand the range
 40 d those statistics are individual young *people* standing tall, able to use their
 41 this tax year the amount of pay that *people* can take home free of income tax
 42 rove the quality of education for young *people*, to support those who have sa
 43 ited Kingdom today. I believe that most *people* have no problem with saying
 44 on policy priorities, and not just the *people* developing, manufacturing and s
 45 red. Any legislature must look like the *people* whom it represents. That was
 46 nce and reforming child care to enable *people* to enter or stay in employment.
 47 he Conservatives a generation of young *people* were denied hope and opportu
 48 remarkable job for local children and young *people*. We also have the headqua

Concordance 2: opposition MPs - GH SONAD

17 put food on the table; *everyday my people* are struggling to pay school fees
 18 rural level. Mr. Speaker, *everyday my people* are struggling to put food on
 19 has not been appealed against and nine *people* are in prison for that case –
 20 e consuming and cumbersome. Ordinary *people* cannot access justice.
 21 Madam Speaker, people have sacrificed. *People* continue to sacrifice. The
 22 body says, yento adie, it is because the *people* do not have money to buy the
 23 divide us politically. Madam Speaker, *people* have sacrificed. People contin
 24 jobs. I am talking about very ordinary *people* in B.U. (Butimabuju) in Esika
 25 bridging the gap, he further divided the *people* of this country. His Ashanti
 26 ent. But Madam Speaker, *seriously*, the *people* of this country are hurting.
 27 But the President should answer to the *people* of Ghana. But what about the
 28 President must come and report to the *people* of Ghana through the House.
 29 tell us the conditions in which the *people* of this country find themselves.
 30 stability is important only insofar as the *people* see that the quality of their lives
 31 hospitals that I know, the *people* who went there were given codeine and APC
 32 ker, if you raise taxes and inflict the *people* with national reconstruction l

Concordance 4: opposition MPs - UK QAD

49 Gracious Speech offer to those young *people*? Absolutely nothing – no change.
 50 look at what is happening to our young *people* and our businesses, and the squeeze
 51 no action on private pension charges. *People* are worse off under the Tories.
 52 ple that they are better off. However, *people* are not better off; they are worst
 53 the Opposition, he said: “Millions of *people* are desperate for changes in the
 54 There are now four times more young *people* claiming benefits for more than
 55 nt. It is so repetitive and hollow that *people* feel they have heard it all before
 56 On living standards, we all met many *people* in this campaign who are struggling
 57 is the job guarantee for Britain’s young *people*? It is not there. Where are the
 58 unemployment, with one in five young *people* not getting a job, and introd
 59 nt understand the difficulties that the *people* of Britain face? I have to say, t
 60 scrap benefits on which millions of elderly *people* rely—attendance allowance
 61 jobs and pay, which are at the heart of *people*’s concerns. The problem is the
 62 e problem. There is no point in telling *people* that they are better off when his
 63 anger and as hundreds of thousands of *people* took to the streets, he was ma
 64 ting worse, not better: 1 million young *people* without work, low growth, fall

Figure 50: Concordance shots of *people* in GH SONAD and UK QAD

I refer to the attributive expression of a good-bad quality of life to people as *people are* constructions. They are a ‘moral evaluation legitimation’ (van Leeuwen 2008: 110), which MPs use to establish “‘goodwill” and “trust”” (Charteris-Black 2014: 9) with the people. The term embodies all expressions that convey a sense of the concerns of the people. *People are* constructions (excluding related expressions such as *people have*, *people need*, *people can/cannot*) occurred 268 times out of 4,417 instances of *people* in the whole of the UK data (Figure 51 is a concordance sample of 10 of the 268 instances of *people are*). The attributive evaluation of people’s concern is made through relational processes such as *people are/feel...*, with adjectives/adjectival phrases, nouns/noun phrases, verbs/verbal phrases and adverbs/adverbials (N. Fairclough 2003: 172; Thompson and Hunston 1999: 4). The following are examples of adjectives/adjectival phrases complementing *people are*.

Carrier	Linking verb	Attribute (adjective)	
	are getting	better	(line 3)
People	are	worse off	(line 51)
	are	not better off	(line 52)
	are	desperate for changes	(line 53)

The relational processes describe people as being in certain states of life: good or bad quality or conditions of life. MPs compare these qualities and conditions. The adjectives above are comparatives (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 13-14), indicating that the MPs are comparing the living conditions of people across governments and periods (note that even though ‘desperate’ is not comparative, the complement ‘for changes’ implies a comparison). Such comparisons are a way of MPs justifying their own governments’ performance or condemning other governments’ performance, since ‘comparisons in discourse almost always have a legitimating or delegitimizing function’ (van Leeuwen 2008: 111). Notice the contrast between the positive adjectives (‘able’, ‘decent’, lines 1, 4, Figure 51) and negative ones (‘demoralised’, ‘concerned’, ‘desperate’, ‘fed up’, ‘unemployed’ and ‘worried’), which further demonstrates the polarised stance between government and opposition MPs on people’s concerns.

N	Concordance
1	there are genuine vacancies, it is important that people are able to move freely. If the hon. Lady is
2	of current policy. If that were not enough, people are also demoralised by the procurement
3	and other anti-trafficking bodies. Endless groups of people are concerned about the problem, but it is
4	to success the confusion on immigration is. People are concerned that UK workers are
5	active and we should recognise that most young people are decent , hard-working youngsters. Very
6	better than almost anybody else, a lot of these people are desperate because they do not have
7	not borne out by the facts. We all know that people are fed up with politicians who say one
8	policies that more than 1 million young people are unemployed . Caroline Flint: My hon.
9	of a handout from the Chancellor, millions of people are wondering how to pay the bills, put
10	the future, although not for the current recipients. People are worried about the future of attendance

Figure 51: Concordance shot of ‘people are’ complemented by adjectives in UK QAD

The *people are* constructions involve other processes as well (Figure 52). There are material process patterns: Actor + material process + Goal, where the ‘goal’ is either a positive or negative thing, as in: line 9: ... *people* (Actor) *are* + *moving* (material process) *into work* (Goal); and line 13, *People* (Actor) *are* + *facing* (material process) *real hardship* (Goal). These structures indicate that people are active participants in tackling the issues that affect their lives, such as looking ‘for a job’ (line 14) and not just passive beneficiaries who are being *helped* by the government (line 10) or just carriers of certain attributes. If MPs represent people as taking action, then they appreciate the efforts of the people. Where the activities engaged in by people are negative, such as *desperately seeking a job* (line 14), then the government has a legitimate need to act on their behalf. There are also mental processes such as: *People* (Senser) *are* + *feeling* (mental process) *a sense of alienation* (Phenomenon) (line 12).

N	Concordance
1	are altering the planet on an unprecedented scale. More people are using more resources with more intensity and
2	so. All three main parties should be concerned about why people are turning to what might be thought of as
3	took up smoking every year. If 40% of our young people are taking up smoking—almost the same level as
4	misappropriating the reserves of the commercial banks. People are suddenly reverting to a strictly cash system.
5	did not include than for what it contained. Across the UK, people are really struggling. They may be unable to get a
6	because there will be a higher housing benefit bill as people are pushed out into the private sector and
7	years back to work. I want to see cheaper energy too. People are paying too much for their gas and electricity,
8	support to them diminishing. About 600,000 fewer people are now accessing local authority-arranged
9	why we left those on tax credits off the cap. I believe that people are moving into work, and will continue to do so,
10	pointed out, is key and will ensure that thousands more people are helped by the Government than would have
11	Chase Farm hospital has a very thin future ahead. Local people are fighting a valiant campaign to ensure that
12	or about the DFID budget, we must recognise that people are feeling a sense of alienation, and that good,
13	that that money does not go anywhere near far enough. People are facing real hardship, and the measure has
14	our citizens. That would bring the welfare bill down. Many people are desperately looking for a job and would like to

Figure 52: Concordance shot of *people are* followed by verbs in UK QAD

The majority of the verb phrases used in the evaluative statements (see Figure 50; note that I am not referring to only the structures containing *are*) are either in the present tense, future time or progressive aspect (even though the past tense also occurs) as exemplified below.

Present tense: *people: cannot access justice, continue to sacrifice, do not have money, see that ...* (Figure 50, lines 20, 21, 22, 30); *have no problem* (line 43); *are in prison* (line 19).

Future time: *will remain* (line 16)

Progressive aspect: (young) *people are: getting*, (lines 3, 7); *struggling, hurting* (lines 17, 18, 26); *standing tall, claiming benefits, not getting jobs*; (lines 54, 58); *have been falling through* (line 5).

This implies that MPs think of the people's concerns as being about now and the future. There are two intertwined sets of rhetoric that occur: demonstrative, debates about the existence of a phenomenon; and deliberative, assessment of choices against one another, 'considering' particular 'circumstances' (Heinrichs 2010: 33). Deliberative discourse is about the future and how things ought to be or be done. Whereas the present-tense forms demonstrate the state of people's concerns and make them urgent, the progressive makes them ongoing and in need of change. The future-time forms project the future based on the

present state of affairs. As in the following extract, Mr Evennett negatively assesses (shown in purple) the Queen's Address as having failed to meet the concerns of **our country**, and wants the **electorate** 'to pass their verdict on them [the government] in the near future'.

The Queen's Speech is a **missed opportunity** for a Government who, when they came in, promised so much, but who have **delivered so little** in nearly 13 years. **They are political to the last**, as they always have been. The speech was a **regrettable missed opportunity** to deal with the issues facing **our country**. Therein lies the Government's **tragedy**. I am sure that the **electorate** will pass their verdict on them in the near future.

Mr. David Evennett (Con): 19 Nov 09 : Col. 197

This demonstrates the present-future evaluation and projection. Considering that the parliamentary debates are about practical concerns of the people, the current situation has realistic implications for the future, as 'practical concerns are ... open to deliberative debate' (Heinrichs 2010: 34). Even when MPs use the past tense, they usually describe a past action that has an effect on the present or future. For example, [the president] *mentioned investment in people* and *people did not give in to excesses* (Figure 50, lines 1, 4) connote current and future benefits.

Being categorical, rather than modalised assertions, *people are* constructions intensify their focus. MPs use adverbs/adverbials (e.g. *suddenly, really, desperately*, lines 4, 5, 10, Figure 52), adjectives/adjectivals (e.g. *desperate*, line 6, Figure 51) and numerals (e.g. *40%, 600,000*, lines 3, 8 Figure 52) to achieve intensification of their assertions. The next section discusses lexical forms of intensifying or emphasising, as employed in the debates.

6.5 Evaluative use of adverbs, adjectives, nouns and numerals as intensifiers

To intensify/emphasise their descriptions of people's concerns, MPs use evaluative adverbs/adverbials. For example, the following adverbs mark and intensify/amplify the certainty of the MPs' assertions: *clearly, prudently, and extensively* (Figure 50, lines 3, 4, 9); *everyday, seriously, only insofar as* (lines 17, 18, 26, 30); *properly* (line 34); and *[a]bsolutely* (line 49). MPs use these adverbs to, either positively or negatively, express their personal views and to indicate that the situations in which people find themselves are beyond the ordinary. According to Lorenz (1999: 24), 'intensification expresses an "interpersonal"

message in what might otherwise be taken to be a purely “ideational” statement. It signals personal commitment as well as truth and value judgements’. Such judgements form a continuum. For example, the Gracious Speech offers *absolutely nothing* to young people (line 49) ‘denote[s] the upper extreme of the scale’ of non-opportunities (Pérez-Parades and Díez-Bedmar 2012: 106). The adverbs are used by MPs to impress, praise, persuade and generally influence the audience’s reception of their arguments (Partington 1993, cited in Pérez-Parades and Díez-Bedmar 2012: 105). A keyword analysis of the GH SONADs and UK QADs indicates a higher use of intensifying adverbs by UK MPs than their Ghanaian counterparts. There were 12 and five (5) of such adverbs among the first five percent (that is, first 500) keywords in the UK QADs and the GH SONADs respectively. Tables 25 and 26 represent them in order of magnitude. In the UK QADs, 11 of the adverbs (*particularly, simply, absolutely, certainly, likely, extremely, entirely, surely, nearly, desperately, hugely*) are emphatic adverbs and one (*rightly*) is a stance adverb. Emphatic adverbs are ‘adverbs that merely add emphasis to some aspect of content but do not otherwise add content itself’ (Finegan 2010: 73-74). They mark definite conviction. Stance adverbs indicate speaker attitudes (Finegan 2010: 74; Biber and Finegan 1988: 1). All the five (5) in the GH SONAD were emphatics (*very, today, indeed, clearly, particularly*). It must be acknowledged that the classification of adverbs can be quite problematic, as they can perform different communicative functions in different contexts. For instance, Biber and Finegan (1988: 33-34) categorise *simply, certainly, likely* and *surely* as stance adverbs. Biber and Finegan (1988: 26) state that some stance adverbs, what they call *actually*-adverbials (e.g. *actually, really*), perform ‘general emphatic stance’. Biber and Finegan (1988: 33) think that ‘[a]lthough at first sight *surely*-adverbials [including *surely, certainly, clearly*] appear to mark emphatic conviction, that is not their primary function’. However, I follow Finegan’s (2010) classification for the reason that MPs use such adverbs to either validate or deny the efficacy of government policies or the state of people’s concerns, thereby making the emphatic aspect more prominent (I will explain this presently). It must be noted that we have not examined all the specific instances of the use of these adverbs in this study and, therefore, the frequencies provided are only indicative. These adverbs are comparatively more frequent in the UK QADs than in the BNC. A similar trend is found between the GH SONADs and

Table 25: Intensifying and stance adverbs in the UK QAD

Adverbs (Freq.)	/1000 words	Frequency in		Example
		QAD	BNC	
Intensifiers				
<i>Particularly</i> (421)	0.41	0.04	0.02	I also hope that we can improve people's working lives and make work pay for a lot more people, <i>particularly</i> young people.
<i>Simply</i> (358)	0.35	0.03	0.02	What the British people <i>simply</i> want is sound, competent government...
<i>Absolutely</i> (303)	0.30	0.03	-	That is what people face, and they are <i>absolutely</i> frustrated.
<i>Certainly</i> (290)	0.29	0.03	-	One of the main reasons so many people, <i>certainly</i> in my constituency, are moving on to estates ... is a recent change in local lettings policy.
<i>Likely</i> (176)	0.17	0.02	-	At a time when the people of Wales are <i>likely</i> to see unemployment rise again, when people's standards of living are going down...
<i>Extremely</i> (173)	0.17	0.02	-	...nearly 50% of people were <i>extremely</i> concerned about their ability to make ends meet...
<i>Entirely</i> (140)	0.14	0.01	-	It is <i>entirely</i> proper for the British people to have a right to vote and to make their views heard...
<i>Surely</i> (129)	0.13	0.01	-	<i>Surely</i> the people of this country deserve that ...
<i>Nearly</i> (121)	0.12	0.01	-	... <i>nearly</i> 50% of people were extremely concerned about their ability to make ends meet...
<i>Desperately</i> (67)	0.07	-	-	...create apprenticeships for young people who <i>desperately</i> want a future...
<i>Hugely</i> (44)	0.06	-	-	Interest rates are very low, and that is <i>hugely</i> important for people with mortgages and businesses borrowing.
Stance				
<i>Rightly</i> (113)	0.13	0.01	-	... we have an increasingly demoralised NHS work force—people who were, <i>rightly</i> , encouraged by the Government to train for and to join the NHS.

the ICE-Ghana. This points to the noteworthiness of their use in the parliamentary debates. Note that the adverbs considered here (including the adjectives discussed later) are those that occurred at least twice within the Left (L)1-5 to the Right (R)1-5 collocates of the 4,417 and 1,333 instances of *people* in the UK QADs and the GH SONADs respectively, as well as occurring in the top five percent (that is, 500 keywords).

Table 26: Intensifying adverbs in the GH SONAD

Adverb (Freq.)	/1000 words	Frequency in SONAD	ICE	Example
<i>Very</i> (1,668)	2.67	0.27	0.06	It makes things <i>very</i> expensive and people just cannot afford to purchase things from the market.
<i>Today</i> (487)	0.79	0.08	0.01	<i>Today</i> the people of Gusheigu are now sleeping freely...
<i>Indeed</i> (381)	0.61	0.06	-	Mr Speaker, <i>indeed</i> , poverty alleviation requires infusion of resources not only to broad sectors but...
<i>Clearly</i> (173)	0.30	0.03	-	Today, we have four, <i>clearly</i> indicating that the people in this country are getting better each day...
<i>Particularly</i> (117)	0.23	0.02	-	that will help give access to resources to people in this sector, <i>particularly</i> of the small-scale farmers, women processors...

Apart from being higher in frequency, the UK examples show higher intensification/amplification and more complex, multisyllabic adverbs than the Ghanaian ones, demonstrating the desire of the UK MPs to rhetorically ‘exploit hyperbole’ or exaggeration (Partington 1973; cited in Pérez-Parades and Díez-Bedmar 2012: 105) and indicating strong emotional attachment to their expositions: ‘the importance and personal involvement they assign to value judgements and their own propositions’ (Lorenz: 1999: 24). The relatively infrequent use of (complex) intensifying adverbs among the Ghanaian MPs could be a second language limitation, as the use of ‘intensifying adverbs’ is said to be ‘problematic for learners of English’: while ‘elementary forms such as *quite*, *very* and *really*

are over-used, ... their corresponding lexical adverbs (such as *highly*, *closely* and *deeply*) are relatively rare in learner data' (Philip 2008: 1302). The occurrence of these adverbs in the GH SONADs clearly corroborates Philip's assertion: *quite* (72; 0.16/1000 words), *really* (192; 0.31/1000 words), *highly* (38; 0.10/1000 words), *closely* (07; 0.05/1000 words) and *deeply* (04; 0.08/1000 words) (note that these are not given in the above Tables, since they did not appear in the first five percent keywords). *Very* is the most frequent adverb (Table 26) among all the intensifying adverbs, registering 2.67/1000 words in the Ghanaian data. In the UK data, the frequency of *very* is 1.50/1000 words, even though it does not appear in the first five percent of the keywords. Referring to Long and Christensen (2008), Finegan (2010: 76) states that *very* performs an intensification function. Finegan (2010: 76) reports that a reading experiment indicated that readers who read a sentence that referred 'to a *very* tall student judged the student to be about 25 percent taller than a tall one and a *very* smart lecturer about 25 percent smarter than a smart one'. One key thing about the use of *very* among the Ghanaian MPs is the use of *very, very* (as in *very, very* clear/serious) for heightening the intensification. There were 107 of such uses in the Ghanaian data, while there were only three (3) in the UK data (as in *very, very* clear/full/foolish). *Very* is a 'high intensification' term (Downing and Locke 2006: 488), which means *very, very* implies higher, if not highest, intensification. Ghanaian MPs' lack of the use of (more) complex adverbs may explain the high frequency of the use of *very, very* among them, which reiterates the earlier point about second language limitation. On a scale of high, higher and highest intensification, *very, very* will be an upper extreme intensification, as represented in Figure 53.

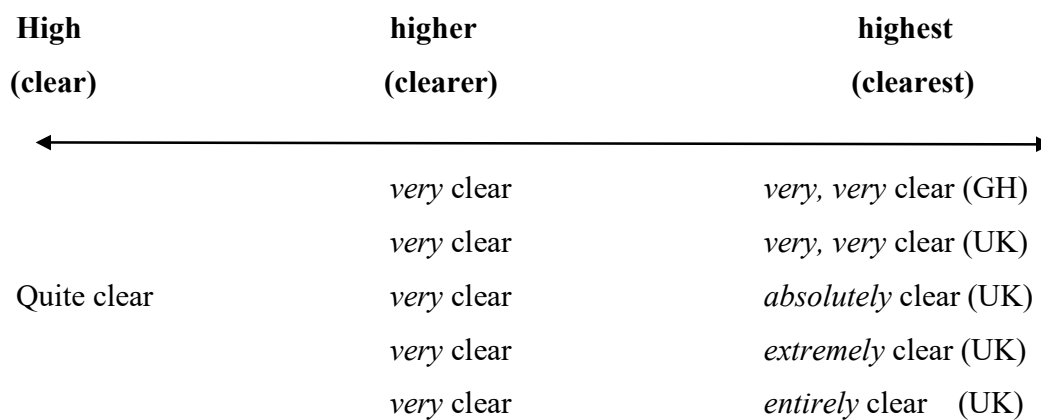


Figure 53: Equivalence of *very, very* as an intensifier

From Figure 53, we can say that a Ghanaian MP's use of *very, very clear* is equivalent to a UK MP's *absolutely/extremely/entirely clear*, which means the Ghanaian MPs also exploit hyperbole for emotional effect. Exploiting hyperbole is, therefore, a parliamentary discourse feature, which allows MPs to appeal to people's emotions.

According to Long and Christensen (2008; cited in Finegan 2010: 76-77):

the best characterization of the literature seems to suggest that intensifiers, if isolated from other forms of powerless speech, or if used in simultaneous comparison with a phrase omitting the intensifier, actually do what intensifiers seem meant to do—they intensify.

What makes the intensifying adverbs significantly emphatic in their use in the Ghanaian and UK parliamentary debates is the fact that MPs almost always do comparing and contrasting, as they either validate or deny the efficacy of the government policies in meeting people's needs. Finegan (2010: 76) states that, in judges' judicial briefs, another adversarial setting, 'decisions that were not unanimous prompted high rates of intensifiers'. Similarly, as government and opposition MPs share differing views during debates, they are more likely to deploy intensifying adverbs to emphasise their views. On an 'attenuated'- 'medium'- 'high' intensification scale (Downing and Locke 2006: 488), the above-mentioned adverbs are 'high', occupying the upper-extreme end of the scale. Thus, we can say that the prominent use of intensifying adverbs points to the nature of parliamentary debates as one-upmanship, with high levels of adversariality, as Miliband demonstrates:

The Conservatives cannot *simply* keep going round promising things that they do not have a clue how they are going to pay for... They have *absolutely* no idea how they are going to pay for that policy...

(Hansard: 24 Nov 09/Col 414)

The use of intensifiers is significant in the sense that 'particular language choices influence a story and presumably the perception of facts behind the story' (Finegan 2010: 77). When MPs use the emphatics, they demonstrate that their information and assessments are without dispute. Miliband's assertion that the Conservatives have 'absolutely no idea' indicates that he has complete conviction.

MPs also use adjectives for emphasis, which include: *undiminished, hard-working, and remarkable* (Figure 50, lines 37, 38, 48). Those that appeared in the top five percent of the keywords and in the L1-5 to R1-5 collocates of *people*, include UK: *great, clear, real,*

little, difficult (Table 27); GH: *good, more, only, better* (Table 28). They are classified according to comparative, complex and base forms and in order of magnitude within each category. Surprisingly, there were no superlative forms among the first five percent of the keywords, which may have been compensated for by the combinatory use of complex adverbs and adjectives, as in *extremely hard, entirely clear*.

Table 27: Intensifying adjectives in the UK QAD

Adj.	(Freq.)	/1000 words	Frequency in		Example
			QAD	BNC	
Comparative					
<i>Greater</i>	(308)	0.30	0.03	-	This Bill aims to give people much <i>greater</i> control over the services that ... help them.
<i>Larger</i>	(233)	0.23	0.02	-	As transport has improved, <i>larger</i> numbers people are choosing to live in my constituency but work in London.
<i>Worse</i>	(166)	0.16	0.02	-	People will be worse off under this Government in 2015
<i>Wider</i>	(120)	0.12	0.01	-	The issue of housing is important ... because of its <i>wider</i> effect on people.
Complex forms					
<i>Difficult</i>	(365)	0.36	0.04	0.01	...it is difficult for young people to get a foot on the housing ladder.
<i>Minimum</i>	(155)	0.17	0.02	-	... people on the <i>minimum</i> wage are paying half the income tax that they paid before...
<i>Excellent</i>	(150)	0.15	0.01	-	It has an <i>excellent</i> record of getting people off drugs and turning their lives around...
<i>Essential</i>	(130)	0.13	0.01	-	For many people, it is <i>essential</i> if they are to have a full life...
<i>Massive</i>	(127)	0.12	0.01	-	There are <i>massive</i> movements of people in terms of both the qualitative make-up of...
<i>Considerable</i>	(89)	0.09	-	-	... which could also save the <i>considerable</i> costs of people being in hospital.
<i>Terrible</i>	(61)	0.06	-	-	...I welcome that Bill, if it will give some comfort to those people who suffer from that terrible disease.
Base forms					
<i>Great</i>	(657)	0.64	0.06	0.01	It is doing <i>great</i> things to train young people...
<i>Clear</i>	(572)	0.56	0.06	0.03	... it gives people a <i>clear</i> understanding of who is responsible for what...
<i>Real</i>	(526)	0.52	0.05	0.01	National Energy Action believes that today, 2.8 million people face <i>real</i> fuel poverty.

<i>Little</i>	(390)	0.38	0.04	0.01	Most people have ... <i>little</i> contact with the legal profession.
<i>Less</i>	(363)	0.36	0.04	0.01	... <i>less</i> older people receiving the support they need.
<i>Small</i>	(344)	0.34	0.03	0.01	There are regulations covering vulnerable persons, but they help only a <i>small</i> number of people.
<i>Huge</i>	(287)	0.28	0.03	-	Elderly and disabled people are facing <i>huge</i> increases in home care charges...
<i>Hard</i>	(284)	0.28	0.03	-	People who work hard for a living were hit with high income taxes...
<i>Large</i>	(236)	0.23	0.02	-	The issues that unite <i>large</i> numbers of people in our society, particularly young...
<i>Extra</i>	(159)	0.16	0.02	-	... these steps will mean that ... an extra 100,000 young people will have benefited.

Table 28: Intensifying adjectives in the GH SONAD

Adj.	(Freq.)	/1000 words	Frequency in SONAD	ICE	Example
Comparative					
<i>More</i>	(639)	1.02	0.10	0.04	... they will employ a lot <i>more</i> people and the Government would be able to get a lot <i>more</i> taxes out of them for development.
<i>Better</i>	(353)	0.56	0.06	-	Today, we have four, clearly indicating that the people in this country are getting <i>better</i> each day...
Complex forms					
<i>Serious</i>	(185)	0.31	0.03	-	... it is a very <i>serious</i> issue that young people between the ages of 20 and 35 form the vast majority of our people. Their biggest problem is unemployment.
<i>Particular</i>	(184)	0.31	0.03	-	... it is a fact, because it is meant for a <i>particular</i> group of people...
Base forms					
<i>Good</i>	(687)	1.10	0.11	0.03	Mr Speaker, they have a bounding duty to the <i>good</i> people of this country and to their constituents ... to discharge their ... duties...
<i>Only</i>	(627)	1.00	0.10	0.03	Trades, repairs of vehicles and households which absorb many of the young people also grew at <i>only</i> 2 per cent...

<i>High</i>	(224)	0.36	0.04	0.01	... we are faced with the problem of people taking high rent advances which are alien to our law.
<i>Clear</i>	(197)	0.33	0.03	-	It is very <i>clear</i> to our good people in the North that SADA [Savana Accelerated Development Authority] is seriously anaemic – There is no money...
<i>Wrong</i>	(162)	0.28	0.03	-	to say that empirically, it was 7.7 per cent, he is totally <i>wrong</i> and misleading the good people of this country.

The adjective *good* requires special mention. It is sometimes used to directly modify *people*, as in *the good people of Ghana/this country*, 41 of which were found in the Ghanaian data, but none in the UK data. Government MPs used it 27 (66%) and the opposition, 14 (34%) times. It constructs a direct attachment to *people*. It presents the people as virtuous and the fact that MPs hold them in high esteem, justifying the need for governments to ‘discharge their ... duties’ to them. This supports our earlier observation in section 6.5 that MPs consciously construct significant attachment to people.

Noun phrases and numerals are also used to amplify statements, as in: *a generation ...* (Figure 50, line 47) *million(s) ...*, *four times more*, *many, hundreds of thousands* (lines 53, 60, 64, 56, 63). In Figure 52, we have *40% of people* (line 1) and *600,000 fewer people* (line 3). Other examples include the following (highlighted in purple).

David Cameron (Con): (UK 15 Nov 06/Col. 13-17):

Nine years ago, the Prime Minister claimed that there were *24 hours* to save the NHS, yet *today*, *20,000 jobs* are being cut in the health service.

Six years on, *110 provisions* are not in force. Seventeen were repealed even before the Act was brought in, and *another 39* have been repealed subsequently

Alhaji Muntaka (NDC): GH SONAD 21 Feb 2012/Col. 1146-8:

... *89 mechanization* centres were established; rice production has increased from only *30 per cent* to *50 per cent* of our needs in three years.

Prof. Gyan-Baffour (NPP): GH SONAD 21 Feb 2012/Col. 1145-76

Economy was actually getting to *14 per cent*, growth rate was getting to *14 per cent*.

... the report indicated that the economy was actually growing at 12 per cent and not 14 percent.

These figures appear enormous without the necessary contexts and comparisons. However, the audience have little or no knowledge of other comparative figures and contexts and, therefore, are likely to see these as true. MPs use the numbers as ‘evidence or data’ ‘to back up’ their claims (Charteris-Black 2014: 133). The numbers ‘justify the transition from the argument(s) to the conclusion’ (Kienpointner 1992; Chilton et al. 2009; cited in Charteris-Black 2014: 113). For example, the statement ‘20,000 jobs are being cut in the health service’ allows Cameron to conclude that the Prime Minister has failed, just as Prof. Gyan-Baffour’s *12 per cent and not 14* indicates failure. On the other hand, Alhaji Muntaka’s *89 mechanization centres and 30 per cent to 50 per cent* implies responsible governance. If the number is true, then the Prime Minister appears to have failed and something ought to be done. It strengthens the persuasive element of Cameron’s argument. Giving numbers and statistics to support one’s claims has the tendency of making them credible and, through emotive choices, manipulating the audience to see them as such. The use of quantifiers means MPs are giving specific information about numbers of people and situations. It suggests that they are informed by some research finding(s) and facts. The use of the aforementioned adverbs, adjectives, noun phrases and numerals shows the strength of MPs’ convictions and arguments about the concerns of the people. They characterise the emotive nature of parliamentary discourse.

The use of intensifiers ‘foregrounds’ (Lorenz 1999: 26) the importance MPs want to attach to the concerns of the people. In the parliamentary context where MPs almost always aim at their political fortunes and chances in the ‘next’ elections, showing commitment to the needs and concerns of the *people* is crucial. There is a general representation of evaluation in parliamentary debates as double-edged: for government MPs, evaluation is seen as praise of the government and as criticism of the opposition; but for the opposition, it is criticism of the government and praise of the opposition. This, therefore, represents four dimensions and is what I have termed *the evaluation rectangle*, an adaptation of van Dijk’s (2011a: 396-397) ideological square. The ideological square states that, in ideological discourse, in-groups emphasise their positives and de-emphasise their negatives, while they emphasise the negatives of out-groups and de-emphasise their positives. However, I call it

evaluation rectangle because square suggests equal measures of emphasis and de-emphasis, while rectangle implies unequal measures of the two sides, which is what actually happens in MPs' evaluation of government policies, as we demonstrate in the next section.

6.6 The evaluation rectangle: towards a theory of evaluation in parliamentary debates

Evaluation of government policies by MPs can be described as an ideological construction of good versus bad policies. MPs deploy subjective, comparative and contrastive evaluation in their debates to indicate ideological differences. While government MPs think that their governments are responsibly formulating and implementing the right policies for the development of the country and the betterment of people's lives, opposition MPs feel otherwise. Examples 71 and 72 illustrate this. While Alhaji Muntaka (Example 71) praises the President and the government for the address and policies outlined therein (see green highlight), Prof. Gyan-Baffour (Example 72) disagrees (purple highlights). Note that, while he praises the government, Muntaka acknowledges some aspects of failure on the government's part (brown highlights) and recognises some achievements of the opposition, that is, the previous government (blue highlights). These will be discussed later, as I first look at the positive-negative arguments. The section demonstrates that the government MPs mainly praise, while the opposition fundamentally criticise the addresses.

Example 71: GH SONAD 21 Feb 2012/Col. 1146-8

Alhaji Muntaka (NDC, government MP, proposer):

1. ... as a developing country, we are not completely out of the woods; there are challenges,
2. there are difficulties.
3. But that notwithstanding, this Government has proved to be the most efficient in terms of
4. delivery to the needs of Ghanaians in our recent history... on the needs of our people... the
5. psychological needs of the people.
6. Within three years ... so much has been achieved, to the extent that I can feel comfortable
7. to say that all past governments ... in this country should come with their first term
8. achievement. ... this Government has been very efficient, has been the one that has managed
9. to deliver so much on the needs of our people.
10. ... when you look at physiological needs of the people, it is talking about food and water. ...
11. without the least doubt, the Address spoke extensively about the in-roads that have been
12. made in agriculture.
13. ... it is clearly stated that over the last three years, as much as 89 mechanization centres were
14. established in almost all cultivation areas across the country.
15. ... we have had significant increases in rice production. Before we took over power in 2009,

16. the production of rice in our country was only 30 per cent of the demand; within three years
17. of the opportunity given us, today, our cultivation is 50 per cent of our needs.
18. ... let me admit, there are challenges. We will not hide and pretend that there are no challenges in this
19. country especially with youth unemployment.
20. Yes, I must acknowledge that the previous government did so well by starting the programme to
21. rehabilitate some of them, but... we have continued work on most of them and many of them are at
22. their completion stages.
23. I will not stand here and pretend that Governments do not succeed one another. I will not pretend that
24. they did not start making an arrangement with financing but... we had to come and do it in 2009.

Example 72: GH SONAD 21 Feb 2012/Col. 1145-76

Prof. Gyan-Baffour (NPP, opposition MP, seconder):

1. Madam Speaker, I am seconding this Motion because our practice in the House
2. requires that the seconder of the Motion should be somebody other than a Member
3. on the Majority side. I am not seconding the motion because I support or endorse
4. what the President came here to say.
5. Madam Speaker, to the contrary, the state of the nation is very bleak and indeed, as
6. dark as the nights. And no one should believe the difficult attempt by the President
7. to whitewash the state of the nation.
8. Madam Speaker, seriously, the people of this country are hurting.
9. [...] in my view, the State of the Nation Address should actually tell us the
10. conditions in which the people of this country find themselves.
11. (a) It is a barometer of the political and social environment of the society and
- (b) it is not about a litany of schools under trees, roads constructed and all those projects...
12. (a) it should be about the people, the way they feel, their joy, their pain...
- (b) It is not about "I built schools", it is about "I built schools so more children are in school...
13. (a) It is about so many children passed the "examination because I did that. It is about so many people are better off because "I did that".
14. (a) It is an end in itself, that is why we call it the "State of the Nation" and
- (b) [it is] not the processes by which you realize the end.
15. ... on roads, we thank God that for now, God has actually touched his heart and he
16. has agreed to build the Ofankor road, the one from Legon to that place.

In Example 71, Muntaka subjectively expresses his opinion and praises the Government's performance. These evaluative statements (green highlights) are not only highly positive but also express a political value-system, a component of an ideology (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 6), namely that (democratic) governments are supposed to be politically and socially responsible to serve the interests of their people. The evaluative statements reflect the view of 'politics' as 'how "social goods" are or ought to be distributed' (Gee 2001 [1999]: 2) and social democracy as 'a desire to distribute social rewards in accordance with moral ... principle' (Heywood 2000: 74). Muntaka projects the government as a responsible social

actor (see van Leeuwen 2008; 1996) which has performed and fulfilled its social contract with the people. While he praises the government, he evaluatively discredits the opposition, the previous government (purple highlight), which is a positive self-presentation and negative other-presentation. Muntaka indirectly expresses the ideological position of the NDC party, which claims a social democratic philosophy and ‘believes in the equality and the egalitarian treatment of all persons’ (Constitution of the National Democratic Congress 1992: Article 5). The statements indicate the ‘conceptually ... comparative, subjective, and value-laden’ (Thompson and Hunston 1999: 13) nature of the evaluation of government policies. The opposition NPP ‘regards itself as a liberal party ... [and] emphasizes its dogmatic attachment to free enterprise as the foundation of social progress’ (Ninsin 2006: no pagination). The NPP is often accused by its opponents as being a self-centred capitalist-oriented party that does not care about the ordinary people. Thus, when Muntaka emphasises that the NDC government has attended to the needs of *our people, our country*, he, by implication, denounces the NPP’s ideological position.

However, Prof. Gyan-Baffour (Example 72) rhetorically expresses contrary views to Muntaka’s standpoint. Right from the outset, he makes his intentions clear: that his seconding the motion is merely a formality and an institutional requirement, and he does not *support or endorse what the President* said (lines 1-4). He describes and evaluates the state of the nation negatively as *very bleak* and *indeed, as dark as the nights* (lines 5-6) and that *the people of this country are hurting* (line 8). To give credence to his claim, he attempts to define, rather subjectively (*in my view* (line 9)), what the State of the Nation Address should(not) be (lines 11-14): (a) *it is/should be...* and (b) *it is not...* Gyan-Baffour also does a positive-self and negative-other presentation. There is a denial of the government’s policy (*it is not...*) and he postulates what the ideal policy should be (*it is/should be...*). He creates an ideal (desirable)-wrong (undesirable) relationship through parallel structures (see (a)-(b), lines 11-14), which are complementary opposites (Jeffries 2010: 130). In other words, they are mutually exclusive, emphasising the contrast between the real address and an ideal one. The construction of opposition allows him to emphatically portray the President’s address as having failed to tackle the crucial issues that affect the lives of the people. While presenting the President’s policy initiatives as undesirable, Gyan-Baffour attempts to persuade the audience to accept his desired viewpoint. He creates an ‘emotional impact

[which] is heightened by creating a contrast between’ (Charteris-Black 2014: 95) a desirable and an undesirable policy (N. Fairclough 2003: 177). Gyan-Baffour illustrates *the people concern* in the phrases: **the people of this country, the society, the people, so many children and so many people**; and more reflectively, *it should be about the people, the way they feel, their joy, their pain* (line 12). He indicates a high degree of commitment to his views by employing the deontic modality ‘should’ (lines 9, 12), denoting an obligation. The use of ‘actually’ (line 9) ‘emphasize[s]’ his ‘position in contrast to other possible positions [those positions expressed by Muntaka and the President]’ (Biber and Finegan 1988: 28).

Redefining in their own terms what the address should/should not be appears to be a practice of opposition MPs. For instance, during the 2005 GH SONAD, Mr Mahama, on seconding the motion, said that ‘the Address failed to excite’ and opined that ‘[a] State of the Nation Address tells the nation three (3) main things — (1) Where are we at? (2) Where are we going? (3) How do we get there? That is the formula for delivering a State of the Nation Address’ (Hansard: GH 8 February 2005/Col. 286-89). (Re)defining the address and what it should do, offers the MPs the opportunity to discredit the address and to legitimise their criticisms and claims and delegitimise the address.

The good-bad policy arguments occur in the UK QADs as well. As we noticed in Examples 67 and 69, section 6.3.2, in his proposal, Alun Michael (government MP) praises the government for delivering *the minimum wage, after 100 years of campaigning* (Example 67, lines 3-4). He also exalts the government’s *more than halv[ing] unemployment and long-term youth unemployment* (Example 69, line 3). But he criticises the opposition: ‘under the Conservatives a generation of young people were denied hope and opportunity’ (lines 2-3), and admonishes them to give the government credit, since *[t]he public are impressed when the Opposition give credit where it is due* (line 1). He anticipates that the opposition will condemn the address, which points to the confrontational nature of the parliamentary debates, which is normally polarised along government-opposition lines. In response to Alun Michael’s statement, David Cameron acknowledges some aspects of the government’s policies. However, he mostly criticises the address. Example 73 represents excerpts from Cameron’s argument.

Example 73: UK 15 Nov 06/Col 13-17

Mr. David Cameron (Con, leader of the opposition):

1. There are things in this Gracious Speech that we very much welcome; in fact, we proposed some
2. of them. I am delighted that the Government are going to link the basic state pension to earnings;
3. we had that in our last manifesto. The Treasury has finally been forced to make the provision of
4. statistics independent—again, a Conservative proposal [...]
5. Let me turn to foreign policy. I welcome the specific mention of Darfur in the Gracious
6. Speech... on Iraq and Afghanistan. I supported both actions, I support both democratically
7. elected Governments, and I support the troops and the work that they are doing [...]
8. [In] Afghanistan ... backing a democratically elected Government [...] Those are legitimate
9. British Interests [...] We have a profound interest in preventing Iraq from sliding further into
10. bloodshed [...] On Northern Ireland, we back the efforts to restore power sharing and
11. devolution. [...]
12. This will be the Prime Minister's last Gracious Speech ... the 13th time ... when he was Leader
13. of the Opposition, he said: "Millions of people are desperate for changes in the Child Support
14. Agency", yet today, under his Government, that situation is more chaotic than ever. Twelve
15. years ago, as Leader of the Opposition, he said that the pension system was a scandal, yet it is
16. his Government who have taken from every pension fund in the country. Twelve years ago, as
17. Leader of the Opposition, he said that the Government "are so riven by faction...that they
18. cannot address the interests of the country"...
19. What better description could there be of our Government today?
20. The tragedy of this Prime Minister is that he promised so much, and yet has delivered so little.
21. The tragedy of this Queen's Speech is that all that his successor offers is more of the same:
22. more laws on crime, yet violent crime is up; more laws on health, yet hospitals have closed;
23. more laws on immigration, yet our borders are still completely out of control. Every year, the
24. same promises; every year, the same failures.
25. The paradox of new Labour is that, 12 years on, the Prime Minister is still desperately looking
26. for his legacy. Three massive majorities, a decade in power, 10 Gracious Speeches and 370
27. pieces of legislation, and [...]: why has so little been achieved? [...]
28. This Queen's Speech is no different. It is so repetitive and hollow that people feel they have
29. heard it all before, and it is so depressing [...]
30. Nowhere is this failure to deliver more clear than in the two vital areas of health and crime. Nine
31. years ago, the Prime Minister claimed that there were 24 hours to save the NHS, yet today,
32. 20,000 jobs are being cut in the health service [...]
33. Morale has been sapped and money wasted, and deficits are at record levels. The chief medical
34. officer tells us that in public health there are "declining numbers and inadequate recruitment...".
35. The Royal College of Nursing says that staff are being placed under intolerable and
36. unsustainable pressure [...]
37. Failure on health is matched by failure on crime. After nine years, every part of our criminal
38. justice system is in a shambles. The chairman of the Youth Justice Board ...says that the juvenile
39. system is in danger of meltdown. The chief inspector of prisons says that the system is
40. approaching breaking point. The Lord Chancellor—the man in charge of the whole legal system
41. - says that there is "general chaos". Even the Home Secretary says that the probation service is
42. poor and mediocre [...] We have had 50 Home Office Bills, some of which were completely
43. contradictory [...] Six years on, 110 provisions are not in force [...].
44. The Government like to talk tough, but they have just been acting dumb.

Cameron directly acknowledges that *[t]here are things in this Queen's Speech that we very much welcome* (line 1). First, he compliments the efforts of the Prime Minister (Tony Blair) in dealing with issues such as linking *the basic state pension to earnings*, making *the provision of statistics independent* (lines 2-4). He, however, takes some credit for the implementation of these policies, as he puts it: *we proposed some of them* (lines 1-2) and that the Conservatives had the pension policy in their manifesto. These evaluatory statements (lines 1-11, blue highlights) are positive as they indicate approval of the Prime Minister's performance, implying that such 'good' policies directly link to electoral fortunes. He, therefore, wants to share the glory with the Prime Minister (PM), for the support of the numerous numbers of the overhearing audience. Cameron also welcomes the PM's foreign policies on *Darfur, Iraq, Afghanistan and Northern Ireland* (lines 5-10). Commending the Prime Minister on these issues reflects the view that the House of Commons MPs often appear neutral when asking questions about 'non-partisan matters such as Northern Ireland' (Harris 2001: 458). It would appear that issues of foreign policy are mostly considered non-partisan and, as Cameron puts it: *[t]hose are legitimate British interests* (lines 8-9). Supporting and commending the Prime Minister on these foreign policies has moral implications for Cameron because he *supported* the military interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan and, therefore, continues to *support the troops and the work that they are doing* (lines 6-7). He has a moral obligation to support the PM on these because it would be insincere to condemn an action he had voted for and supported. Having voted for and supported the war in both countries, Cameron has a responsibility towards rebuilding stability in those countries. In fact, during the debate that authorised the Iraq war, 149 (against 412) MPs opposed it (Hansard: 18 Mar 2003/Col. 902, 907). In recent times, many British people have criticised and called to question the invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan. For example, in her statement to the Chilcot Inquiry (a British public inquiry into Britain's role in the Iraq war that was commissioned by PM Gordon Brown in 2009), the Former MI5 chief, Eliza Manningham-Buller, said that the Iraq and Afghanistan invasions had led to the radicalisation of young people in the UK (Norton-Taylor 2010). When we compare Cameron's arguments on local policies (lines 11-44) with those on the above-mentioned foreign policies, it appears that his support for the PM's foreign policy is only politically convenient. It is similar to what Muntaka (Example 71) does in his argument. Muntaka's

acknowledgment of aspects of the previous government's performance is followed by a 'but ...' (lines 21-24) and takes some credit for his government as well. Cameron's and Muntaka's acknowledgements appear only politically convenient because, apart from allowing them to share in the glory of the praise, the recognition makes their criticisms that follow appear credible, as an independent observer would think that they are objective about policy issues. This means that recognising an opponent's positive side in parliamentary debates is hardly genuine. MPs appreciate mainly the aspects in whose credit they can share.

Cameron's general assessment of the PM's local policies (especially the ones Cameron cannot claim credit for) is negative and deleterious (purple highlights), which he evaluatively sums up as: *[t]he Government like to talk tough, but they have just been acting dumb* (line 44). He describes the address as a *tragedy* (lines 20-21), a *paradox* (line 25), *repetitive, hollow and depressing* (lines 28-29). These are emotionally loaded evaluations that attempt to appeal to people's fear and hopelessness, in order to emphasise the dire consequences of the PM's policies. To make his claims credible, Cameron relies on 'expert authority' and 'expert legitimation' (van Leeuwen 2008: 107) by citing professional and expert sources, appealing to 'expert opinion' and/or 'the authority of powerful institutions' (Walton 1997: 28) to back his argument. He quotes *the chief medical officer* (lines 33-34), *the Royal College of Nursing* and *the British Medical Association* (lines 35-36) to support his claim of failure on health delivery. He also cites the *chairman of the Youth Justice Board*, the *chief inspector of prisons* and the *Lord Chancellor* (38-41) to reinforce his assertion that crime fighting has failed while the *criminal justice system is in a shambles* (37-38). Even more significant is the reference to the Home Secretary's supposed calling of *the probation service as poor and mediocre* (lines 41-42). If a government's own Home Secretary could describe the government's policy as *poor and mediocre*, it makes Cameron's claims more believable and legitimised. Cameron's appeal to the institutions in his argument is made plausible (if not credible) by the direct quoting of those institutions of power. Cameron also quotes the PM Tony Blair in support of his statement.

... when he [Tony Blair, in 1994] was Leader of the Opposition, he said: "*Millions of people are desperate for changes in the Child Support Agency*", yet today, under his Government, *that situation is more chaotic than ever* (lines 12-14).

Cameron's citing of the PM Tony Blair is an attempt not only to give evidence and justify his criticism of the PM's performance, but also to emphasise his claims. He uses the quote as the basis of his criticism and to give his audience (including the overhearing audience) an insight into the implied contradictory stances of the PM with respect to his words and his actions and/or performance as a PM. The quotation has a potential to persuade the audience as they are more likely to 'follow, and respond to the words as reported' (Myers 1999: 376) because it 'enhance[s] the credibility' of Cameron's claims, as it implies "I could not have said it better myself [than you]" (van Leeuwen 2008: 61). Cameron uses the PM's own words against him: *[w]hat better description could there be of our government today?* (line 19). It presents the PM as dishonest. If after assuming the reins of governance, he cannot change what he had condemned, but *under his Government, that situation is more chaotic than ever* (line 14), it implies that he is not trustworthy and has failed the people.

Another means by which Cameron intensifies his criticism and persuasive power is the use of a tetracolon pattern of four pairs of parallel *X yet Y*:

- *more laws on crime, yet violent crime is up*
- *more laws on health, yet hospitals have closed;*
- *more laws on immigration, yet our borders are still completely out of control.*
- *Every year, the same promises; every year, the same failures.* (lines 22-24)

The use of the coordinator *yet* (and *but*) sets up an 'oppositional frame', which 'impl[ies] a contrast between two circumstances; i.e. that in the light of the circumstance in the dependent clause, that in the main clause is surprising' (Quirk et al. 1972; cited in Jeffries 2010: 43-44). Thus, Cameron creates a sense of surprise between the government's promises and passage of more laws but little success in meeting the people's aspirations and needs as well as fighting crime. In other words, the Government's achievements vis-à-vis their legislative actions are unexpected and surprising. In I. Fairclough's (2016: 58) terms, by promising, the government as an 'agent' states a 'goal' in a set of 'circumstances' and proposes 'a course of action' 'that would presumably transform their current circumstances into the future state-of-affairs corresponding to their goal'. Cameron's argument implies, therefore, that if the government has failed to transform the circumstances to achieve the stated goal, then the government appears incompetent – *[t]he Government like to talk tough, but they have just been acting dumb* (line 44).

Thus far, we have tried to show that government and opposition MPs respectively essentially praise and criticise government policies. As indicated in Figure 54, whereas government MPs give large amounts of space and time to the government's positives, opposition MPs give the major portions of their talk to criticising the government. For example, throughout his talk, Gyan-Baffour commends the President only on one thing: the decision *to build the Ofankor road* (Example 72, lines 15-16). Figure 54 represents the percentage of words which Alhaji Muntaka, Prof. Gyan-Baffour, Alun Michael and David Cameron devoted to praising/commending, criticising, acknowledging their opponent's positives as well as their own problems. I achieved this by reading each MP's entire talk and splitting the words into those that praised, criticised or acknowledged some aspects of the government policies including those that acknowledged their own challenges. I then counted up each set of words and expressed it as a percentage of each MP's entire talk.

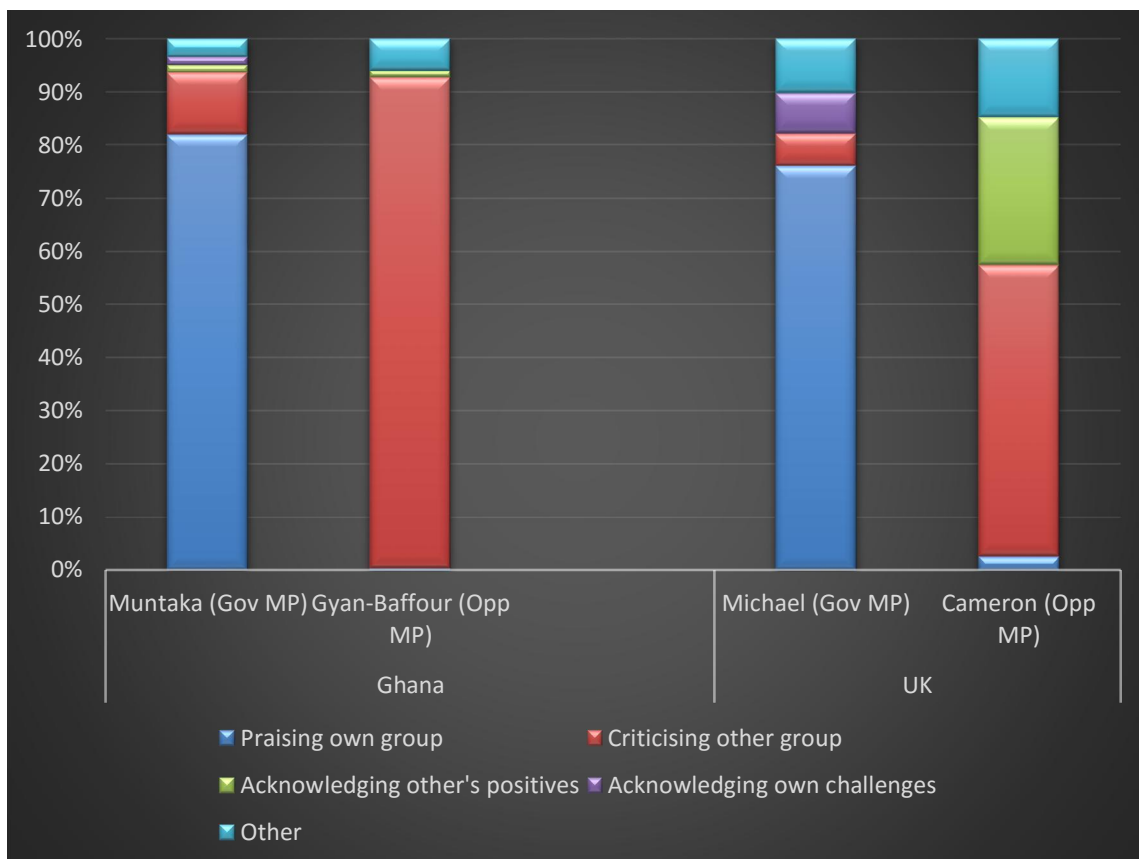


Figure 54: Distribution of four MPs' words in their debates

Figure 54 shows that Muntaka (Ghanaian government MP and proposer) devoted about 82% of his words to praising the government, 12% to criticising the opposition, 3% to acknowledging his government's challenges and 1% recognising the opposition's record in government. In response, the opposition MP (the seconder) spent about 92% of his words on criticising, 1% to commend part of the government's performance and approximately no appreciation of any failures of the opposition. Similarly, Alun Michael, UK government MP, utilised around 76% of his words to praise/commend the government, 6% to criticise the opposition and 8% to acknowledge his government's challenges. In response, David Cameron, opposition MP, used approximately 55% of his words in criticising the government, 28% to acknowledge some facets of the government's policies and 2% to praise the opposition. 'Other' represents statements that could not be categorised as any of the afore-mentioned. Figure 54 clearly demonstrates the fact that parliamentary debates are polarised along party lines. The Majority MPs predominantly praise and defend the government, while the Minority generally criticise and oppose the government (CDD-Ghana 2008: 108, 131). It reflects the ideologically-saturated nature of the parliamentary debates.

It is in the light of the foregoing that we should see the debates as an *evaluation rectangle* as shown in Figure 55. As noted earlier, I call it *rectangle* as against van Dijk's *square*, since *rectangle* reflects the disproportionateness between each group of MPs' highlighting their policies/achievements and de-highlighting their opponent's policies/achievements. There is an unequal measure of emphasising and de-emphasising, just as the rectangle has unequal adjacent sides. In other words, government and opposition MPs' evaluation in the parliamentary debates represents an unequal presentation of two sides of an argument. The long sides indicate that the amount of space and time MPs give to praising and criticising is more than that which is devoted to acknowledging the opponent's positives and/or recognition of their own challenges and failures. The evaluation rectangle exemplifies the fact that [b]ecause discourses are created in reference and opposition to each other, they tend to be organized around certain fundamental oppositions' (Jacobs 1998: 356). The rectangle shows that parliamentary debates are organised around the adversary between opposition and government MPs.



Figure 55: The evaluation rectangle

The unequal measures of the rectangular sides also represent parliamentary debates as a struggle for superiority of ideas, as MPs frame their debates in a manner that fundamentally discredits opponents' image and promotes their own.

6.7 Chapter conclusion

The chapter has explored how Members of Parliament (MPs) evaluate government policies and people's concerns during UK Queen's Address debates (UK QADs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONADs). It has concerned itself with what I have called *the people concern*, that is, the idea that the focus of governments and public policies should be to cater for the socio-economic wellbeing of the citizenry. MPs classify people in two main ways: age-based (e.g. young people, youth, old(er)/elderly people) and circumstance-based (e.g. disabled/vulnerable, poor, unemployed people). Different classes of people are associated with different needs and concerns, such as young people and youth mainly needing employment/jobs/skills. Other classes of people such as pensioners, old/older/elderly, disable/vulnerable are linked to social care and benefits. Similarly, working people need decent wages. Local people need empowerment for them to take control over the development of their communities. Ordinary and poor/poorer/poorest people are regarded as lacking basic infrastructural accessibility. However, UK MPs appear

more specific in their classification of the people than Ghanaian MPs, which means the UK MPs recognise a more multilayered society than Ghanaian MPs. The attempt by the UK MPs to identify a complex society with different groups of people with different kinds of needs reflects the British political culture as a welfare state. It echoes parliamentary democracy as a representation of the people and not a section of them. But at the same time, it displays posturing for political-point scoring. The absence of such groups as *pensioners*, *the elderly* and *disabled people* from the GH SONADs implies lack of policy direction for such groups. The limited categories of people in the Ghanaian debates mean that Ghanaian MPs overgeneralise the groups and needs of people, which ignores the differences between members of a category of people.

Evaluatory language allows MPs to express their opinions about government policies, while connecting with the citizenry by displaying concern for people's needs and establishing goodwill with them. However, the extent to which the show of concern for people's interests is genuine or mere rhetoric is another question. One way to ascertain this will be to measure the effects of practical policy implementation on the lives of the people, which is beyond the scope of this research. The key references to people and the show of concern in the debates raise an important assumption about MPs. In Chapters 4 and 5, we raised the point that MPs appeared to care little about the general good of the people, which is not supported by the findings in this chapter. In their debates, MPs go out of their way to construct themselves as advocates for the people in order to appeal to their emotions for political ends.

Whereas government MPs think that people are in a more fortunate or prosperous position than previously as a result of prudent government policies, opposition MPs disagree, giving a contrastive picture of *the people concern*. Each group of MPs attempts to characterise itself as being more concerned with the people's needs than the other. The attributive expression of *the people concern* is what I have referred to as *people are*, which is complemented by evaluative adjectives that are either positive or negative (e.g. *People are better off* or *People are not better off*). *People are* is sometimes followed by verbs, which mostly occur in the present tense (e.g. *People cannot access justice, continue to sacrifice, do not have money*), present progressive aspect (*People are struggling, hurting*) and future time (*People will remain/be properly rewarded*). The evaluation of people's concerns is

often heightened by evaluative adverbs/adverbial phrases (e.g. *absolutely, extremely, likely, certainly, prudently, seriously*) and nouns/noun phrases/numerals (*a generation, million(s), many, hundreds of thousands*). It shows the high levels of conviction with which MPs evaluate government policies. Considering parliamentary debates as a competition about who has stronger political acumen and policy initiatives to lead and meet the aspirations of the people, it is clear that ideological stancetaking is the basis of the use of such high intensity evaluatory language.

In trying to expound a sense of care and attachment to people, MPs create a contrastive frame of desirables and undesirables or praise and condemnation, leading to polarised stances between government and opposition MPs. Such polarisation makes it difficult to assess the truth and validity of MPs' assertions and commitment to the concerns of the people. The polarised stances taken by MPs manifest in the amount of time and space they devote to either praising or condemning government policies. Government MPs commit the majority of their talk to essentially praise government policies and only a small fraction of it to, marginally, if any, acknowledge the opposition's positives and the government's own failures/challenges. On the other hand, opposition MPs fundamentally criticise and allocate a small percentage of their talk to recognise the positives of the government policies, with little or no mention of their own failures/challenges. This gives parliamentary debates an ideologically rectangular frame. Consequently, we have proposed that evaluation in parliamentary debates could be described as an *evaluation rectangle*, which reflects the unequal measures of the expression of positives and negatives in MPs' debates, which indicates the ideological biases of the two groups of MPs.

7 Conclusion

7.1 Introduction

The fundamental aim of this study has been to explore questions and debates in the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse through a corpus-assisted discourse studies (CADS) approach, drawing inputs from corpus-based and corpus-driven methods. It has sought to investigate what MPs seek to accomplish with their questions and debates. We have analysed the linguistic forms and patterns of MPs' questions and debates and tried to uncover what holds MPs' attention in the course of their professional engagements as representatives of the people. In Chapters 4 and 5, through the analysis of a range of process types (transitivity), questions were examined to identify how material, relational, verbal and mental processes were employed by MPs to hold (Prime) Ministers accountable. The analysis was complemented by speech act principles (e.g. Searle 1969; 2010; Coulthard 1985). We also looked at negative *yes/no* interrogatives. In Chapter 6, we explored debates to examine what I have called *the people concern* and the evaluative implications of MPs' references to people. This chapter provides a summary of the findings by responding to the research questions that were posed at the beginning of the thesis. It also states the implications of the study for theory and methodology, suggestions for future directions and a closing remark.

7.2 Responding to the research questions

Five specific research questions were posed at the beginning of this research (section 1.3), which sought to find out:

- i. similarities and differences between UK Prime Minister's and Ghanaian Minister's questions; and those between the UK Queen's Address and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates.
- ii. what transitivity choices tell us about MPs and UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse;
- iii. the speech act functions of MPs' questions.
- iv. how government and opposition MPs judge government policies and what MPs focus on in the debates; and

- v. the socio-political implications of MPs' manner of questioning and debating in the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse.

These are responded to in turn in the following sections, but due to the close relationship between the process types and speech acts as used in the analysis, I answer the second (ii) and third (iii) questions simultaneously.

7.2.1 Similarities and differences between UK PMQs and GMQs; and UK QADs and GH SONADs

While the UK Prime Minister's questions (PMQs) and Ghanaian Minister's questions (GMQs) are similar, they are also different in many respects. The similarities and differences between the two can be viewed from linguistic and non-linguistic perspectives. In terms of interrogative forms, our analysis in Chapter 3 show that MPs in both parliaments use the following five types, viz:

- i. independent (direct) *yes/no* interrogatives,
- ii. independent (direct) *wh*-interrogatives,
- iii. independent (direct) alternate interrogatives,
- iv. dependent (indirect) *wh*-interrogatives, and
- v. multiple interrogatives.

In addition, the Ghanaian MPs use two distinctive types of interrogatives that UK MPs do not use, namely:

- i. dependent (indirect) *yes/no* interrogatives, and
- ii. dependent (indirect) alternate interrogatives.

In both parliaments, *yes/no* interrogatives were the most frequent, so they were the types (both independent and dependent *yes/no* interrogatives) which were explored in Chapters 4 and 5. Both groups of MPs design their questions in a similar way, which could be represented as:

(preface/pre-question statement)+question+ (postscript/post-question statement)

That is, before and/or after asking questions, MPs make contextualising propositions that form the basis of the questions and/or predict what the response should be. MPs construct their questions this way because they do not have the opportunity of asking follow-up

questions. They seek to condense so much information into their questions. In other questioning settings such as court trials, questioners are able to do extended questioning, which leads them to employ a greater variety of question types to control information and ‘to achieve witness control’ (Archer 2005: 151). However, since MPs do not have the chance to ask follow-up questions, there is the need for elaborate question design. Through the contextualising propositions, MPs try to control information and response by using epistemic markers such as ‘know’, ‘sure’, ‘aware’ and ‘believe’, as for example ‘People know that...’ or ‘The Minister will be aware that...’ When using these epistemic markers, MPs employ three types of orientation: ‘people’/‘we’ orientation, addressee and speaker orientations. The ‘people’/‘we’-oriented epistemic marking is constructed to represent the greatest level of believability, since it makes the truth of the statement rest with ‘people’ by indexing its claim to knowledge ‘as shared’ (Jaffe 2009: 7), especially as it is mostly constructed with ‘know’, a factive verb. When questions are constructed this way, it makes it difficult for the addressee (Prime) Minister not to accept the propositions in the questions.

Dependent (indirect) *yes/no* interrogatives are found to be the major difference between Ghanaian Minister’s and UK PM’s questions. They are mainly constructed with mental process verbs, including ‘know’, ‘want to’, ‘like to’ and ‘wish to’. The structure could be generally represented as:

I want to/would like to /will want to/wish to + verb + (from X) + whether/if + Y

as in: *I want to find out from the Minister if there is good collaboration between the Ministry of Food and Agriculture and Ministry of Trade and Industry.* The use of dependent *yes/no* interrogatives in the GMQs is largely influenced by Ghanaian language (L1) interference. Ghanaian languages do not have modal forms (Adika 2012; Anderson 2009) and, therefore, Ghanaians mostly make requests through declarative forms by means of ‘want to’-structures. These are desiderative structures and, therefore, their use, which allows MPs to delay their questions, is a politeness marker.

In marking politeness, Ghanaian MPs appear to be also influenced by English as a second language (ESL) teaching, which usually emphasises grammatical rules over the communicative approach to teaching (Dzamashie 1997). Ghanaian MPs use more ‘would’/‘could’ as against British MPs’ use of ‘will’/‘can’ forms in the construction of *yes/no* interrogatives and the exhibition of politeness. This finding seems to corroborate the

view that politeness is a cultural phenomenon (Mills 2009; Watts 2005: 61) and that the British and in this case British MPs appear to have moved away from making ‘direct requests to conventionally indirect requests’ and that ‘indirectness has been thought to be of particular value in doing politeness in British culture’ (Culpeper and Archer 2008: 66-70). It means what constitutes polite behaviour in British culture is more socio-cultural than linguistic. However, the second language speaker may not be familiar with such socio-cultural factors and, therefore, the main option is to mark politeness by consciously choosing the linguistic forms that are said to mark politeness, such as the past form of modals.

Linguistic differences in the debates can also be found in the use of intensifiers, such as adverbs, adjectives, nouns and numerals. In their debates, MPs evaluatively describe the situations in which people find themselves and the potency of government socio-economic policies to respond to such situations. In doing so, both groups of MPs make use of intensifiers to signal and heighten their emotional attachment and commitment to the truth of their value judgements. The intensifiers allow MPs to ‘foreground’ (Lorenz 1999: 26) the importance attached to the concerns of the people. However, the UK MPs use more complex adverbs (e.g. *particularly, simply, absolutely, certainly, likely, extremely, entirely, surely, nearly, desperately, hugely* and *rightly*) than their Ghanaian counterparts (*very, today, indeed, clearly, particularly*). UK MPs also use more complex adjectives (*difficult, minimum, excellent, essential, considerable* and *terrible*) than the Ghanaian MPs (*serious, particular*). One could argue that UK MPs’ high use of complex adverbs and adjectives exploits hyperbole in order to ‘spread out and colour’ the reality (Martin and White 2005: 42-43), an attempt to ‘control’ what ‘people think’ (Jones and Wareing 1999: 36). We have argued that Ghanaian MPs’ use of less complex adverbs and adjectives could be the result of second language constraints, as second language speakers are said to have difficulties in the use of such complex structures and often use simple adverbs and adjectives (Philip 2008: 1302). Ghanaian MPs use *very, very* as an equivalent of complex adverbs such as *extremely, absolutely*, which are usually the upper extreme end of the intensification scale. For example, a Ghanaian MP’s use of *very, very clear* is the equivalent of a UK MP’s use of *extremely/absolutely clear* (see section 6.6). It means Ghanaian MPs also exploit hyperbole. Since parliamentary debates are a competition for leadership roles between two opposing groups who try to outmanoeuvre each other, remaining highly convinced about one’s

propositions is essential. Thus, when MPs use these complex lexical items, they portray that their propositions are beyond dispute. Both groups of MPs make extensive use of noun phrases and numerals such as *a generation, million(s) ..., hundreds of thousands, 600,000 fewer people, 30 per cent and 50 per cent of our needs* as evidence to support their arguments. MPs use such numbers as ‘evidence or data’ ‘to back up’ their claims (Charteris-Black 2014: 133), so as to increase the believability of those assertions. Giving the figures suggests that MPs are informed by some research statistics and they have facts and figures. Parliamentary leadership is about representing and ‘standing for’ the interest of the people (Pitkin 1967: 85-87, 206). It is about discussing policies, weighing and adopting options that respond to the needs of the people. To be able to do that, MPs need to know the ‘exact’ problems which the people face. Giving such statistics implies that the MPs are on top of the issues that confront the citizenry. It is a way of demonstrating their competence as MPs. Other linguistic similarities relate to the use of the process types, which we discuss in the next section.

Apart from the linguistic differences in the question forms, Ghanaian Speakers of parliament police questions in order to prevent MPs from asking questions that flout the parliamentary rules, such as expressing opinion, making arguments, inferences and imputations, using ironical and offensive expressions. However, the UK Speakers of Parliament do not control the questions in this regard, making the UK PMQs appear more confrontational than the GMQs. But the UK Speakers’ inability to control the questions appear to have emanated from practical constraints. An attempt to police and control the questions could create some discord between the Speakers and the backbench MPs, who mostly ask questions during the session. The backbench MPs may feel that the Speaker is making it more difficult for them to hold the executive to account. On the other hand, one could argue that the Ghanaian Speakers who control the questions may be attempting to protect the image of the government from being damaged through highly critical questions.

One other area of difference is the UK MPs’ reference to foreign policy, which reflects the globalised culture of UK parliamentary politics. It shows the global political position of the UK and the perceived responsibility it has towards the rest of the world. However, Ghanaian MPs hardly talk about foreign policy and global issues, which reflects

a lack of political responsibility on the world stage and a more inward-looking political approach.

7.2.2 What transitivity choices tell us about MPs and UK and Ghanaian parliamentary discourse; and speech act functions

In this research, we have examined *yes/no* interrogatives from the point of view of transitivity: material, relational, verbal and mental processes as well as speech acts. This was informed by the idea that ‘grammar is closely tied to politics’ and that ‘[t]he linguistic code seen as a process rather than as a structure is one of the “technologies” through which power and social structure can be sustained and renegotiated’ (Duranti 1995: 142, 139). The process tools allowed us to examine, for example, agency in the construction of parliamentary questions.

In both the UK and Ghanaian parliamentary questions, material processes are the least used by MPs. MPs use material process interrogatives to ask questions about the performance of specific duties and responsibilities, including requesting: action towards dealing with a specific problem, support for a course of action, information about and confirmation of an action or a situation, invitation to a meeting or a visit. This is achieved by thrusting the (Prime) Ministers (and sometimes the government) into an actor/agent position. The attribution of agency to the (Prime) Ministers (or the government) is equivalent to reminding them about their responsibility to achieve certain goals. From the Searlean (2010: 8-9, 94) institutional facts perspective, (Prime) Ministers have ‘status functions’ and ‘deontic powers’ (a set of obligations), which are created by the speech act of declaration and recognised by *collective intentionality*. Therefore, the (Prime) Ministers have a duty to fulfil such responsibilities. Thus, when MPs are asking questions, they are holding the (Prime) Ministers to account. By reminding (Prime) Ministers of their ‘status functions’, MPs are questioning the legitimacy of the (Prime) Ministers’ power. The material process questions allow MPs to focus on real-world performance of (Prime) Ministers’ responsibilities or the practical implementation of policy.

Relational process types are the second least frequent of the four process types we explored. The relational process interrogatives are used to describe (Prime) Ministers as carriers of certain personalities and attributes (qualities or values) which bear on their status

functions and deontic powers. MPs then question the (Prime) Ministers' personalities and their attitudes towards their responsibilities by thrusting them into requested carrier positions in the clause and challenging them to reveal their own attitudes. Sometimes, the MPs compel the (Prime) Ministers to accept that they have certain negative attitudes towards their responsibilities. While government MPs often evaluatively portray the positive attributes of the (Prime) Ministers, opposition MPs present the negative ones. MPs' use of relational process questions indicates an attempt to let the citizenry see the Prime Ministers' interests and feelings towards them. There are two types of questions embodied in the use of relational processes, namely, person- and idea-targeted questions (see Gibbons 2003). While person-targeted questions focus on the personalities of the (Prime) Ministers, idea-targeted ones concentrate on issues.

Whereas the relational process interrogatives describe (Prime) Ministers' personalities, verbal process interrogatives indirectly request (Prime) Ministers to make statements about certain situations, compliment or condemn institutions, individuals and groups or certain happenings. The questions clearly portray the power vested in the (Prime) Ministers and make them appear responsible for their actions and the policies meant to affect the public. The verbal process interrogatives, the second most frequent in both datasets, allow MPs to thrust (Prime) Ministers into requested sayer positions to express the actions contained in the questions. By urging the (Prime) Minister through verbal processes to impress upon social institutions the need to perform specific duties or to compliment those institutions, individuals and groups, MPs try to establish rapport and goodwill from such bodies and individuals. Acknowledgement in those circumstances indicates commitment to the welfare and wellbeing of those concerned and hints at the core mandate of parliamentarians – representation of the people.

The most frequent of all the processes in both datasets is mental processes. MPs employ mental processes to push (Prime) Ministers to verbalise and reveal their thoughts, feelings and intentions. It is a means of asking the (Prime) Ministers to enact their human consciousness in a form of language (Halliday and Matthiessen 2004: 171). As a result of their concern for (Prime) Ministers' conscience, the questions lead to attacks and counter-attacks. This is because, when MPs frame their questions, they indirectly include in them assertions and attribute to the (Prime) Minister beliefs, thoughts, and intentions which they

are coerced into accepting or rejecting. The questions result in a high degree of partisan politico-ideological stancetaking between MPs and (Prime) Ministers, leading to confrontations between them.

The minimal occurrence of material processes in the parliamentary questions is in contrast to Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014: 215) point that material processes are relatively the most frequent of all the process types. This could be attributed to the fact that the data are a specialised corpus, as against Halliday and Matthiessen's more generalised corpus. As noted above, the high frequency of mental and verbal processes in our data characterises parliamentary discourse as deliberative, expressions of opinion over and assessment of advantages and disadvantages of policies.

It is remarkable and noteworthy that both datasets (UK PMQs and GMQs) have the same patterns of processes. Thus, the frequency distribution of the process types (mental, verbal, relational and material processes) in the data may reflect the process of doing parliamentary politics: first, (Prime) Ministers *think* about a policy (mental process); second, they *tell* parliament about it (verbal process); third, they let parliament *evaluate* it (relational process), and fourth, they *do/perform* (i.e. implement) it. While *thinking* about a policy is an internal process, it is the *tell* process that externalises it. The *evaluation* process includes assessing how the policy relates to the needs of the people before it is implemented. Thus, parliamentary politics can be said to be involving *think*, *tell*, *evaluate* and *do* (TTED) processes. This is, perhaps, one of the things that set it apart from Halliday and Matthiessen's (2014: 215) more general distribution of the process types.

Generally, in asking questions, MPs create *us* and *them* situations (van Dijk 2011a: 396) and construct *positively-negatively* established questions (Wilson 1990: 167), which seek to create 'ingroup' and 'outgroup' bias (Mullen and Brown 1992: 103) and a 'differential attribution of uniquely human emotions to ingroups and outgroups' (Leyens et al. 2001: 395; 2000: 186). Depending on whether it is a government or an opposition MP, (Prime) Ministers are asked to confirm either a positive/negative situation or an opinion, express commitment to a situation, give assurance, or promise to take specific courses of action or admit to some wrongdoing or misconduct. Through the questions, MPs also do personal publicity, portraying themselves as representing the interest of their constituents. Such shows of concern for the interest of the people and publicity by MPs are even more

evident in their debates (see section 7.2.3 below). It mirrors the fact that '[in] parliamentarianism, the relation of trust has an essentially personal character' as '[i]t is through individuality that the candidate inspires confidence' (Manin 1997: 202-3). Since the MP is elected by his/her constituents, he/she has a personal relationship with them and, therefore, building such a trust is crucial for the MP's political career.

In the Ghanaian parliament, as a result of the Speakers of Parliament policing the questions, in the Ghanaian parliamentary questions, attacks are less evident as compared to the debates. This could be attributed to the fact that MPs have less restriction in terms of what and how they can argue their points in the debates.

7.2.3 How MPs judge government policies and what MPs focus on in their debates

A keyword analysis of both the UK Queen's Address debates (UK QADs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation address debates (GH SONADs) showed that 'people' was a key and significant term. Further analysis indicated that the references were mainly about the concerns of the people. Thus, Chapter 6 investigated how, during the UK QADs and the GH SONADs, Members of Parliament (MPs) assessed what I have termed *the people concern*. I used *the people concern* to refer to the perception that the focus of government policies should be to cater for the socio-economic wellbeing of the people. In evaluating government policies and how effective they are, the MPs seek to measure how significantly they affect or will affect the lives of the people. To achieve this, the MPs first describe the circumstances in which people find themselves. They, thus, classify people and ascribe to them certain needs. In both parliaments, the classification is done in two ways: age-based (e.g. young people, youth, old(er)/elderly people) and circumstance-based (e.g. disabled/vulnerable, poor, unemployed people, working people, local people). Even though both the UK and the Ghanaian MPs identify different classes of people and their needs, the UK MPs are more specific and elaborate about the classes of people and their needs than their Ghanaian counterparts, which implies that the UK MPs are more likely to attend to the specific needs of particular groups of people (such as welfare interventions for the aged) than the Ghanaian MPs. For instance, while the UK MPs identify vulnerable groups such as *pensioners*, *elderly* and *disabled* people, who need tax exemptions and fuel subsidies, for example), these groups

are not identified by Ghanaian MPs. We have argued that such classification may reflect the view of Britain as a welfare state that seeks to meet each and everyone's needs. The UK MPs evaluatively describe poverty as world-wide social issue. They usually use 'poor/poorest people' in the context of 'the world', as in: *the poorest people in the world*. It is a reflection of the British government foreign policy, as we noted earlier. Such a description allows MPs to boost their importance in providing solutions. On the other hand, it displays exaggeration, making it exploitative for political purposes.

Further, in the two parliaments, both government and opposition MPs recognise the issues confronting the different classes of people. However, while government MPs think that people's living conditions are better than previously, oppositions MPs feel the opposite. In other words, there is a contrastive presentation of the people's concerns in the form of *people are getting better, people are getting worse*. This is what I termed as '*people are*' constructions, which involve relational process evaluative constructions, and actor-goal material processes in the present progressive. The '*people are*' constructions are mostly in either the present (progressive) tense or future time, which may illustrate parliamentary debates as being about present and future practical concerns, which 'requires an audience to make a decision in relation to a future action after assessing the advantages and disadvantages of that action' (Săftoiu 2013: 48).

As a means of indicating attachment to the people and their concerns, the MPs employ deictic and indexical expressions, that is, pointing/referencing expressions. The MPs use 'people' and its hyponyms such as 'our country', 'our nation', 'the people of this country', 'the public' and so on, in order to show closeness to the people. They also often use place names such as *Liverpool, Manchester* (UK) and *Bimbilla, Wa* (Ghana) to indicate such relationships, as reference to those places is an indirect reference to the people. It reinforces the point that the parliamentary debates are about the *people concern*. Even though MPs' references to *the people concern* show they stand for the interest of the people, it may be posturing and for only rhetorical effect. MPs appear to promote themselves, their parties and their record. It means MPs' way of questioning and debating has significant implications for parliamentary politics, which we discuss in the next section.

7.2.4 The socio-political implications of MPs' manner of questioning and debating

We saw in sections 1.4 and 5.5 how the UK and Ghanaian parliamentarians have often been accused of not caring about the general good of the people, and that MPs were in parliament for their personal interests. However, we have observed in this thesis that during their debates, MPs make significant references to people, references which appear to put people at the forefront of policy. A critical analysis of the references suggests that MPs show concern for the people's interest. This could be said to be a way of rendering political accountability to the people. The analysis further indicates that the people references are largely posturing for political ends, which suggests that the expression of concern for the people's needs may be insincere. If it is not mere posturing, then, it implies a discrepancy between the production and/or the presentation of politics by parliamentarians and its reception by the public. In reality, what the public see in questions and debates is 'only a few snapshots of the politician's life' (Wodak 2011: 3) and duty as a representative of their constituents. If 'what is politically accessible to the general public could be labelled ... as the *performance* or *staging* of politics' (Wodak 2011: 31), then it behoves parliamentarians to put up a performance that will inform the general public about the positive side of parliamentary politics. This is more crucial considering that '[p]olitical discourse relies very heavily on the principle ... that people's perceptions of certain issues or concepts can be influenced by language' (Jones and Wareing 1999: 35). Apart from practical policy implementation that affects people's lives directly (for example, creating employment opportunities for young people, offering benefits to the elderly and vulnerable people, and giving decent wages to working people), parliamentary interactions offer an avenue for people to observe and judge what politicians stand for. On the parliamentary stage, MPs are recognised as spokespersons for their constituents and the general public. The manner of questioning and debating is, therefore, crucial.

We have argued in this study that the two activity types – questioning and debating – seem to offer different insights into the image we see of MPs. For example, parliamentary questions involve 'question-response sequences that display exchanges of challenging, accusatory, but also countering, defensive and ironical, remarks between opposition MPs and government MPs' (Ilie 2010a: 333). Questions often raise specific issues that allow MPs

to put the (Prime) Ministers on the spot to respond. The questions, the majority of which involve mental processes, usually ask (Prime) Ministers to externalise their internal states in parliament and to the public. MPs habitually attribute to the (Prime) Ministers beliefs, thoughts, and intentions which they are coerced into accepting or rejecting. The questions become biased so as to prefer particular responses. This is supported by the admission by the Prime Minister, David Cameron, and some Ghanaian MPs (as we saw in section 4.5.3) that the majority and minority sides often plant questions that will be either favourable or unfavourable to the government. Responses to such questions, thus, are often obvious, as a result of which the listening public would usually feel that the MPs are only posturing. It appears then that it is the manner of asking the questions that sends that signal to the general public. However, whether or not the manner of asking the questions negatively affects parliamentary business is another question altogether, which is beyond this study. It should also be recognised that the questions and debates are only a part of the parliamentary business.

Whereas questions put (Prime) Ministers on the spot, debates do not. Debates are not a one-to-one exchange between MPs and (Prime) Ministers, so the debates are less personal. References are often to the government. Even when the/a (Prime) Minister is directly mentioned, there is a delay in response, which reduces the high level emotional outbursts that usually characterise questions and answers. However, both parliamentary question time and debates are, to some extent, overshadowed by noise, interruptions and shouting, which may often be more observable than the content of MPs' speech. Thus, even though MPs may make significant statements about the needs of the people, the public are more likely to concentrate on the 'theatrical performance' (Ilie 2003a: 34) and behaviour of MPs than what is said. For example, during debates and questions, 'interruptions' such as 'the cries of "question", "order, order", or "hear, hear" are allowed 'in moderation' (Jack 2011: 450), but the general public may see it as unparliamentary since they do not know the parliamentary rules. The public view is more likely to be negative when the noise and interruptions occur amidst MPs taking entrenched positions in criticising and defending policy proposals along party lines. Of course, it has been absolutely clear from our analysis that MPs take entrenched stances along party lines. However, the division of opinion between criticism and defence of policy proposals may have a positive side to it, because

[i]t is only by thinking of the strongest attacks and defences of standpoints that are at stake that the debate will have a chance of producing an outcome that is epistemically superior...

Fairclough and Fairclough (2012: 207)

It means that political policy makers who seek parliamentary approval and support for their policies must be able to defend them to the greatest extent. To withstand the strong attacks, the policies should be thorough. The polarisation between government and opposition MPs may, thus, be positive to some extent.

The foregoing denotes parliamentary questions and debates as complex phenomena that signal both positive and negative representation of parliament as an institution. Depending on how they are observed, one can see either the positive or the negative side or both.

7.3 Theoretical and methodological contributions

The theoretical and methodological contributions of this study can be seen in the concepts of context, form and meaning (speech acts), transitivity (systemic functional linguistics), evaluation and the corpus-assisted discourse studies approach.

We have demonstrated in this study that parliamentary questions offer the clearest evidence that there is no on-to-one correspondence between linguistic form and function. We have shown how *yes/no* interrogatives hardly ever function as a request for affirmation or disaffirmation. Chapters 4 and 5 expounded the idea that parliamentary questions lean heavily on contextual propositions which inform and form the basis of the questions, and sometimes predict the expected responses. Both chapters illustrated how *yes/no* interrogatives contextually function as directives (e.g. order, advice) and statements (e.g. criticism, praise). Chapter 5 also discussed how mental process *yes/no* interrogatives function as offering of opinions and assertions. We have made the point that parliamentary questions are mostly politically biased, as they usually verge on presuppositions which expose their preferences for particular responses. Therefore, to treat parliamentary *yes/no* interrogatives as demanding (dis)affirmation is to be superficial and uncritical. The study has found and labelled a group of interrogatives as the ‘tellex’ *yes/no* interrogatives, which, as a result of their use of words such as *tell*, *explain* and *clarify*, actually demand narratives

as responses (as in: *Can the Prime Minister explain to us why ...?*). Furthermore, parliamentary questions and debates illuminate the difficulty in pinpointing and defining context. The questions and debates present two images of parliamentarians in terms of whether or not they are concerned with the interest of the people. While there is clear evidence of people referencing in the debates, it is not so obvious in the questions because the questions more often target personalities than the debates do. This reflects how, like the chameleon colour-changing character, the same entity (in this case, an MP) can take on different faces in different contexts.

The thesis has also contributed to the theory of transitivity in a significant way. Halliday and Matthiessen (2014: 215) have indicated, in a more general sense, that the relative order of frequency of the process types is, in a descending order: material, relational, mental and verbal processes. However, this study found them to be almost in a reverse order: mental, verbal, relational and material processes. It demonstrates the importance of looking at specialised corpora for studying institutional discourse, as noted by Flowerdew (2004; 2005). The study points to the fact that categorising *yes/no* interrogatives on the basis of the process types can offer insights into the functions of interrogatives. Since such a classification shows the attribution of agency, for example, one can identify social relationships that exist between questioners and responders. The classification will also help us to observe how people encode the states, actions, speech and mental picture of their interests, experiences and feelings in their questions, which, to a large extent, will assist in identifying people's motives for asking specific questions.

Chapter 6 of the thesis examined parliamentary debates from an evaluatory standpoint. We have suggested that evaluation in parliamentary debates could be theoretically viewed as a rectangle. The rectangular interpretation reflects the disproportionateness between government and opposition MPs emphasising and de-emphasising their positives and negatives. Van Dijk (2011a: 396-397) has called it an ideological square, but we have argued that 'square' suggests an equal measure of emphasising and de-emphasising and, therefore, it does not mirror the true position of the parliamentary debates, in which praise and criticism are unequally expressed. Chapter 6 also suggested that the linguistic representation of the concerns of the people by MPs could be described as *'people are' constructions*. These are descriptive phrases that indicate the socio-

economic status of the people. The majority of the *'people are' constructions* were either in the present tense or future time, reflecting parliamentary discourse as being rhetorically deliberative, which is associated with the now and the future and how things ought to be or be done.

Last but not least, this study contributes to corpus-assisted discourse studies approach. We stated in Chapter 3 that corpus analysis was used to support the overarching discourse analytical approach employed in the study. The corpus-assisted approach has proved to be highly useful. For example, our focus on *the people concern* in Chapter 6 was determined through a corpus-driven approach, employing a keyword analysis of the data through *Wordsmith Tools* version 6 (Scott 2012) and frequency output through *CFL Lexical Feature Marker* version 5A (Woolls 2011). The application of the two software tools showed that 'people' was a key and significant word in both the UK and Ghanaian datasets, hence our concentration on it. This means that our decision to focus on 'people' as a term was objective and one that was explored through quantitative analysis. Concordances and keywords helped us to explore the data in order to validate the observations we made in the analysis of both the questions and debates. For instance, our conclusion that cultural differences accounted for the UK MPs' use of 'will'/'can' as against Ghanaian MPs' use of 'would'/'could' in marking politeness was made possible by the quantitative information gathered from the use of *Wordsmith Tools*. *Wordsmith Tools* made it possible for us to delve into the quantitative aspects of the various linguistic features we discussed. This helped to reduce speculation and bias in the interpretation of such linguistic features. It also allowed us to see comparative and contrastive patterns across the two large datasets and the two different activity types.

7.4 Suggestions for further research

This study investigated aspects of two genres of parliamentary discourse, viz, oral questions and debates. While we believe that the study has made successful and useful contributions to research and knowledge, there is still more to be done. This study identified different question types but concentrated on only *yes/no* interrogatives. The other question forms such as *wh*-interrogatives and alternative questions can be studied to expand the frontiers of investigation into parliamentary questions. Studying questions to ministers, rather than

Prime Ministers, will also be useful. One can compare those questions with PMQs to see whether they are significantly different, which can offer more insight into context and identity creation and change. For debates, we looked at only one type, the UK Queen's Address debates (UK QADs) and Ghanaian State of the Nation Address debates (GH SONADs), which are special kinds of debates in the two parliaments. Whereas the UK QADs are based on the government legislative programme for a whole parliamentary session (about five years' programme outline), the GH SONADs look at the general economic, social and political state of the country within a past year and the government's attempts to map the year ahead. Thus, both debates do not concentrate on only one subject. It would, therefore, be illuminating to study debates on topical issues introduced by bills, as for example, a debate on the living wage or backbench debates. This study used orthographically-transcribed Hansards as data, which took away the nuanced paralinguistic modes of expression, including tone of voice, gestures, facial expression and other forms of body language. The keyword analysis identified other equally important words such as 'say', 'said', 'that', 'is', 'will' and parliamentary genre-specific words and address terms. Studies that consider all or aspects of these will be highly significant. Other forms of parliamentary discourse genre, including ministerial statements and written questions, can also be studied. Different theoretical and methodological approaches, such as argumentation theory, rhetoric, conversation analysis, ethnography of communication, presupposition, implicature, and so on, will throw further light on our findings here. A more crucial study could be an investigation into why there appears to be a disparity between what parliamentarians say they represent and people's perception of them.

7.5 Parliamentarily speaking: a closing remark

Parliamentary questions quite fascinatingly offer an insight into the concept that linguistic form and function do not normally match. Clearly, in their questions, MPs often say one thing but mean another as a result of the contextualising propositions on which the questions are constructed. Parliamentary questions highlight the difficulty in categorising questions either formally or functionally. Parliamentarily speaking, there seems to be a contrast between political rhetoric and representativeness: what MPs think they represent appears to be at odds with what the interests of the people are. People think MPs represent their own

interests rather than those of the people (Mensah 2015; BBC 2014b; *Question Time* 2014). This thesis has shown, however, that people's view that MPs do not care about them cannot be wholly true, as aspects of MPs' language suggest the opposite. MPs represent themselves as caring for the needs of the people. Parliamentary politics is fundamentally politics of representation, where representation 'means acting in the interest of the represented, in a manner responsive to them' (Pitkin 1967: 209). As demonstrated in the analysis, MPs' significant references to 'people' in their debates indicate that they represent the interest of the people. The question then is: why do people feel that MPs do not care about them? Is it that the majority of people do not see what goes on in the parliamentary questions and debates or what MPs really do? Or do MPs make the 'people' references to 'manipulate people' (Ilie 2009: 35) for political-point scoring and electoral capital? Was Ilie (2010a: 333) right in saying that 'for parliamentary interacting and debating, *speaking is acting*'? Or do MPs 'discourse like angels, but they live like men'? (Johnson 1860: 52). One thing has been clear in this study: there is a high degree of posturing by MPs for political purposes. The personality attacks, political point-scoring, partisanship and the polarised manner, among others, in which government and opposition MPs defend and attack government policies during questions and debates raise doubts about the sincerity of MPs' claims of care for the concerns of the people. To dispel that notion, it behoves MPs to regulate their manner of questioning and debating.

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Appendix

The University of Leeds' PVAC and Arts joint Faculty Research Ethics Committee's ethical review decision

Performance, Governance and Operations
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UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

Emmanuel Sarfo
 School of English
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 Leeds, LS2 9JT

**PVAC & Arts joint Faculty Research Ethics Committee
 University of Leeds**

19 June 2016

Dear Emmanuel

Title of study **Speech Acts in Ghanaian Parliamentary Discourse**
Ethics reference **PVAR 13-036, amendment Nov 2015**

I am pleased to inform you that your amendment to the research application listed above has been reviewed by a representative of the Arts and PVAC (PVAR) Faculty Research Ethics Committee and I can confirm a favourable ethical opinion as of the date of this letter. The following documentation was considered:

<i>Document</i>	<i>Version</i>	<i>Date</i>
PVAR 13-036 amendment Nov 15 Ethics Amendment.docx	1	26/11/15
PVAR 13-036 Ethical_Review_Form_V4 Sarfo.doc	1	15/11/13
PVAR 13-036 Parliament Letter.pdf	1	13/11/13
PVAR 13-036_Ethics Corrections Summary.docx	1	20/12/13
PVAR 13-036_ Consent Form.docx	1	20/12/13
PVAR 13-036_Copy of Approved Risk Assessment.doc	1	20/12/13
PVAR 13-036_Information Sheet.docx	1	20/12/13
PVAR 13-036_MPs Letter.docx	1	20/12/13

Please notify the committee if you intend to make any further amendments to the original research as submitted at date of this approval as all changes must receive ethical approval prior to implementation. The amendment form is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAmendment>.

Please note: You are expected to keep a record of all your approved documentation, as well as documents such as sample consent forms, and other documents relating to the study. This should be kept in your study file, which should be readily available for audit purposes. You will be given a two week notice period if your project is to be audited. There is a checklist listing examples of documents to be kept which is available at <http://ris.leeds.ac.uk/EthicsAudits>.

We welcome feedback on your experience of the ethical review process and suggestions for improvement. Please email any comments to ResearchEthics@leeds.ac.uk.

Yours sincerely

Jennifer Blaikie
Senior Research Ethics Administrator, Research & Innovation Service
On behalf of Dr Kevin Macnish, Chair, [PVAR FREC](#)
CC: Student's supervisor(s)