

Disclaiming in the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Questions (PMQs) Sessions: A Pragmatic perspective

Qasim Abbas Dhayef¹, Eman Majeed Fadhil²

Abstract

The study conducts disclaiming, which states that one has no responsibility for or knowledge of something that has occurred. Specifically, this research examines disclaiming language in spontaneous verbal interactions, particularly during Boris Johnson's Prime Minister's Questions sessions. The main goal of the study is to analyze the forms of disclaiming that Boris Johnson employed during these sessions and identifying the most common type. It also explores the pragmatic strategies employed in Boris Johnson's Prime Minister's Questions sessions. The research methodology involves presenting a theoretical overview of disclaimers alongside a comprehensive analysis of the chosen data using qualitative and quantitative methods. The research findings indicate that the representation of disclaimers in Boris Johnson's sessions relies fundamentally on three key types that frequently occur during these sessions. Furthermore, the study also highlights the pragmatic strategies that underpin the use of disclaimers, including speech acts, Grice's conversational maxims, and politeness strategies. These findings emphasize the complex interplay between pragmatic strategies and the use of disclaiming in verbal interactions and highlight the importance of utilizing disclaiming in political discourse.

Keywords: *Boris Johnson, Context, Disclaiming, Grice's Conversational Maxims, Pragmatics, Politeness, Speech Acts, British Prime Minister Questions.*

Introduction

The present study focuses on disclaiming from a pragmatic perspective. The ideas of context and intention should be taken into account whilst they are crucial to pragmatics. This section will cover the significant theories of pragmatics, including context, Grice conversational maxims, and politeness. These theories are essential for understanding disclaiming and presenting the impact of the speaker's intentions.

Kasper (1993) elucidates that pragmatics focuses on how individuals understand and use language in context. Additionally, The philosophy of language is the source of pragmatics, a branch of linguistics, according to Huang (2007). The study of meaning derived from language use is its definition.

Moreover, disclaiming is an essential activity in adversarial discourse, where politicians disclaim responsibility for their actions regarding their administrative positions in government. They disclaim responsibility by employing various forms of disclaiming; avoiding anticipated negative evaluations, and maintaining an ongoing interaction. Accordingly, disclaiming is an interactional strategy used by actors who are faced with impending actions or occurrences that could undermine constructed situational identities or disturb emerging meanings (Hewitt & Stokes, 1975).

However, according to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000), to disclaim something is to state that you are not accountable for it or have no knowledge. The present study tackles the concept of disclaiming in selected British Prime Minister's Questions sessions (PMQs) of Boris Johnson. As the researchers know, no previous research has tackled disclaiming in the British Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) pragmatically. Searching the literature on disclaiming revealed such a gap, which is why this study attempts to close it.

¹ Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon in Iraq, Email: qasimabbas@uobabylon.edu.iq, (Corresponding Author), ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1723-1836>.

² Department of English, College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon in Iraq., Email: Hum802.eman.majeed@student.uobabylon.edu.iq, ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0002-8730-1262>

Consequently, in this paper, the researcher desired to delve into this linguistic phenomenon of disclaiming through a pragmatic analysis of the British Prime Minister's Questions.

Literature Review

Pragmatics: A General Overview

It is essential to notice how scholars in the field have defined the term pragmatics. Commonly, the underlying meaning of words or circumstances in which people decide not to convey what they intend for specific reasons are the focus of pragmatics, according to Thomas (1995). The most popular definitions of pragmatics, according to Thomas, are "meaning in use" and "meaning in context."

Moreover, pragmatics was described by Crystal (1985) as the study of language from the viewpoint of its users, with a focus on their assessments, the difficulties they face when speaking in social contexts, and the impact their language use has on other participants in communication actions.

Context

Context is considered as one of the major factors in analyzing the utterance and assuming the meaning. It relies on the idea that participants in a communicative action share knowledge about the physical context of the speech. Yule (1996) explains how the sort of speech act generated is influenced by the context of a speech act, sometimes referred to as a "speech event." Thus, in order to correctly interpret the utterance, the speech event is necessary. The speaker thinks the hearer will understand his communication purpose by looking at the situation's surrounding context.

Thereby, the Hymes contextual model is applied. In this idea, the speech event, or "the activities or aspects of activities that are directly governed by rules or norms for the use of speech," is the main element (Hymes, 1974).

Hymes's (1974) SPEAKING model, which consists of eight components:

S-setting refers to physical characteristics of the speech event like the location and the date,

P-Participant Hymes (1974) categorizes participants based on the complexity of their interaction with the speaker, addressor, hearer, addressee, and audience.

E-End describes the speech's goal from a societal perspective.

A-Act sequence is the speech event structure.

K-Key describes the speech event's style or tone.

I-Instrument describes the channel or medium via which written or spoken words are transmitted.

N-norms interpretation norms and interaction norms.

G-genre is the type of writing or speaking

Speech Act Theory

The study of speech acts has piqued the interest of numerous scholars in the discipline. The function of speech acts has revealed that language is capable of more than just information transmission.

Huang (2007) elucidates that Austin, the British philosopher, initially came up with speech act theory, which is now regarded as one of the major areas of pragmatics. However, after Austin's death, his student John R. Searle, developed this theory.

By uttering a statement or sentences, a speaker often carries out one or more of these acts. Not all of the mentioned verbs are illocutionary, according to Searle (1979), who questions Austin's taxonomy.

The researcher will follow Searle's classification to analyze the chosen data. Searle's five categories, as put by Degand (2009), and a few examples of each are as follows:

Representatives vouch for the veracity of the proposition being stated, usually declarations, claims, conclusions, descriptions, etc., such as "The earth is flat."

Directives are S's attempts to persuade H to take action. They convey what S desires: common examples include directives, demands, requests, recommendations, etc., like "I warn you to stay away from my house!"

Commissives bind S to a future plan of action. They convey S's intentions, usually through threats, promises, offers, and rejections. For example, I swear to be home at six o'clock.

Expressives are employed to convey the speakers' emotional states. They express how S feels and can include words of gratitude, regret, welcome, and other emotions like joy, grief, or sorrow.

The Cooperative Principle and the Conversational Maxims

The Cooperative Principle, which looks at how interlocutors understand conversational implicature, was studied by Grice (1975). "Make your contribution as needed at the moment, according to the agreed-upon goal or course of the conversation you are participating in." is how Grice recently defined the cooperative principle. The following categories apply to the four maxims that comprise Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle:

The quantity maxim:

Your contribution should be as informative as feasible.

Avoid including more information in your submission than is required.

The Quality Maxim

Refrain from saying anything you believe to be false.

Avoid making claims for which you lack enough evidence.

The Maxim of Relevance

Be pertinent.

The maxim of manner:

Stay clear of ambiguity in expression. -Steer clear of uncertainty.

Be succinct (avoid becoming too long).

Maintain order.

In conclusion, if speakers are expected to meet the maxims, they should only give a speech that is useful and helpful, give enough details, be pertinent, and steer clear of ambiguity. According to Thomas (1995), persons in this situation adhere to the maxims. On the other hand, it is referred to as non-observance of the maxims when individuals do not fulfill one or more of them. Grice (1975) suggests five examples in this regard: flouting the maxims, violating the maxims, infringing the maxims, opting out of the maxims, and suspending the maxims

Flouting the Maxims

How speakers flout a maxim was Grice's main area of study. when "a speaker blatantly fails to observe a maxim, not with any intention of deceiving or misleading, but because the speaker wishes to prompt the hearer to look for a meaning which is different from, or in addition to, the expressed meaning," this type of inattention occurs (Thomas, 1995). Consequently, the listener deduces a different interpretation based on the speaker's directions. Thomas (1995) asserts that speakers use the maxims of quality, quantity, relation, and manner to start this type of non-observance:

Flouting the quantity maxim: the speaker flouts the quantity maxim if they give more or less speech than is necessary for the circumstances.

Flouting the quality maxim: implicature is triggered when a speaker flagrantly provides insufficient information, hence flouting the quality maxim.

Flouting the relevance maxim: this kind of disregard arises when a conversation's topic and its response diverge or cease to be relevant.

Flouting the maxim of manner: this happens, for instance, when a speaker gives vague information in response to a request.

Politeness

Politeness theory has been widely used by researchers since it is an essential theory of pragmatics. Due to these adaptations, politeness theory boasts various expansions and variations (Elen, 2001). According to Cutting (2008), when we talk about being polite, we don't mean following social norms like letting people through a door first but rather using language choices and expressions that give people space and convey a friendly attitude. Notably, what is accentuated in her definition of politeness are the speakers' linguistic alternatives in a particular context rather than their social norms. Thus, a speaker can be viewed as linguistically polite when s/he calls for types of expressions that reveal deference and solidarity.

Additionally, Leech (2014) defined politeness as "a form of communicative behavior found very generally in human languages and among human beings," suggesting that it is a universal phenomenon of human society.

Furthermore, in their 1978 paper "Universals in Language Usage: Politeness Phenomenon," which was later revised and republished in 1987. The most famous and notable of these is still their work on etiquette.

Goffman's concept of "face" forms the basis of Brown and Levinson's (1987) conceptualization. They mean "the public perception of oneself that people [in society] wish to assert for themselves" when they discuss face. As a result, the concept of face falls into two categories:

Negative face: represents the non-distraction, or freedom of activity and freedom from imposition, as well as the fundamental right to personal property and territories.

Positive face: represents the interactants' stated positive, consistent self-image or "personality," which importantly includes the wish for this self-image to be adored and accepted.

Therefore, the perspective of the positive face wants is demonstrated by being valued and welcomed as a member of society. On the other hand, being self-reliant and not imposing oneself on others shows the negative face wants point of view.

Types of Disclaiming

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) classified disclaiming into five types:

Hedging disclaimer: This type refers to a cue of the speaker's minimal responsibility or an utterance's truth.

Credentiaing disclaimer: This type represents the actor's credentials that enable them to be utilized in an act.

Cognitive disclaimer: this type implies the speakers' anticipation of a misinterpretation as wrong-headed or lacking sense.

Sin licenses disclaimer: this type establishes beforehand that an action to be taken could typically be regarded as breaking a rule and disrupting the current engagement.

Appeals for the suspension of judgment disclaimer: People with this personality type are aware that their actions and words could offend, enrage, or disappoint others.

Methodology

Research Approach

This study employs mixed methods, incorporating qualitative and quantitative approaches. A qualitative approach is applied to find answers to questions like how, why, and what. Additionally, a quantitative approach is used to support the qualitative one and to figure out the analysis results.

Since this is a descriptive qualitative study, the data observation serves as the study's initial research tool. Since an observer should be aware of the data being analyzed, it is essential to provide a succinct interpretation of the data in the part that follows. According to Creswell (1998), the researcher is the primary tool used in qualitative research for data collection and identification. They collect words, perform inductive analysis, and follow the utterances provided by the writers or speakers. Data can be gathered using certain techniques, including research design, data selection, data classification, data analysis, result interpretation, and conclusion totalization.

The selected data addresses several influential topics that help us comprehend contemporaneous matters. It features discussions among various members of parliament (MPs), with British Prime Minister Boris Johnson provoking responses to their questions. Each extract corresponds to a specific question raised either by the leader of the opposition party or any member of parliament (MP) focusing on various political matters carefully chosen by the researcher for deeper analysis. In addition to its analysis, each extract provides a brief description of its background under what Hymes's SPEAKING model refer to as "the general context."

Participants

The data consists of five extracts taken from two sessions of the British Prime Ministers Questions (PMQs) featuring "Boris Johnson." The extracts were carefully gathered precisely from the official UK Parliament Hansard archive in transcript form. Boris Johnson's sessions occur in different contexts spanning from 2019 to 2022.

Additionally, the Prime Minister (PM) is subject to questioning from other Members of Parliament (MPs) at Prime Minister's questioning (PMQs), a weekly gathering in the House of Commons in the UK. Data is

collected from the British Prime Minister's Questions sessions, which are then thoroughly reviewed multiple times to determine the components that contribute to the formation of disclaiming comments.

Tools

Instruments

The researcher followed several steps to collect data for this study. First, the researcher looked at YouTube for videos of the British Prime Minister's Questions sessions on the official channel of the UK Parliament. Next, the researcher explored the transcripts, which were then utilized to analyze the utterances. Then, the researcher watched the videos and understood the conversations between the participants. Finally, they focused on sessions that included disclaiming situations for further analysis. Notably, each extract is accompanied by instant online access for the respective session.

Procedures

To fulfill the aims and to prove or refute the hypotheses of the study, particular procedures are observed: Delivering a theoretical survey of the relevant literature on pragmatic theories concerning, context, speech act, Grice's conversational maxims, presupposition, and politeness theory. Examining the literature about disclaiming to show a general view about it. Designing an eclectic model for the analysis of the selected data. It will be based on:

Hewitt and Stokes (1975) types of disclaiming;

Degand (2009) classification of speech acts;

Grice's Maxims; and

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness.

The researcher uses both quantitative analysis, which is based on percentages and frequencies, and qualitative analysis, which is based on language theories, to examine the selected data. Consequently, conclusions are drawn to evaluate the viability of the current study's hypotheses.

Results and Discussion

The Qualitative Analysis

Excerpt 1

Robert Halfon: Will my right hon. Friend confirm that when we leave the European Union on 31 October, we will no longer be subjected to EU rules on VAT on our energy bills, costing Harlow constituents and households around £55 extra every year? Will he confirm that we will take back control of our energy bills and save households around £1.5 billion a year on their heating and lighting?

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I thank my right hon. Friend for his excellent suggestion. As he knows, we currently apply the reduced 5% rate on domestic fuel and power, which is the lowest, allowed under EU law, but of course, when we leave the EU on 31 October, it will be open to us to change this to the benefit of the people of Harlow.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2019-09-04/debates/917B81A6-57F8-48C3-AABE-63224897F16E/Engagements>

The Analysis

Hymes's (1974) Contextual Model

Table 1. Hymes's (1974) Speaking Model of Excerpt -1-

Setting	The Time: This debate occurs on Wednesday, the 4th of September 2019. The Place: The House of Commons, UK.
Participants	The addressor is Robert Halfon who is a member of the conservative party, and the addressee is Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
End (aim)	In this extract, the politician Robert Halfon wants to elicit a confirmation from the Prime Minister about controlling the energy bills after leaving the EU.

Types of Disclaiming

In response to Robert Halfon's inquiry about the EU's VAT regulations on energy bills, Boris Johnson denies any responsibility for reducing energy bills by using a hedging form of disclaimer. He stated, "As he knows, we currently apply the reduced 5% rate on domestic fuel and power, but of course..." Essentially, when an individual is uncertain about how their actions will be received, they may hedge by disclaiming responsibility for the action. This lack of confidence in their subsequent actions indicates a lack of confidence in the likely response to their initial action.

*Pragmatic Strategies**Speech Acts*

Boris Johnson outlines his predictions for what is going to happen when Britain leaves the EU. Hence, representative SA is illustrated by presenting the forthcoming potential conditions concerning energy bills and power that would be reduced after leaving the EU.

Non-Observance of the Maxims

By providing a lengthy response that falls short of answering the addressee's inquiry, Boris Johnson flouts the maxim of quantity. To lessen the imposition of his identity, he manipulates his speech. Boris Johnson's manipulation of his utterances is a tactic to control the narrative and steer the conversation in a direction that benefits him.

Politeness

When talking about policies, Boris Johnson refers to the government using the inclusive pronoun "we". For example, he might say, "We currently apply the reduced 5% rate on domestic fuel and power, but of course, when we leave the EU on 31 October, it will be open to us to change this to the benefit of the people of Harlow." This way, he tries to show that the government is not solely responsible for a particular decision or policy; rather, it is a collective effort. By using "we," he aims to distribute the responsibility among all parties, not only the prime minister.

Excerpt 2

Sammy Wilson: The Prime Minister stated that when we leave the EU at the end of this year Northern Ireland will still remain a full part of the United Kingdom. But I have in my hand a letter received by the management of the port of Larne only this week, stating that it has to prepare to become a border control post, and 14 acres of land has been looked at for car parking, for lorry parking and for construction. Can the Prime Minister explain how Northern Ireland can remain a full part of the United Kingdom if people

coming from the rest of the UK into Northern Ireland have to pass through a border control post? Would he advise the management to tear this letter up as well?

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): I have not seen the letter the right hon. Gentleman describes, but I can tell him absolutely categorically that there will be no new customs infrastructure for the very simple reason that, under the protocol, it is absolutely clear in black and white that Northern Ireland is part of the customs territory of the whole of the United Kingdom. We will be joining the whole of the United Kingdom in our new independent trade policy and doing free trade deals around the world.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2020-06-24/debates/D20D8EC5-6E34-4D03-8279-28DA87F704B3/Engagements>

The Analysis

Hymes's (1974) Contextual Model

Table 2. Hymes's (1974) Speaking Model of Excerpt -2-

Setting	The Time: This debate occurs on Wednesday, 24 June 2020. The Place: The House of Commons, UK.
Participants	The addressor is Sammy Wilson, and the addressee is Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
End (aim)	In this extract, MP Sammy Wilson asked Prime Minister Boris Johnson whether Northern Ireland would remain part of the EU. He also inquired about how individuals traveling from the rest of the UK would be able to cross into Northern Ireland if it becomes a border control post.

Types of Disclaiming

In this extract, a hedging disclaimer is used, as seen in the following statement: "I have not seen the letter the right hon. Gentleman describes, but I can tell him absolutely categorically that..." Boris Johnson denies responsibility by claiming that he has not read the particular letter in question, rather than directly responding to the topic of Ireland remaining a part of the UK. After that, he talks about his future goals.

Pragmatic Strategies

Speech Acts

Boris Johnson highlights that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom's customary territory by using the speech act of stating. Additionally, he explains why he does not see additional customs infrastructure in Ireland using the speech act of reasoning.

Non-Observance of The Maxims

Boris Johnson flouts the quality maxim when he talks about the letter and declares that he has no knowledge about it.

Politeness

Boris Johnson's utilization of hedging disclaiming shows an awareness of his addressee's negative face. Hence, he employs a negative politeness strategy.

Excerpt 3

Keir Starmer: The Prime Minister used to say that nobody would have to sell their home to pay for their care it is in his manifesto, right here. On the basis of that promise, he then put up tax on every working person in the country. Has he done what he promised and ensured that nobody will have to sell their home to pay for care, yes or no? It is not complicated.

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): If you go down to £100,000, that is the beginning of where we will ask you to contribute, but your home is not included in that. Labour has absolutely no plan. It has spent decades failing to address this. Only a few weeks ago, Labour Members failed to vote for the £36 billion that will enable us to fix this and to help people up and down the country—not just to fix the social care problem, but to pay for people to live in their own homes and receive the care they need in their homes. That is what this one nation Conservative Government are doing. Why will the right hon. and learned Gentleman not support it.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-11-24/debates/C44218D0-4FD5-4841-94E9-8218FAE2B9AB/Engagements>

*The Analysis**Hymes's (1974) Contextual Model*

Table 3. Hymes's (1974) Speaking Model of Excerpt -3-

Setting	The Time: This debate occurs on Wednesday, 24 November 2021. The Place: The House of Commons, UK.
Participants	The addressor is Keir Starmer, and the addressee is the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
End (aim)	In this excerpt, the prime minister's reaction to a pledge he made in his campaign is sought by the leader of the Labour Party. He assures his nation's citizens that they won't have to sell anything they own to for the cost of their care. However, in practice, he did not keep this pledge.

Types of Disclaiming

In this extract, Boris dodges the question delivered by Keir Starmer about the medical care of people and the taxes that the government put on them by not giving a concise answer about the promise he made in his manifesto. Therefore, he disclaims responsibility by blaming the Labour Party for not voting on a different matter and asserts that they have no clear plan. Before that, 'Boris' employs the sin licensing disclaimer that states beforehand that an action to come may normally be considered a rule violation.

*Pragmatic Strategies**Speech Acts*

Boris Johnson is accusing the Labour Party, claiming that they lack a clear plan for their future visions. He stated, "Labour has absolutely no plan. It has spent decades failing to address this. Only a few weeks ago..." Hence, he uses the representative SAs.

Non- Observance of The Maxims

Breaking the GM is seen by flouting the relevance maxim when Boris Johnson mentions that Labours has no plan, which is not related to what Keir Starmer wants to know, instead of commenting on the care

institutions. Moreover, he flouts the quantity maxim by prolonging his utterance and manner maxim by not being brief.

Politeness

Boris Johnson says, "If you go down to £100,000, that is the beginning of where we will ask you to contribute, but your home is not included in that ". The use of "if clause " intensifies his awareness of his addressee's negative face.

Excerpt 4

Paul Blomfield: In a recent ITV interview, the Prime Minister was asked about my constituent Jenni Garratt. Jenni is a victim of the cladding scandal. Yet in his interview, the Prime Minister said Jenni had "a frankly unnecessary sense of anxiety". So will he meet her to hear why she is worried, and do so before the Building Safety Bill completes its passage through the House?

The Prime Minister)Boris Johnson(: I have every sympathy, but what I think is unfair is that people such as her are placed in a position of unnecessary anxiety about their homes when they should be reassured. I think it is absurd. But what people should be doing is making sure that we do not unnecessarily undermine the confidence of the market and of people in these homes, because they are not unsafe. Many millions of homes are not unsafe, and the hon. Gentleman should have the courage to say so.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2021-11-03/debates/DA26E685-87E2-430D-AD81-919688AE9400/Engagements>

The Analysis

Hymes's (1974) Contextual Model

Table 4. Hymes's (1974) Speaking Model of Excerpt -4-

Setting	The Time: This debate occurs on Wednesday, the 3 rd November 2021 The Place: The House of Commons,UK.
Participants	The addressor is Paul Blomfield, and the addressee is the Prime Minister Boris Johnson.
End (aim)	This extract is the ongoing social issue in the United Kingdom, referred to as the "cladding scandal," which resulted from the fires that occurred in the Grenfell Tower on June 14, 2017, and the Bolton Cube on November 15, 2019. These incidents made it clear that numerous buildings had been wrapped with insulation and flammable cladding, among other dangerously combustible materials. Many buildings lack additional crucial fire safety precautions, like cavity barriers around windows and fire barriers to stop fires from spreading, in addition to their flammable components.

Types of Disclaiming

In this extract, Boris Johnson uses a cognitive disclaimer, stating, "I have every sympathy, but what I think is unfair is that people such as her are placed in a position of unnecessary anxiety about their homes when they should be reassured." The prime minister anticipates doubts that may be expressed regarding the cladding scandal. By anticipating doubt, Boris Johnson uses the disclaimer to reassure others that there is no loss of cognitive capacity and that there is still agreement on the facts of the situation. Therefore, 'Boris' leaves the question without any clear answer about whether he will meet 'Jeeni'.

Moreover, knowledge plays a key role in this type of disclaimer, as in others. By demonstrating awareness in advance of a potential basis for classification, the individual lays out a reason for actions that might otherwise be perceived as lacking responsibility.

Pragmatic Strategies

Speech Acts

Boris Johnson has expressed his sympathy for the victims of the cladding scandal and their unwarranted anxiety about their homes. He utilizes the expressive SA when he expresses his opinion and vision regarding these individuals. This can be seen when he says: "I have every sympathy, but what I think is unfair is that people such as her are placed in a position of unnecessary anxiety about their homes when they should be reassured."

Non-Observance of The Maxims

Boris Johnson flouts the quantity maxim when he talks about the anxiety of the people without being consistent with the question of the addressee whether he will meet her 'Jenni' or not. Also, challenging the addressee isn't related to the question. Additionally, the maxim of quality is flouted by saying "I think is unfair that people such as her are placed in a position of unnecessary anxiety about their homes when they should be reassured." The use of "think" is an indication that what is said lacks assurance and evidence.

Politeness

The negative politeness strategy is seen when Boris Johnson hedges his opinion to save the addressee's negative face. This can be observed in the statement: "I think it is absurd."

Excerpt 5

Kate Osamor: The Windrush compensation scheme was launched in April 2019. In the time since, we have seen this Prime Minister come and go. Meanwhile, just one in four applicants has received compensation so far, and sadly at least 28 have passed away without receiving compensation. Is it not about time for the Government to make the scheme independent of the Home Office, and finally provide justice to the victims before it is too late?

The Prime Minister (Boris Johnson): Actually, I think more people have got compensation. I renew my apologies to the Windrush generation for what they have suffered, but we have greatly increased the compensation available. We have paid out, I think, more than £51 million. We are working with voluntary groups to ensure that people get what they are entitled to. I may say that Labour has never apologised for its own part in the Windrush scandal.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/Commons/2022-07-20/debates/63F450D4-6D44-4D0B-915A-8D06DCDD7E4A/Engagements>

The Analysis

Hymes's (1974) Contextual Model

Table 5. Hymes's (1974) Speaking Model of Excerpt -5-

Setting	The Time: This debate occurs on Wednesday, the 20th of July 2022. The Place: The House of Commons, UK.
----------------	--

Participants	The addressor is a Labour Party member Kate Osamor, and the addressee is the prime minister Boris Johnson.
End (aim)	The core of this extract is the Windrush scandal involving the wrongful detention, denial of legal rights, and erroneous deportation of people by the Home Office in the UK. The government acknowledged their mistreatment and established a compensation scheme. However, accessibility and effectiveness concerns have been raised about the scheme in reviews.

Types of Disclaiming

In the previous extract, the prime minister utilizes disclaiming by using the type of hedging disclaimer. This can be seen in: "Actually, I think more people have got compensation... We have paid out, I think, more than £51 million." His usage of expressions like: "I think" indicates an intentional signal of minimal commitment to the upcoming act of behaviour and the doubtful nature of the coming action. When politicians make decisions, their words carry weight and can either strengthen or harm their prominence. That's why they frequently use hedging to dodge making firm affirmations or giving clear answers.

Pragmatic Strategies

Speech Acts

In this excerpt, Boris Johnson uses expressive SA. Boris Johnson's apology to the Windrush generation is an example of an expressive SA, which is used to convey the speaker's psychological condition. He continues by accusing the Labour Party of being responsible for the Windrush affair by saying, "I may say that Labour has never apologized for its own part in the Windrush scandal."

Non-Observance of the Maxims

The speaker's overload of information is a flouting of the quality maxim. Boris was just meant to respond to the MP's question; nevertheless, he attacked the opposition. Breaking this adage was intended to show a self-assured resistance to his opponent's policy and to draw attention to how ridiculous the opposition's argument was.

Politeness

Boris Johnson's use of a hedging disclaimer shows his awareness of the potential negative impact on the recipient. Additionally, his choice to use the verb "think" seems to be a way to express his personal view and soften any potential offense.

The Quantitative Analyses

Types of Disclaiming

Table 6. Types Of Disclaiming in the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Questions (Pmq's) Sessions

Types of disclaiming	Frequency	Percentages
Hedging	3	60%
Credentiaing	0	0%
Cognitive disclaimer	1	20%

Sin licenses	1	20%
Appeals for the suspension of judgment	0	0%
Total	5	100%

The research findings reveal notable differences in the usage of types of disclaimers across the five extracts of the selected data. The types of disclaiming in the selected data are confirmed as conversational acts of disclaiming, with the following types coincident in all extracts: a) Hedging; b) Cognitive; and c) Sin licenses.

Table 6 clarifies that Boris Johnson employs disclaiming types with varying frequencies and percentages. Notably, a higher emphasis is given to the hedging type. The hedging type is used (3) times, and its percentage score is 60%. This indicates that when answering questions about postponed or cancelled responsibilities, he employs the hedging type to minimize his responsibility by showing uncertainty about his statements. However, the cognitive type is once, representing 20%. While the sin license type is also used once, matching 20%. Overall, the findings clarify that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson utilizes disclaimers in his Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs) sessions. In contrast, credentialing and appeals for suspension of judgment are not present in the selected data.

Speech Acts

Table 7. Speech Acts in the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Questions (PMQs) Sessions

Speech Acts	Frequency	Percentages
Representatives	4	66.6%
Directives	0	0%
Commissives	0	0%
Expressives	2	33.3%
Declarations	0	0
Total	6	100%

This means that Boris Johnson primarily employs disclaimers with the representatives of SA through the selected data. He uses it a total of (4) times, which amounts to a total percentage of 66.6%. Overall, he utilizes expressives twice, making up 33.3% of his interaction. Notably, he does not utilize commissives, directives, or declarations at all.

*Politeness***Table 8.** Politeness in the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Questions (PMQs) Sessions

Politeness	Frequency	Percentages
On-record	0	0%
Negative	4	80%
Positive	1	20%
Off-record	0	0%
Total	5	100%

The findings reveal that British Prime Minister Boris Johnson employs both negative and positive politeness strategies during his Prime Minister's Questions (PMQs).through his PMQs. The negative politeness strategy is used (4) times in the data under scrutiny, representing 80%, and the positive politeness strategy is used a total of (1) time, which amounts to 20%. Notably, he does not use the off-record and on-record strategies in the extracts.

This expresses his desire to present his views in a way that does not seem imposed or offensive to the addressees.

*Grice's Maxims***Table 9.** Grice's Maxims the British Prime Minister Boris Johnson's Questions (PMQs) Sessions

Grice's Maxims	Frequency	Percentages
Quantity	2	33.3%
Quality	3	50%
Relevance	1	16.6%
Manner	0	0%
Total	6	100%

Table 9 illustrates how Boris Johnson employs Grice's maxims differently. He predominantly flouts the quality maxim which occurs (3) times, accounting for 50% of the occurrences. This indicates that he often tends to express his viewpoints indirectly. Moreover, the quantity maxim is flouted only twice, amounting to 33.3% of the instances. Which reflects his willingness to make claims that may not exhaustively align with matter-of-fact reality and communicate his intended message. Additionally, the relevance maxim is flouted once, amounting to 16.6%. Notably, the manner maxim is not applied in the selected data.

Conclusion

The present study examines how Boris Johnson employs disclaiming during the British Prime Minister's Questions from a pragmatic perspective and explores the various pragmatic strategies associated with the use of disclaiming.

The results showed that by employing disclaiming, Boris Johnson can deflect and preempt doubts and negative perceptions arising from his conduct. As a result, he paves the path to avoid being unwantedly aggressive and protects his identity from being unfairly challenged.

When presented with difficult instances, the study reveals that disclaiming is only a few examples of largely verbal involvement to assure or reform major interchange. Its purpose is to predefine these troublesome events for others in a way that lessens their importance as conversational cues, preserving engagement and controlling the meaning flow in circumstances.

Furthermore, analyzing disclaimers within the political context has a distinctive role, particularly from a pragmatic standpoint, as it helps identify the underlying causes of such behaviour. At the linguistic level, the study seeks to provide a more in-depth understanding of the nature of disclaiming and highlighting their role as an active linguistic device that can be employed in everyday interaction. By scrutinizing the diverse uses of disclaiming, the study aims to boost current knowledge.

Authenticity: This manuscript is an original work.

References

- Austin, J. L. (1962). *How to do things with words*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some universals in language usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. (4th ed.). Thousand Oak, California: Sage
- Crystal, D. (1985). *A Dictionary of Linguistics and Phonetics*. 2nd. edition. Oxford: Blackwell.
- Cutting, J. (2008). *Pragmatics and discourse: A resource book for students* (2nd ed). Routledge.
- Degand, L. (2009). *Speech acts and grammar*. In *Concise encyclopedia of pragmatics*. 2 nd ed. Ed. J. L. Mey. 1009-1015. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Elen, G. (2001). *A critique of politeness theories*. St. Jerome Pub.
- Grice, P. (1975). *Logic and conversation*. In P. Cole & J. Morgan (Eds.), *Syntax and Semantics*,
- Hewitt, J. P., & Stokes, R. (1975). *Disclaimers*. *American Psychological Review*, 40.
- Huang, Y. (2007). *Pragmatics*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Hymes, D. (1974). *Foundations in Sociolinguistics: An Ethnographic Approach*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Kasper, G., & Blum-Kulka, S. (1993). *Interlanguage pragmatics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Leech, G. (2014). *The pragmatics of politeness*. Oxford University Press.
- Searle, J. R., Kiefer, F., & Bierwisch, M. (Eds.). (1980). *Speech act theory and pragmatics* (Vol. 10). Dordrecht: D. Reidel.
- Thomas, J. (1995). *Meaning in interaction. An introduction to pragmatics*.
- Yule, G. (1996). *Pragmatics*. Oxford university press.
- Web Source (1) <https://www.oxfordlearnersdictionaries.com/definition/english/disclaim> Accessed on Oct. 2024.