Mitigation and boosting as face-protection functions

Abstract: Mitigation is undeniably and necessarily linked with the social aspect of communication. No speaker mitigates an utterance without a goal in mind, which makes mitigation a means to an end and not an end in itself. Even though the various definitions of mitigation do not assign the same aims to this phenomenon, the social impact it has on the participants in the communication is generally agreed upon throughout the literature (Fraser 1980; Meyer-Hermann 1988; Bazzanella, Caffi, and Sbisà 1991; Briz 1998; Caffi 1999; Briz 2003; Thaler 2012; Briz and Albelda 2013; Schneider 2013; Albelda et al. 2014; Albelda 2016; 2018). In this paper, the mitigating and boosting strategies in relationship with face-protection are analysed in a self-compiled corpus containing the transcriptions of the Spanish reality television show Gandía Shore. The results demonstrate that the aforementioned mitigating functions do not belong exclusively to the domain of mitigation, but they can also be performed using boosting. The findings suggest that the functions associated with mitigation in previous studies are, in fact, the face-protection functions, which thus constitutes a broader and hierarchically higher category.

Key words: mitigation, attenuation, boosting, reinforcement, face, facework

1. Introduction

Mitigation is undeniably and necessarily linked with the social aspect of communication. No speaker mitigates an utterance without a goal in mind, which makes mitigation a means to an end and not an end in itself. Even though the various definitions of mitigation do not assign the same aims to this phenomenon, the social impact it has on the participants in the communication is generally agreed upon throughout the literature (Fraser 1980; Meyer-Hermann 1988; Bazzanella et al. 1991; Briz 1998; Caffi 1999; Briz 2003; Thaler 2012; Briz and Albelda 2013; Schneider 2013; Albelda et al. 2014; Albelda 2016; 2018). The main goal of these paper is to present a framework that explains how social phenomena can trigger the use of mitigation as well as boosting.

The literature on mitigation generally accepts that protecting the face of speaker is commonly a mitigation function. Having found the link between the social phenomenon, i. e. face-protection, and mitigation, the research questions for this study are the following:

- Is face-protection a mitigation function or is mitigation a strategy to protect face?
- If the latter is true, is mitigation the only face-protection strategy or it can be achieved through other ways such as boosting?

The operational definition of mitigation is taken from Albelda and Estellés (this volume). Regarding boosting, the description of Albelda (2007, 2014) is used. A justification for the choice of these definitions as well as a detailed description is provided in sections 2.1, 2.2 respectively.

2. On mitigation and boosting

2.1 Mitigation and face

Albelda's (2018, 2016) review of the literature on mitigation points out that the reduction of undesired social effects for participants in communication has been described as one of the most constant objectives of mitigation. Not all definitions of this phenomenon explicitly take into consideration the concept of face (Goffman, 1967) when making an account of the social dimension of mitigation. However, one might argue that the concept of mitigation points towards the concept of face, even if this is not made explicit. This notion is reflected in the works of Fraser (1980) and Meyer-Hermann (1988), which were among the first studies of mitigation to take a pragmatic perspective. Fraser defines mitigation as "a modification of only those effects which are unwelcome to the hearer" (Fraser, 1980, p. 342), which, as Caffi (1999) points out, is quite similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987) concept of face-threatening acts. Meyer-Hermann (1988) refers to mitigation as a strategy to lessen the obligations speakers commit themselves to through their utterances, but he also mentions Brown and Levinson's (1987) notion of face.

However, as Albelda (2016) points out, a review of the literature shows that the social aspect of mitigation occasionally resists being placed at the core of the definition of this concept. Such is the case, among others, in the works on mitigation within speech act theory. In the literature that makes use of this framework (Bazzanella et al., 1991; Caffi, 1999; Holmes, 1984; Sbisà, 2001) mitigation is described as a modification of the illocutionary force. Even though

these proposals generally acknowledge that the modification of the illocutionary force is not devoid of repercussions on the social level, this aspect does not play a central role in their descriptions of mitigation. An exception is to be found in the work of Thaler (2012), whose main aim is to combine the speech act theory with the concept of face. This author aims to explore the role face has in the perlocutionary effects of a mitigated speech act.

Another trend in the literature that studies mitigation is the attempt to describe mitigation from a perspective where the interactive aspect of language takes a central role. The works of Briz (2007, 2003, 1998, 1995) conceptualise mitigation as an argumentative strategy that weakens the illocutionary force. Where the concept of face is acknowledged, face needs are said to be the aim of mitigation only occasionally. However, in later works conducted by the same author jointly with other researchers (Albelda et al., 2014; Briz and Albelda, 2013), the idea of mitigation functions is introduced. Since these functions take as a basis for their description the specific face among the interacting participants that the mitigation is trying to save (i.e. the speaker's or the hearer's), it can be claimed that the understanding of the role of face put forward in prior studies on mitigation by Briz and his group has been enhanced. Another model wherein face acquires a more central role is that of Schneider (2013), who puts the face-wants of the speakers at the core of his definition of mitigation. The aim of mitigation is to minimize face-threatening acts along with the obligations and level of commitment of the speaker, in order to keep the face of the participants in the interaction unharmed.

The works of Martinovski et al. (2005) and Martinovski (2006) take a different perspective to describe the concepts of mitigation and face. They state that "mitigation is described here as a complex cognitive, emotional, pragmatic, and discursive process whose main function is reduction of vulnerability" (Martinovski, 2006, p. 2066). Mitigation is presented as a cognitive strategy used to save face (Martinovski et al., 2005). The processes involved in mitigation work in a cyclic manner. There is an initial appraisal of the situation, which establishes that the outcome of the situation might constitute a threat to the speakers. In order to prevent said threat, the speakers deploy a coping mechanism that can take the form of mitigation. This mitigating strategy is aimed at affecting the outcome

of the reappraisal process that it triggers in the interlocutors. Figueras (2018), who also employs this cognitive perspective, conceives face as the "identity socially formed in interaction" (Figueras 2018, 275, translation is ours). Speakers reflect in interactions those attributes with which they want to be associated, and challenge those with which they do not wish to be associated.

One of the latest theoretical approaches to mitigation (Albelda and Estellés, this volume) defines mitigation as being at once a linguistic, social, and cognitive strategy. From a linguistic point of view, a mitigating strategy has to distance itself from the default linguistic form, following Levinson's M heuristic, which states that "what is said in an abnormal way isn't normal" (Levinson, 2000, p. 33). From a social point of view, mitigation tries to prevent a negative impact on the faces of the participants in the communicative act. From a cognitive point of view, mitigation is a conservative strategy based on the speakers' self-perception. This perspective defines self-image as a set of presuppositions speakers think interlocutors have of them. The use of mitigation can be triggered when speakers believe that the idea others have of them is at risk of changing in a way that might cast them in a negative light. For an item to qualify as a mitigating device, it is indispensable that it functions on all three of the aforementioned dimensions.

This last conception of mitigation is taken as the operational definition. Even though there are similarities between this approach and the on by Martinovski et al. (2005) and Martinovski (2006), we should bear in mind that these proposals are completely focused on the cognitive aspect of mitigation, in Albelda and Estellés (this volume) there is also two additional levels (i. e. social and linguistic) to take into consideration. We believe Albelda and Estellés' (this volume) definition to be more comprehensive, since it unifies the various perspectives on mitigation to create a multi-modular definition that both concisely identifies mitigation and presents a way to study its linguistic realisation of cognitive and interactional processes.

On the subject of how face is defined in this paper, it must be noted that this term has been extensively studied since the introduction of this concept by Goffman (1967). It has been especially developed in relation to the politeness studies field and since the seminal study of Brown and Levinson (1987)

numerous works have further developed this concept in different direction[1]. However, for the purposes of this study, we use the notion of 'face' integrated in the proposal by Albelda & Estellés (this volume).

2.1.1 On mitigation functions

Mitigation has not only been described in terms of what it is; it is also common to find functions ascribed to this concept. Fraser (1980) distinguishes between self-serving and altruistic mitigation. Self-serving mitigation is used to prevent negative effects on the speaker's face. Participants in interaction may want to avoid a situation in which hearers have a negative reaction to the speaker's utterances—such as when issuing a command to perform a "distasteful task" (1980, p. 344). Another reason to deploy self-serving mitigation is to protect what an utterance "implies about the speaker's beliefs" (Fraser, 1980, p. 345). Altruistic mitigation, on the other hand, is focused on avoiding negative effects on hearers. Another author who distinguishes the functions of mitigation is Meyer-Hermann (1988). Drawing on the concepts of negative face and positive face by Brown and Levinson (1987), this author conceives mitigation functions as a strategy to deal with face threats.

Holmes (1984) accounts for two reasons speakers may modify illocutionary force. On the one hand, "to convey modal meaning or the speaker's attitude to the content of the proposition" (Holmes, 1984, p. 348); on the other, to convey affective meaning or a certain attitude towards the hearer. Holmes also makes a trifold distinction depending on whom or what mitigation—as well as boosting—affects. Speaker-oriented downtoners "express the speaker's reservations in relation to a particular speech act" or "focus on the speaker's reservations concerning his or her warrant for the speech act which follows" (Holmes, 1984, p. 359). Hearer-oriented downtoners, on the other hand, modify the illocutionary force of acts that concern the hearer, whereas content or other-oriented downtoners deal with mitigating the content itself.

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[1] For a more comprehensive review of the concept of face see Hernánde-Flores (2013), Garcés-Conejos Blitvich (2013) and Arundale (2020).

Looking to the literature where face takes a more salient role, Thaler (2012) distinguishes between speaker-oriented mitigation—concerning the speaker—and hearer-oriented mitigation—concerning the hearer's negative face. Briz and Albelda (2013), who also take face as the key element in defining mitigation functions, identify *self-protection* (speaker-oriented), which prevents potential damage to speakers' own faces; *prevention* (hearer-oriented), which aims to avoid damage to hearers' faces; and a third function called *repair*, which deals with restoring face damages that were caused linguistically prior to the sequence where mitigation is employed. Albelda et al. (2014) include a fourth function that is at work when face is not present, but in a later paper Albelda (2016) challenges this function's existence and claims that face is always involved in mitigation.

Since the operational definition used for this paper (Albelda and Estellés, this volume) does not include an account on the mitigation functions, this study makes use of Briz and Albelda's (2013) proposed array of mitigation functions. This framework was chosen for various reasons. First, all three functions are defined based on the concept of face. Second, it is one of the most comprehensive proposed definitions of mitigation and includes a third function normally not accounted for in other frameworks (repair). Last, they signal already a relationship between mitigation and face, which are two of the main concepts revisited in this paper.

2.2 Mitigation and boosting

It is not uncommon for authors who study mitigation and boosting together to conceptualise them as opposite poles (Bazzanella et al., 1991; Caffi, 1999; Holmes, 1984; Meyer-Hermann, 1988; Sbisà, 2001). Two trends have been identified in the literature that analyse mitigation and boosting jointly. On the one hand, Meyer-Hermann (1988) conceives mitigation and boosting as being respectively a reduction or heightening of the speakers' obligations in an interaction. On the other hand, within speech act theory, Holmes (1984), Bazzanella et al. (1991), Caffi (1999), and Sbisà (2001) conceive these two pragmatic phenomena as opposite forces, constituting either a weakening (mitigation) or a reinforcement (boosting) of the illocutionary force.

Regardless of the perspective taken, the literature tends towards establishing a relationship between mitigation and boosting in terms of opposite forces. Both of these phenomena are shown to pursue social goals in the interaction. There are numerous studies (such as the ones previously described) that analyse mitigation as a freestanding concept. However, boosting as a pragmatic phenomenon seems to be frequently analysed as a device within other frameworks, as it is the case of the literature on boosting within politeness studies (Albelda and Barros García, 2013; Barros García, 2011; Bayraktaroğlu, 1991; Hernández Flores, 2004; Holmes, 1988, 2013).

In this paper, boosting is considered to be a face-protection strategy, along with mitigation. For this reason, an operative definition of boosting must also be adopted. For the purposes of this study, Albelda's (2007, 2014) definition is suitable. Taking a pragmatic perspective, Albelda concludes that boosting must meet two criteria. On the one hand, it has to be part of a subjective scale created by speakers. On the other hand, for an element to be consider a booster it must represent the highest point on the aforementioned scale.

3. Method of analysis

The corpus used for this study is a self-compiled transcription of the reality television show Gandía Shore. It consists of the first and only season of the show, the fourteen constituent episodes of which were recorded and aired on Spanish national television in 2012. Gandía Shore follows the lives of eight young Spanish people (four men and four women) during a single month in the summer. The participants are not acquainted beforehand and, during the month over which the show was filmed, have to live together, go to work together, and go out in their free time together. The show mixes fragments of everyday spontaneous conversations between the participants of the show (and often with outsiders, especially when the participants are working or going out clubbing) as well as solo interviews in which the participants share their views on the events unfolding in the house. In total, the corpus consists of 100,337 words; 53,423 of these words belong to spontaneous conversation and 43,688 to interviews.

4. From mitigation functions to face-protection functions

So far, the literature review has shown that prior authors have focused on describing, within different perspectives, what mitigation is and how it works. Some proposals have also identified different functions that mitigation can carry out to protect participants' faces. In this section, we take the mitigation functions proposed by Briz and Albelda (2013) to prove that these forms of face-protection are not exclusive to mitigation and can also be achieved through the use of boosting. In doing so, it would be easy to conclude that the aim of this paper is to present a critique of Briz and Albelda's (2013) proposal. However, the goal of this study goes beyond criticising any specific classification. The objective is to provide a framework that, taking as a basis the functions described by these authors, systematises the way face-protection works.

Our proposal consists of reinterpreting the mitigation functions originally proposed by Briz and Albelda's (2013) as face-protection functions. It is important to note that the original descriptions of these functions are taken as described in the aforementioned paper. However, as is shown below, the effects originally ascribed only to mitigation functions can also be accomplished through boosting, as has already been proven for the mitigation function *repair* (Cabedo and Uclés, 2019). Since the common goal of all three mitigation functions is the protection of the faces of those involved in the interaction, we propose a modification to the original schema that better suits the reality unearthed through the analysis of interactions. That is, what have been identified as mitigation functions seem to actually be serving the purposes of face-protection, which can be achieved either by mitigating or boosting devices.

4.1 Self-protection

This function aims at protecting the speaker's own face during interaction (Albelda et al., 2014; Briz and Albelda, 2013). Although originally associated with mitigation, it is not uncommon to find instances where boosting serves the same purpose. Whereas mitigation seeks to create distance between speakers and the matters at hand that can potentially threaten their faces, boosting takes the opposite approach by stressing certain parts of the discourse. This can be done by claiming control of responsibility for the very thing that can pose a threat, or

by highlighting other parts of the discourse that can cast the speaker in a more favourable light. Included below are instances of the canonical examples of self-protection through mitigation, as well as excerpts extracted from the corpus where boosting can be seen to serve this purpose.

Self-protection with mitigation

One of the reasons proposed for speakers' deployment of mitigation is self-protection on the part of the speaker. In Fraser's (1980) conception of mitigation theory, this kind of mitigation would be classified as a self-serving function of mitigation, whereas for Holmes (1984) and Thaler (2012) it would be considered as falling under the speaker-oriented type. Although these different proposals are not fully interchangeable (see section 2.1.1), there is a trend towards considering that the speaker making an utterance can be the beneficiary of mitigation. In terms of the operational definition followed in this paper, self-protection is used to protect the speakers own faces (Briz and Albelda, 2013). The following examples represent the classical conception of self-protection through mitigation.

In example (1), G—a participant in the show—is talking with a man (Y2 in the transcription) she has met at a party. Y2 refers to a previous conversation in which G claimed to be highly skilled with her mouth. In line 02, G confirms the assertion (*es que es verdad*), but then immediately reformulates and displaces the source of this piece of information from herself to a third party (*bueno/ lo que dicen ¿sabes?*), who initially remains unidentified, being referred to only as *they*. As mitigating strategies, the speaker uses depersonalisation, as well as the discourse marker '*bueno'* that mitigates disagreement, depersonalisation (*lo que dicen*) and the interactive discourse marker '*¿sabes?*' She eventually reveals the source of her claims after being explicitly asked who it is.

(1)
01 Y2: bueno ¿entonces qué?/ ¿seguro que que decías tú que hacías// virguerías con la boca?
well then what? is it for real that thing you were saying that you did crazy stuff with your mouth?
02 G: es que es verdad bueno/ lo que dicen ¿sabes?
that's true well that's what they say you know?
03 Y2: ¿quien lo decía?

who said that?
04 G: ¿quién lo dicen? pos los tíos con los qu'he estao tío
who says that? well the guys I've been with dude

<div align="right">Gandía Shore, episode 7</div>

Mitigation as a method to protect the speaker's own face can be found in line 02, when G corrects herself and replaces herself as the source that vouches for her oral skills. In this case, we can attest to a double need to deploy strategies with the aim of preserving the way the speaker thinks her interlocutor perceives her. On the one hand, Y2's first intervention (line 01) shows this speaker demanding confirmation, which can be interpreted as incredulity or as eagerness to actually establish first-hand the veracity of G's claims in action. In both cases, however, G thinks the idea Y2 has of her either has changed or could potentially change to a view of her as overconfident and pretentious. If Y2 were to be in a situation where he could personally judge how dexterous G is with her mouth, his opinion could diverge from what she has proclaimed with so much certainty, which would mean that G is bragging about a skill she does not actually have. Therefore, mitigating such a strong assertion can protect G from the previously described scenarios in which the interlocutor's presuppositions about the speaker can be challenged.

Self-protection with boosting

Speakers can attempt to protect their own face by resorting to the use of boosting. In these cases, when participants in the interaction perceive a threat towards their own face, instead of minimising the effects of what is being said in order to maintain the idea an interlocutor may have of them, speakers choose to stand their ground. Participants in interactions boost their utterances in order to protect their own face by changing a perceived idea of themselves that does not fit the image they want to project. In such cases speakers do not try to hide or minimise the things that can potentially have negative consequences for their face. Instead, they boost those aspects that can help to maintain the idea of themselves they believe others had prior to the threat.

In (2), speakers Ab and Y are discussing Y's previous actions. The night before, all the participants in the show were out partying, and Y became

aggressive with another girl at the club when she was falsely informed that her romantic interest was flirting with said girl. In this fragment, Ab wants to force Y to confess that her attempt to hit the girl from the club was caused by her being in love with another housemate (line 1). Y denies Ab's claim but admits having feelings for his roommate and having felt jealous. Ab insists (line 5) that Y stops denying her true feelings and that she recognises out loud that she is in love (*luego no lo niegues// porque luego vas y lo niegas*). Y responds by going in quite the opposite direction (line 6), saying she might be out of love soon enough if the circumstances are not favourable for her (*tan tonta no soy ¿vale? aunque lo sienta lo olvido* RÁPIDO ¿vale?).

(2)
01 Ab: si no estás enamorada de él/ si no estás enamorada de él/ ¿por qué vas a ir a pegar a la tía?
if you're not in love with him if you're not in love with him why would you hit that girl?
02 Y: pues porque/ me puedo poner celosa enamorada/ no sé lo qu'es el amor/ que siento algo está claro ¿no? es EVIDENTE ¿no?
well because I might get jealous in love I don't know what love is I feel something there's no doubt about it right? it's obvious isn't it?
03 Ab: entonces
then
04 Y: [pues ya está]
then that's it
05 Ab: [luego no lo niegues]// porque luego vas y lo niegas
then don't deny it because then you deny it
06 Y: pues noo sí lo niego porque es que ya no sé/ tan tonta no soy ¿vale? aunque lo sienta lo olvido RÁPIDO ¿vale?
I don't I do deny it because I don't know I am not that stupid okay? although I feel it I can forget quickly okay?
07 Ab: ya ya lo vemos
yeah yeah we see that

Gandía Shore, episode 8

Analysing this example in terms of how face protection is managed, we first find that Y is defending herself from the accusations Ab is making against her. In a quite aggressive manner Ab is not only forcing Y to take accountability for her actions—trying to hit a woman who was allegedly flirting with her romantic interest—but also admitting the source of these actions: doing so because she is in love of her housemate. Y's need to protect her face is, thus, also double. The event being discussed does not cast the speaker in the best light, as it potentially

reveals her as someone who acted out in a fit of jealousy. Before the eyes of her interlocutor, Y is depicted as a reckless and aggressive person, and also as someone who does not admit her own feelings. The idea Ab has of Y does not match the image Y want to project. This leads Y to resort to face-protecting strategies aimed at changing the ideas she feels Ab has of her. This can be found in two different interventions made by Y.

In the first one (line 2), she responds to being accused of hitting a woman because she is in love. She admits to having felt jealous, although not on the most straightforward way (*pues porque/ me puedo poner celosa*) and denies being in love. However, the way to do so is not to downgrade the expression of her emotions. Not only does Y admit to having feelings for a man but in doing so she actually boosts through the use of the discourse marker '*¿no?*' and the prosodic emphasis on '*EVIDENTE*' (line 02, *que siento algo está claro ¿no? es EVIDENTE ¿no?*). Y thus takes something potentially embarrassing and converts it into a fact that is so obvious that even asking her about it seems pointless. However, this is not the only boosting strategy she deploys to protect her face. She also boosts the fact that she is not going to get caught blindly in love and can put an end to the relationship if problems arise (line 06). In this case, speaker Y also makes use of the interactive discourse marker '*¿vale?*' and prosodic emphasis on '*RÁPIDO*'.

The previous example is drawn from a situation where an action prior to the deployment of self-protection boosting strategies has potentially motivated a negative change to the face of the speaker. In such cases, speakers have solid grounds to believe the idea others have of them has changed, and may want to change this new negative perception by means of boosting. However, boosting is not only found in negative situations leading up to conflicts. The following excerpts (examples 3 and 4) show the use of boosting in non-conflictive scenarios where speakers feel their faces are at risk of changing, but said change has not as yet occurred.

Example (3) is an excerpt from one of the solo interviews included in the show. Speaker Ar is trying to remember the physical appearance of the man with whom she has kissed the previous night. She has some concerns about this person not being as attractive as she thought him to be at the time. This confusion

is attributed to alcohol consumption, which she asserts causes her to see people as more beautiful than they really are. However, she closes her intervention by insisting that her partner was indeed a handsome man and boosting this assertion by the use of the discourse marker *¿eh?*

(3)
Ar: yo le miraba y le veía bien pero que/// que es que el alcohol mee/// me hace ver a las personas más guapas/ pero que yo creo que era guapo ¿eh?
Ar: I looked at him and he looked all right but but alcohol makes me see people more beautiful but I think he was handsome huh?

Gandía Shore, episode 2

Kissing someone at a club who is unattractive is something that can damage the idea Ar wants to give to others about herself. Especially in such short-term relationships, physical appearance is an essential consideration when selecting a person as a potential candidate to be one's partner for the night. Therefore, accidentally choosing someone who does meet the standard of physical attractiveness could cast a negative light on Ar's taste in men. Ar thus boosts the idea of her partner being attractive in order to prevent a potential change in her audience's perception of her attractiveness standards for men.

Another example with an a priori use of the strategy is shown in (4). A participant in the show—C—has found a partner (speaker X4 in the transcription) with whom she is flirting. In the excerpt she is making it clear that she does not intend to have sexual relations with him later on that night (line 01). This declaration of intentions is followed by an exchange where C makes sure the message has gone through after what seems to be a miscommunication with X4 (lines 02 to 06). In line 07, she restates her intentions, boosting the segment of the utterance in which she claims nothing will happen.

(4)
01 C: oye pero que no voy a hacer nada contigo ¿no sé si lo tienes claro?
listen I'm not going to do anything with you I don't know if you get it
02 X4: sí
yes

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03 C:   ¿eh?
        huh?
04 X4:  sí
        yes
05 C:   no
        no
06 X4:  que yo tengo claro que no
        I know that it's not going to happen
07 C:   ah vale// no es que si piensas eso yo no ¿eh?
        oh okay because if you think that I don't okay?
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<p align="right">Gandía Shore, episode 4</p>

The use of boosting as a strategy of self-protection is found in line 07. The miscommunication in lines 01 through 05 can lead C to think her interlocutor is actually expecting to have intercourse. As the speaker fears that X4 has an idea of her as someone who would have sex with someone she barely knows, she boosts her response in order to change this perception and stresses that this is not her desire. For this reason, she does not change the subject even though X4 confirms in line 06 that he does not expect to have intercourse (*que yo tengo claro que no*). In fact, she boosts her next intervention (line 07) using the Spanish discourse marker *¿eh?*, which constitutes an intensified direct appeal to the interlocutor. In doing so, not only does she express that there will not be sex, but also aims at changing the conception that her interlocutor—and ultimately the audience of the show—have of her regarding her attitude to potential new partners.

4.2 Prevention

Prevention deals with the protection against potential damages to the face of participants in an interaction who are not the speaker emitting the utterance. It should be noted that preventing potential face-threats to a third party does not mean leaving speakers' own face needs unattended. This function assumes that speakers also take care of their own face needs at the same time as doing so for other participants. Unlike the cases of self-protection and repair, prevention has only been found to be realised through mitigation. A tentative account in support of this assertion is also included in this section.

Prevention with mitigation

Mitigation seems to be the default pragmatic strategy to prevent damage to the faces of other participants in an interaction. The intersection of mitigation and prevention seems to also be the area where it is easiest to distinguish between the deployment of face-protection strategies on two different levels of interaction (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2014), epistemic and deontic. The epistemic domain deals with how knowledge is managed in an interaction. Lacking knowledge—or the rights to know (Heritage and Raymond, 2005) about something—can be a reason to protect the face of the speaker, whereas inquiring about something unknown—or something that speakers do not have the right to treat as "their own" information—may be accompanied by mitigating strategies that serve the purpose of preventing damage to the interlocutor's face. On the other hand, the deontic level deals with authority (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2014, 2012), that is, "determining how the world 'ought to be'" (Stevanovic and Peräkylä, 2012, p. 298). In these cases, participants who do not feel they have the right to such authority—or want to show less authority towards their interlocutors—can resort to mitigation to prevent potential face-threats to others.

An example of how mitigation works on an epistemic level to prevent potential face threats to others is found in (5). Ar was engaged in sexual relations but had to stop due to pain. The next morning, her housemate—E—asks her about this incident. Speaker E asks the question twice (lines 02 and 06) until Ar acknowledges his inquiry and responds accordingly.

```
(5)
01 Ar: buenos días
          good morning
02 E:   ¿qué? te follaron [a mitad ¿no?]
          so? you were fucked in half weren't you?
03 Ar: [buenos dias]// buenos días// ¿eh?
          good morning good morning what?
04 E:   ¿eh? ¿qué? nada
          what? what? nothing
05 Ar: (risas)
          (laughs)
[5 lines omitted]
06 E:   vamos que te- que te crujieron por la mitad ¿no?
          so you were crushed in half weren't you?
07 Ar: ah que me dolía y no quería yo eso
          oh it hurt and I didn't want that
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In this fragment, the way E enquires about Ar's night of passion clearly shows that he knows about her having intercourse and that there was an issue. E's question does not seek to find information about something totally unknown; he is at least partially informed regarding the thing he is asking about. Mitigation as a strategy of prevention is at work in lines 02 and 06. Choosing to formulate questions using *¿no?* (functional equivalent of tag questions in English) can be considered a mitigating device as well, since it downgrades the knowledge the speaker shows in the discourse (Heritage and Raymond, 2005, 2012; Sidnell, 2012). Regardless of what E actually knows, introducing a topic that is so personal to the interlocutor—in this case her painful sexual experience—can be considered a threat to Ar's face in itself. As Goffman states, the personal information and experiences that people are expected to have of themselves belong to their territory (Goffman, 1971). E wants to keep the idea he thinks Ar has of himself as someone who, while being a friend, still respects the boundaries of Ar's experiences and does not talk too freely about them. For this reason, E mitigates his attempts to introduce a topic that belongs to Ar's territory.

As previously stated, prevention of face-threats that can affect the interlocutor can occur not only on an epistemic level (example 5) but also on a deontic one. An instance that combines both is found in (6). D—the manager of the bar where the participants of the show work—is talking with Ar because there has been a problem with her at work. Ar has felt overwhelmed with work and apparently her other colleague has not helped her, which led to a serious dispute in front of the customers. After the shift has ended, D talks with Ar about the incident.

(6)
01 D: como no has dormido estabas así estresada/ con el trabajillo y tal/ ¿vale?
        since you haven't slept you were sort of stressed with work and such okay?
02 Ar: [m'estre- aunque yo hubiera dormío estaría estresada]
        I'm stre- even if I had slept I would have been stressed
03 D: [te relajas// hay que relajarse] hay que trabajar pero también relajarse hay que// marcar los tiempos un poquito

you have to relax one has to relax it's necessary to work but to relax as well one has to control the rhythm

04 Ar: pues habrá que ir ligero m'estás diciendo que no hay qu'ir así pues/ estoy intentando estar liegera y hacerlo todo deprisa
but I'll have to work quickly you're telling me that I don't have to do it like that so I'm trying to be fast and do everything quickly

<div align="right">Gandía Shore, episode 8</div>

The first intervention of D (line 01), uses mitigation to prevent damages to Ar's face on an epistemic level. The manager, who is in a higher hierarchical position, is describing how Ar's feelings have led to the argument with her co-worker. However, this experience belongs to her, so he downgrades Ar's previous behaviour (*estabas así estresada*) and also the level of importance the job itself has (*con el trabajillo y tal*). D's other intervention (line 03) shows the deployment of several mitigating devices, but in this case prevention occurs on a deontic level. As Ar's superior, D has a position that allows him to give her orders in the work domain. However, one should keep in mind that the show's participants are working in a place they have not chosen (working there is a requirement for participation), are only working there for the duration of it the show, and are engaging in work of a kind that doesn't necessarily fall within their fields of employment outside the show. For these reasons, even if D is the boss, the authority he has appears to be limited by extrinsic factors. Another possible reason to mitigate is that after the issue the employee has had, she is still visibly upset. He still has to act as the manager and give directions, but if he were to be too harsh in his wording he could be perceived as inconsiderate or mean given Ar's emotional state. The strategy to mitigate, in this case, is to use depersonalisation. In fact, in line 03, D first uses a direct command (*te relajas*) before rephrasing his command in an impersonal manner (*hay que relajarse] hay que trabajar pero también relajarse hay que// marcar los tiempos un poquito*).

Notes on prevention and boosting

So far, no instances of the use of boosting to prevent threats to the faces of speakers have been found. If we continue to follow Albelda and Estellés' (this volume) proposal, then when facing a potential face-threat to the interlocutor, speakers also protect the idea they want to project of themselves. As seen in the previous section, mitigating strategies can help to preserve the status quo while

preventing damage to the faces of the interlocutors. Boosting, on the other hand, seems to be in conflict with the social dimension. If speakers do not wish to intrude—either on the epistemic or the deontic level—the preferred route seems to be to downgrade. Reinforcing an utterance while also taking into consideration the territory of interlocutors seems to be an unlikely combination in interaction. For this reason, we believe boosting is not a strategy commonly associated with prevention.

4.3 Repair

The last of the functions proposed by Briz and Albelda (2013) is repair. The objective of this function is to undo damage to the interlocutor's face caused in an interaction that has already occurred. A previous work (Cabedo and Uclés 2019) has shown that repair can be achieved using either prosodically mitigated utterances or prododically boosted ones. However, we believe that the use of mitigation or boosting to serve a strategy to repair face damages is not limited to the prosodic component. Speakers can either mitigate their account of the actions that have caused the damage, boost the part where they apologise and feel remorseful, or stress that the situation was not as negative as perceived by their interlocutors.

Repair with mitigation

As stated by Albelda and Briz (2013), mitigation is used to make amends to damage inflicted on the face of an intelocutor. The repair function tends to be linked to apologies. However, mitigated repairs are also frequent when speakers account for the actions that caused damage to other interlocutors and take responsibility for them.

Such is the case in example (7) where L asks G to specifically have a conversation without the rest of the show's participants present. In a previous argument L insulted G and her mother and is trying to make amends. L first apologises for his behaviour during the incident (line 03) without actually referring to it (*nada que siento lo que pasó l'otro día*). As the conversation progresses L repeats the apology but also introduces the reason why he acted that way. G

then accepts having helped L to learn from his mistake and, in doing so, also indirectly accepts the apology.

(7)
01 L: Gata// ven un momento/// ¿puedo hablar contigo?
        Gata come here one moment can I talk to you?
02 G: ¿ahora?// dime// [¿qué pasa?]
        ¿right now? tell me what's wrong?
03 L: [nada que siento] lo que pasó l'otro día ¿vale?
        it's just that I'm sorry for what happened the other day okay?
        [flashback to their prior argument]
        que siento lo que pasó l'otro [día en casa]
        that I'm sorry about what happend the other day at home
04 Ar: [ooh]
        ooh
05 G: esperaba que me dijeras algo
        I expected that you said something
06 Ar: bien abracito
        nice a hug
07 G: porque yo creo que te pasaste bastante
        because I think you went too far
08 L: en verdad m'arrepiento y yo qué sé// [estaba mosqueao y]
        actually I regret that and I don't know I was pissed
09 G: [encima porque ibas-] ya pero es que/ te puedes meter conmigo todo lo
        que tú quieras tío pero con mi madre sabiendo que l'has conocido y tal
        and because you were- well you can insult me as much as you want but
        insulting my mother when you have even met her
10 L: de los errores s'aprenden ¿no?
        one can learn from their mistakes can't they?
11 G: bueno m'ale- m'alegro por ayudarte
        well I'm- I'm glad to help

Gandía Shore, episode 11

Speaker L accounts for his actions— and them having negatively affected his interlocutor—using mitigation strategies to downgrade his level of implication with the utterances. His wrongdoings put him at risk of having changed G's perception of him, but also of having altered the idea the audience following the show may have of him. By distancing himself from these utterances he can potentially restore the face he thought he projected before the conflict. On the other hand, acknowledging his actions is done to gain forgiveness from G. In lines 08 and 10, G deploys mitigating strategies, such as epistemically downgrading the motivation behind his actions (*yo qué sé// [estaba mosqueao*) as well as using impersonality and the discourse marker *¿no?* to displace responsibility from himself (*de los errores s'aprenden ¿no?*).

Repair with boosting

Cabedo and Uclés' (2019) study shows that the repair function can be deployed by producing prosodically boosted utterances. This has led the authors to conclude that the domain of repair is not exclusive to mitigation. There are cases where boosting is also a strategy that seems to function in service to the face needs of speakers. Their work is focused on prosody; however, this phenomenon is not restricted to this linguistic level. In this section, instances of boosted repair are analysed.

In (8), speakers Ab and Y are trying to comfort an interlocutor in the interaction (not shown in the fragment). This participant has been crying after being insulted by Y (not shown in the transcription). Ab's utterances challenge the reaction of the interlocutor by claiming the situation does not call for such a big emotional display, whereas Y explains the motivation for the offence while also offering reassurances.

(8)
01 Ab: que tampoco te rayes ahora// pero aquí están tus amigas aquí están tus amigas pues ponte tu copita// con tus amigas a bailar y ya está/ y no hay problema// no llores// que no llores// ¿por qué te pones a llorar ahora?
now don't make a fuss but here are your friends here are your friends so have a drink with your friends and go dance and that's it there's no problem whatsoever don't cry don't you cry why do you start crying now?
02 Y: ¿qué te pasa? ¿por qué lloras?// ¿por qué lloras tía? que estamos en plan broma riéndonos
what's going on? why are you crying? why are you crying? we're just joking having fun
03 Ab: [si no ha pasado nada]
but it was nothing
04 Y: [no has quedado mal ni nada] ¿vale?// te soltamos eso porque nos da rabia que nos hayáis vacilado y ya está no se van a pensar que eres una guarra ni nada ¿vale?
you haven't given a bad impression or anything okay? we say that because we are pissed that you have been messing with us and that's all nobody's gonna think you are a slut or anything okay?
Gandía Shore, episode 2

In this example, the speaker responsible for the damage (Y) is not the only one attempting to restore good terms; another participant not present in the

moment of the conflict (Ab) is also interceding on her behalf. However, these participants differ in the strategy chosen for the repair. Whereas both speakers use boosting to claim that the reaction of the offended girl is blown out of proportion (questions inquiring as to why the girl is crying are uttered repeatedly), Y also appeals directly to the effects the insult has had on the interlocutor's face. Specifically, she boosts the idea that the insult has not actually changed the idea others might have of her (*no has quedado mal ni nada - no se van a pensar que eres una guarra ni nada*), thus making explicit in interaction the cognitive perspective on face put forward by Albelda and Estellés (this volume). The use of boosting to repair the damage caused can be found in line 04, where Y emphasises through the use of the Spanish discourse maker *¿vale?* as a direct appeal to the hearer.

5. The cognitive perspective on mitigation and boosting and their implications for face-protection functions

So far, two different mechanisms to protect speakers' faces have been identified—mitigation and boosting—but no further explanation has been provided of the motivations behind their use or for the preference of the use of one over the other. This is not to say that the use of mitigation or boosting is random and cannot be accounted for. Albelda and Estellés' proposal can provide a tentative explanation of the reasons behind opting for either mitigation or boosting strategies to serve face-protection objectives. Specifically, the cognitive perspective can help shed light on this decision-making process.

If speakers fear that the utterances they produce can put them at risk of changing the presuppositions of their interlocutors—thus, ultimately, affecting their faces—they will mitigate in an attempt to preserve the projected idea of themselves. On the contrary, if speakers believe that what their interlocutors think of them does not match the concept they have of themselves—or the one they want to transmit to others—they may boost utterances that challenge this idea with the aim of producing change.

An example of mitigation used as a way of preserving the idea speakers thinks others have of them is shown in (9). Speaker E and his mother (X1 in the

transcription) are saying goodbye before E departs to take part in the show. His mother asks him not to drive too fast to get to his new house and not to get drunk while he is away. E reassures his mother on the first petition but does not seem to be as compliant on the second.

(9)
01 X1: y no corras
          and don't drive too fast
02 E: tranquila
          don't worry
03 X1: y no bebas
          and don't drink
04 E: eso// ya lo veremos
          we'll see about that
05 X1: y no bebas
          and don't drink
06 E: ya lo veremos
          we'll see about that

Gandía Shore, episode 1

The answers E provides in lines 04 and 06 are dispreferred answers, since they challenge the indications his mother is giving him (lines 03 and 05). Instead of plainly stating that he won't obey, he minimizes his refusal by leaving his future actions uncertain. Even though the only person involved in his mother's command is E himself, as a mitigation device he also switches the subject of his utterance from *I* to a general *we*. Stating her expectations, E's mother also makes explicit the idea she has of her son as a mature, obedient, and well-behaved person who does not get drunk when going out to party. This idea does not match what E plans on doing, which is going out and drinking large quantities of alcohol. However, E does not want to challenge his mother's command, since doing so not only would go against X1's idea of her son but also would mean that E is disobeying a direct order. His mitigated answers prevent a negative change in his mother's idea of him while simultaneously preventing him having to show disobedience or lie about how he intends to behave on the show.

The following example (10) depicts the use of boosting to protect a speaker's face. Speaker C is interested in pursuing a relationship with Ab beyond them being housemates. However, since Ab does not seem to be showing signs of reciprocity, C has suggested that he might be gay as a way to explain this unrequited attraction. During an argument involving all members of the show, a

participant reveals that C called Ab gay behind his back using a slur that roughly translates to "faggot" in English (*maricón*). In the fragment depicted here, this issue is brought back into conversation when C asks Ab for a goodnight kiss and he refuses to kiss her on the mouth. Ab says that he is gay in order to decline C's advances (line 05). At this point, C interprets this comment as an allusion to what she previously said about Ab and tries to explain herself.

(10)
01 C: ¿me das un beso de buenas noches o qué?
       are you gonna kiss me goodnight or what?
       [Ab kisses C on the cheek]
02 C: no aquí no// ¿ya está?
       no not there that's it?
03 Ab: que soy gay coño ¿no sabes que me gustan los tíos?
       I'm gay damnit don't you know I like guys?
04 C: ¿eh?
       what?
05 Ab: que soy gay ¿no sabes que me gustan los tíos?
       I'm gay don't you know I like guys?
06 C: (suspiro)//
       (sighs)
       […]
07 C: que a ver ¿qué dices? que yo no dije eso a ver// [porque estaba cabr-]
       but hey what are you talking about? I didn't say that well because I was ma-
08 Ab: [que a mí me da igual] estoy hasta la polla/ [que a mí me da igual]
       I don't care I'm fucking tired I don't care
09 C: [a ver porque estaba ca-] claro a ver no te da igual estaba cabreada
       well because I was ma- well sure you do care I was mad
10 Ab: que a mí me da igual
       I don't care
11 C: tú me puedes decir retrasada choni de mierda y todo lo que sea/ pero yo a ti no es que es queee
       you can call me a retard fucking thrashy and whatever but I can't do the same that's
12 Ab: <ininteligible/> escúchame/ que a mí me da igual que me llames maricón o lo que quieras
       listen to me I don't care that you call me faggot or whatever you want
13 C: a ver que no te dije maricón ¿sabes?
       hey I didn't call you a faggot okay?
14 Ab: ((a mí no me importa)) que tú me puedes decir lo que quieras a mí me da igual si a mí no me molesta
       I don't mind you can call me whatever you want I don't care it doesn't bother me

Gandía Shore, episode 9

There is a lot going on in this example in terms of the speakers' faces. Ab may be showing that he considers his face to be damaged by alluding to his alleged homosexuality (line 3). On the other hand, C tries to challenge Ab's interpretation of her words and thus uses a series of strategies to protect her face. At this point, it is reasonable to wonder whether this might be a case in which a repair of the linguistic damage previously done is at play, since Ab's face has been previously damaged by C. However, a closer analysis of the fragment reveals that self-protection of C's face is a more accurate description. On line 07, C first denies having called Ab "gay", and then, at the end of line 7 and on line 9, she starts to give a reason for having done so (her being angry with him). C then follows by accusing Ab of him having been disrespectful towards her (line 11) and then denies having called him a "faggot" (line 13). As it can be seen, all these strategies are more coherent with an attempt by C to evade responsibility for past actions rather than they are with an effort to cater to the needs of the damaged face of the other interlocutor. For this reason, we deem self-protection to be a better label here, even though there is damaged face involved.

In this fragment, C protects her own face through boosting. In fact, she defends herself throughout the fragment in quite an aggressive fashion. The interventions where she denies having called Ab *gay* are boosted through direct appeals to the hearer that challenge his version of events (line 7, *¿qué dices?*) and reinforce C's claims (line 13, *a ver que no te dije maricón ¿sabes?*). In terms of the cognitive explanation of boosting, there is a clear intention from C to change what she thinks Ab thinks of her. He has alluded to her having called him a "faggot", which is enough evidence for C to believe he has an opinion of C that does not match the image she wants to project. Since insulting someone behind their back obviously does not show the best side of C, she stresses the assertion that she did not do it while also advancing the alternative (and contradictory) justification that she had good reasons to do so (since Ab has also offended her) in order to enforce change on the idea her interlocutor has of her.

6. Joint uses of mitigation and boosting as a face-protection strategy

So far, the examples provided describe the use of mitigation or boosting separately. This may lead to the false assumption that only one can be used at a

time when speakers are attempting to protect their faces or the faces of others. It is not uncommon to find instances where speakers resort to both mitigation and boosting in the same sequence—or even in the same intervention—and use them together to achieve the same goal. Although an in-depth analysis of how boosting and mitigation act in conjunction falls outside the scope of this study, a brief account of the phenomenon is introduced below.

In example (11), both mitigation and boosting are deployed as self-protection strategies. This excerpt is part of an interview in which Y is talking about her feelings towards another participant on the show. She has had an on and off relationship with this person that is characterised by being rocky and argumentative. As is obvious to viewers, however, most of the conflict is caused by Y herself.

(11)
Y: puede que seamos un poco como niñatos de mierda pero es que es él/ yo ya estoy cansada tío he aguantado mucho en mi vida he aguantado tanto// estoy mu cansada ya/ s'acabó y punto
we may behave a bit like fucking brats but it's him I am tired I have put up with a lot in my life I've put up with so much I'm really tired it's over and that's it

Gandía Shore, episode 11

Y first acknowledges her part in the conflict in quite a mitigated way (*puede que seamos un poco como niñatos de mierda*). In doing so, she aims at preserving the idea she wants to give others of herself as neither immature or insecure in a relationship. She shares the blame for her actions by including her former partner using *we* as the subject, rather than just *I*. She also minimizes the assertion using a modal verb that introduces probability *puede* (*may*) and by describing their behaviour using the lexical modifier *un poco* (*a bit*) and the adverb *como* (*like*) to reduce the harshness ascribed to her actions. In other words, several mitigating devices are deployed at once, indicating that there is a clear intention from the speaker to protect her own face.

After this mitigated admission of guilt, however, Y blatantly puts the blame on her partner (*pero es que es él*). She then proceeds to boost how tired she is of the situation, saying that the relationship is over because of that fact. Stating

that the affair has ended in a boosted manner can be interpreted as a way Y has to introduce a new conception for others to have of her. Since her relationship has been not been short of arguments and jealousy (mostly from her), by claiming in a boosted manner that she is the one making the decision to break up she aims to be perceived as having regained agency.

7. Conclusions

The main purpose of this paper is to show how functions that have previously only been identified as falling within the realm of mitigation comprise, in fact, a broader category that serves the purpose of face-protection. To prove this point, boosting—along with mitigation—has been identified as a pragmatic strategy that also pursues the goals of face-protection. However, while mitigation is used in the three mitigation functions we take as a basis for our study (Briz and Albelda, 2013), the deployment of boosting is not found to be associated with prevention. A tentative explanation for this is found in Albelda and Estellés' (this volume) account of mitigation, specifically through the cognitive perspective. Boosting—seen as a strategy aiming to change how speakers think others perceive them—seems to be incompatible with the nature of prevention, since this face-protection function is focused on the interlocutor. Speakers may avoid appearing too invasive by using only mitigation to attempt to preserve the idea they think others have of them.

Another conclusion derived from applying the cognitive perspective (Albelda and Estellés, this volume) on mitigation and boosting concerns how the face-protection functions themselves are conceived. There is a shift away from the idea of considering self-protection and prevention to be a priori functions—strategies deployed in order to prevent face-damage from happening—and repair to be an a posteriori one. The fragments of interaction analysed for this paper show that all three of the functions can work either to prevent a change in the idea speakers think interlocutors have of them. Self-protection and repair induce interlocutors to change their conception of them, when speakers believe this conception does not match how they want to be perceived.

Changing perspective from viewing functions as mitigation functions to describing them as face-protection functions has, in turn, an impact on the relationship between mitigation, boosting, and face. This shift has created a broader framework that systematises the social goals participants in the interaction have in the form of face-protection functions. Furthermore, it has established that not only mitigation, but also boosting, are strategies that achieve face-protection. This perspective opens new potential avenues for research. First, it should be established whether the sole purpose of mitigation and boosting is to serve as face-protection devices or whether, on the contrary, they can appear in contexts outside the domain of face. In the case of mitigation there seems to be a sound theoretical background suggesting that its use is linked with face activities. In the case of boosting, the literature does not suggest as strongly a tight or exclusive link to face. We believe further analysis of boosting is necessary in order to be able to make claims regarding its nature. Second, so far, regarding pragmatic phenomena used for face-protection, only mitigation and boosting have been considered. However, that is not necessarily to say that face-protection is limited to these two strategies. A broader analysis of face-protection may lead to the identification of other mechanisms that serve this purpose. Last, as previously shown, the use of mitigation and boosting in the same intervention to protect a speaker's face may be a subject worthy of further exploration.

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