



Keeping the Upper-hand: Pragmatic Techniques in the Media Interview

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Critical Approaches to Discourse Analysis across Disciplines
<http://cadaad.net/journal>
Vol. 7 (2): 180 – 199
ISSN: 1752-3079

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Abstract

A critical approach to media discourse analysis sheds light on the way that individuals and institutions maintain certain ideologies in spite of the apparent neutrality of journalistic discourse. In media interviews, the interviewer can use pragmatic techniques to elicit agreement and maintain the question-answer format. This paper explores how metapragmatic acts (MPAs) and extended question sequences (EQSs) affect the interviewee's responses in two television interviews concerning political issues in China. The aim of this paper is not to comment on the ideologies implicit in the discourse, but rather to exemplify the ways in which the aforementioned pragmatic techniques play a role in the media interview. Throughout this analysis, attention is paid to the interviewer's questions and how the given responses are affected. I conclude that EQSs are more effective than MPAs, and that both are used by the interviewer to repair tacit political opinions.

Key words: Critical discourse analysis, conversation analysis, journalistic neutrality, metapragmatic acts, extended question sequences, media interview, China

1. Orderliness in the Media Interview

Two prominent features of the media interview are its overhearing audience and pre-allocation of roles (Montgomery 2008). The interviewer (IR) is expected to elicit information from the interviewee (IE) objectively, reserving the formation of personal opinion for the audience. IRs achieve this objectivity by restricting themselves to the role of asking questions so that his or her own personal values and opinions are not foregrounded. Despite this, personal attitudes can be implied in various ways, sometimes so subtly that the audience is hardly aware of the underlying ideologies (Wodak 2007; van Dijk 2000; Fairclough 1985). As van Dijk (2000) points out, 'media discourse is the main source of people's knowledge, attitudes and ideologies, and despite freedom of the press, media elites control these sources of information' (2000: 36). This paper aims to further explore how media interviews are manipulated by IRs. Since interviews are *unequal interactions* (Fairclough 1985), the IR has the power to open and close the interview and initiate turns. The IE, on the other hand, is expected to cooperate by answering the IR's questions. The smoothness of this interaction and the adherence to the

interview format, achieved by the participants' fulfilment of their assigned roles is, what Fairclough (1985) calls *orderliness*:

When I refer to the 'orderliness' of an interaction, I mean the feeling of participants in it [...] that things are as they should be, i.e. as one would normally expect them to be. This may be a matter of coherence of an interaction, in the sense that individual speaker turns fit meaningfully together, or a matter of the taking of turns at talking *in the expected or appropriate way*, or the use of the expected markers of deference or politeness, or of the appropriate lexicon. (1985: 740 my emphasis)

Thus, if the IE answers the questions in accordance with the IR's expectation, the interaction is orderly because the IR is left with nothing to 'repair'. As a result, the overhearing audience accepts any implicit ideology as taken-for-granted background knowledge. However, in the case of disorderliness, the conflict between ideologies rises to the surface, threatening the power of the IR within his or her media institution. Fairclough (1985: 761) mentions five examples of disorderliness in an interview:

1. IE interrupts IR
2. IE challenges IR's questions rather than answering them
3. IE questions IR
4. IE questions IR's sincerity
5. IE maintains a different orientation by using the lexis of a different peer group

Although Fairclough is talking here about different types of interview genres (i.e. police interviews, courtroom questioning), the same principle can be applied to the media interview. The IR has, at his or her disposal, various options that allow him or her to maintain the orderliness of the exchange and protect ideology located both at the micro-level (IR's personal values) and the macro-level (the values of the institution). Since orderliness depends on taken-for-granted background knowledge (Fairclough 1985), incidents in which the IR is compelled to repair the interaction can be interpreted as the discursive repair of 'common sense' knowledge.

2. Journalistic Neutrality

IRs, as representatives of media institutions, are responsible for appearing unbiased for their audience when communicating news. Clayman (1988) identifies three techniques that journalists use to maintain neutrality. The three techniques are listed below with examples from the interviews that will be analysed:

1. *Embedding statements in questions*

(1)

But is it true that because of the amount of oil that China buys from the Sudanese government, and the fact that China is involved in producing oil and petroleum in Sudan themselves, does that then contribute to arms sales from

China which contribute to the conflict and the genocide and the killing in Darfur – and therefore China’s contribution is negative and is causing a lot of the trouble, a lot of the strife, a lot of the death?

2. *Attributing statements to third parties*

(2)

The most cynical in the West would say, “Why should we believe you? Can we trust China?”

3. *Mitigating*

(3)

Is it possible that- that we don’t understand the Chinese definition of freedom, let alone freedom of the press?

Clayman (1988) points out that by employing the techniques above, the IR protects him or her self from libel and attacks during the interview. However, these strategies may at the same time convey the IR’s true opinions and beliefs. In the above examples it is implied that (1) is in fact the IR’s own opinion, that (2) is an expression of the IR’s own scepticism and that in (3) China’s notion of freedom is lacking or somehow wrong. In addition to the manipulation of sentence-level constructions, the IR is also able to use certain pragmatic devices to control the interaction and direct the IE’s response in a particular direction. The IR uses these techniques to maintain orderliness, and thus keep naturalised ideologies ‘safe’ within the constraints of journalistic neutrality.

3. Response Types and Departures

The terms *preferred* and *dispreferred* are key terms in the study of preference organisation (Levinson 1983). They refer to the types of responses that are expected or preferred in the production of *adjacency pairs* (e.g. request-acceptance, assessment-agreement, question-expected answer). In this context, a preferred response is one that ‘agrees’ with the question, whereas a dispreferred response is one that ‘disagrees’ (see for example Gardner 2004). Consider the example below, which, consistent with the data analysed in this paper, uses the Jefferson system of transcription (Jefferson 2004), with stressed syllables underlined, parentheses denoting the length of the silence in seconds, square parentheses indicating overlap, and arrows drawing attention to particular points of interest:

- 1 IR:→ P- people are concerned now though that there are restrictions on internet access (0.8)
- 2 there are certain topics, certain political issues that we've been told (1.0)
- 3 IE: [Ah]
- 4 IR:→ [So] sensitive the government doesn't want us to cover them I mean this sounds like

- 5 an attempt to (.) cancel (.) the international media and stop us from doing our job (0.3)
- 6 IE:→ I don't personally think so (continues)

In this excerpt, line 1 attributes the statement to a third party ('people are concerned'), and in line 4 the statement is mitigated ('it sounds like'). Despite the appearance of neutrality, the whole statement is framed in semantically negative terms (concerned, restrictions, sensitive, cancel) and is formed in a way that seeks confirmation from the IE. The IE's response in line 6 is a rejection of the IR's statement, deeming this response 'inappropriate' or according to Gardner (2004), 'dispreferred'. In this paper, I will use the terms 'preferred' and 'dispreferred' as illustrated in the example above, and explore the ways in which IRs can elicit preferred responses; in other words, push the IE towards a response that confirms the IR's personal beliefs. The analysis will also demonstrate how IRs can pre-empt and prevent *departures* from the question-(expected) answer format. The term *departure* (Greatbatch 1988) describes the ways that IEs can avoid certain questions. IEs can perform a departure in two ways: by declining to address the topical agenda or by shifting away from the agenda before or after giving an answer.

4. Data

The transcriptions included in this analysis are taken from two interviews conducted by George Negus, a reporter for an Australian current affairs program called Dateline. Interview 1 was aired on May 30, 2007 and features Xinran Xue, a Chinese author who talks about the state of China's government, particularly the ideological 'progress' that began with the Tiananmen Square protests in 1989 (see for example Mahbubani 2010). According to some Chinese officials, China 'is moving toward democracy, implying that some form of a Western-style political system could take root [here]' (Wong 2010: para 5). This notion of hope is constantly defended by Xue and challenged by Negus during the interview (Negus 2007b). Despite Xue's attempts to discuss some positive directions in which China has become less repressive, Negus pragmatically rejects those notions to reinforce the improbability of so-called 'real' democracy in China.

Interview 2 was aired on August 6, 2008 and features Ambassador Liu Guijin who, during the lead-up to the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing, discussed media censorship and China's involvement in the humanitarian crisis in Darfur, Sudan. Ho (2009) summarises the situation:

China is Sudan's biggest foreign investor. Because of its economic ties, it is also often seen as being one of the African nation's biggest defenders, in the face of international criticism over Sudanese government involvement in the Darfur conflict. (2009: para 2)

In the interview, Negus (2008) probes Guijin about issues such as the UN arms embargo, which declares that foreign countries must not provide any military assistance to the conflict. Negus uses his power as IR to convince his overhearing audience that the money received from the sale of Sudanese oil to

China is directly linked to arms sales, resulting in ‘genocide’ (see for example Reeves 2007) in Darfur.

In both interviews, Negus defends the ideology that China is a repressive government with little chance of becoming democratic and that China should be held responsible for happenings in Darfur. Although Wodak (2007) points out that the critical analyst should address not only the co-textual but also the socio-political context of the text, spatial constraints limit this paper to a focus on co-textual analysis (the media interview as a question-answer format). However, even a basic conversation analysis performed at the micro-level reveals the IR persistently trying to confirm negative ideologies about China. Two of the pragmatic techniques he uses to achieve this are outlined below, followed by examples from the texts and discussions.

5. Metapragmatic Acts

Thomas (1985) describes the discursive options available to the dominant participant in unequal encounters that allow him or her to ‘keep the upper hand’ (1985: 767). These strategies for controlling the shape of the interaction are *metapragmatic acts* (MPAs) and are divided into three categories. The three types of MPAs are outlined below.

5.1 IFIDs

Illocutionary force indicating devices (IFIDs) express or make transparent the illocutionary force of an utterance. A typical example would be ‘I order you to be quiet’ as opposed to ‘be quiet’ (Thomas 1985: 769), where the illocutionary force of the utterance is made explicit. However, such overt displays of power would be inappropriate for media interviews. Accordingly, no IFIDs appear in the texts I have analysed.

5.2 MPCs

Metapragmatic comments (MPCs) are used by speakers to remove ambivalence from a particular utterance. MPCs are either speaker-oriented (to disambiguate the speaker’s utterance) or audience-oriented (in attempt to prevent the hearer from producing ambivalent utterance). Each type of MPC has two sub-types.

Speaker-oriented MPCs

1. *Prospective comments* occur before the discourse to sharpen the focus of what the speaker will say next (see text 5).
2. *Retrospective comments* occur after discourse, to clarify what the speaker had said previously (see text 7).

Audience-oriented MPCs

1. *Reformulations* are brief summaries of previously uttered discourse that isolate the main point of what was said (see texts 2 and 4).

2. *Upshots* are performed when the speaker paraphrases what the other participant had said in less ambivalent terms (see texts 1, 3 and 9).

5.3 Appeal to Felicity Conditions

The dominant participant in an unequal encounter may directly or indirectly remind the subordinate participant of institutional constraints or the power imbalance itself. For example, during a news interview, a politician (the subordinate) might subvert his pre-allocated role as an answerer of questions by asking a question to the IR. In response, the IR can repair the interactional error by directly or indirectly pointing to his or her authority as the 'question-asker' (see texts 6 and 7).

Thomas (1985) points out that in her studies, MPAs were used by dominant speakers at 'moments of crisis', i.e. at points where the authority of the dominant speaker was challenged. In the data analysed, the dominant speaker (IR) not only uses MPAs to repair moments of crisis, but also to control the type of response that the IE produces by eliciting agreement and preventing departure.

6. Analysis of MPAs

Interview 1

IR: George Negus

IE: Xinran Xue, author

Text 1

- 1 IR: As a democracy it is a babe in the woods with probably a long way to go (0.3)
- 2 IE: Yes the much better (.) if you go back the 1990s you know in China four kind the
- 3 human needs they never allowed people talk about (.) like religion, independent legal
- 4 system, and sexual (.) topic=
- 5 IR: Mm
- 6 IE: =and freedom of the press (0.3) if you go to the street today's China (.) people can talk
- 7 quite a lot and China started sexual education from 2002, and also (.) you know the
- 8 media start talk about the foreign press as well (0.3)
- 9 IR: → You are an example of that (.) this freedom that you say is opening up (.) you're not

- 10 suggesting though that the- that freedom is freedom as we know it in
°China° (0.3)
- 11 IE:→ No no completely different (continues)

In line 1 above, it is established that China is still struggling with its democratic 'movement'. The IE responds with 'yes' but then proceeds to talk about the progress China has made in line 2. The IR, in response, removes this ambivalence by questioning the notion of freedom using an upshot in line 9. The IE's response in line 11 is 'appropriate' and marks a successful MPC.

Text 2

- 1 IE: And before 1995 or 97 when I left China, um (.) there were four kind the
human nee:ds
- 2 were banneded (.) one is of freedom of the religion, one is independent
legal system,
- 3 one is freedom of the press, one is the (.) sexual topic (0.3)
- 4 IR: Mm hm
- 5 IE: This is all banneded
- 6 IR: Yeah
- 7 IE: You can't talk [at all]
- 8 IR:→ [So at] the moment you can't talk about those things
- 9 IE:→ No no not at all this is why afterwards, after eight years my radio show, I
feel so
- 10 depressed (0.3)

In lines 2 and 3 above, the IE lists four topics that were taboo in the mid-1990s. The IR emphasises their negative semantics with a reformulation in line 8. It seems that the IR is either unaware of or is deliberately exploiting the fact that the IE has made some grammatical errors with her use of verb tenses. The IE is left with little choice but to agree with the IR in line 9, resulting in a successful MPC. The interaction continues in text 3 below:

Text 3

- 11 IR: Yeah [so]
- 12 IE: [I don't] know how to answer the questions (0.3)
- 13 IR:→ Mm [so in] other words=
- 14 IE: [Yeah]
- 15 IR:→ =there is still a long way to go- even though you are suggesting that a fair
amount of

- 16 progress has been made in the right direction, .hh still a long way from the goal of real
- 17 freedom and=
- 18 IE:→ Yeah
- 19 IR: =real democracy (0.3)
- 20 IE:→ I think so far the direction is not far away from (.) how do you say the western (.)
- 21 standard (continues)

In line 15 of text 3, the IR performs another upshot, again seizing the opportunity to emphasise the notion that China's government is not truly democratic, and still 'a long way from the 'goal'¹ of 'real' freedom' (the same ideology underlines the second interview). The IE says 'yeah' in line 18 but then returns to China's relative progress in line 20, suggesting that the situation is not as hopeless as the IR has implied. This response deems the MPC unsuccessful.

Text 4

- 1 IR:→ With penalties if you have-
- 2 IE: Yes ((laughs))
- 3 IR: try to have more than one [child]
- 4 IE: (.) because in the [But] this happened in the whole China (.) not
- 5 cities was very strong policy carried out (.) but in the countryside I just spent 10 weeks
- 6 last year in China travel between the River Yellow and the River Yangtze (.) .hh I still
- 7 saw lots of the big families with nine children=
- 8 IR: Really (.)
- 9 IE: =in the countryside (.) [Oh, yes]
- 10 IR:→ [So they're-]
- 11 IE: No (.) [question °about that°]
- 12 IR:→ [So they're flying] in the face of that policy (.) [°Ignoring it°]
- 13 IE:→ [No, because] China is huge (continues)

In text 4 above, the participants are discussing China's one-child policy. The IR mentions that the violation of that policy results in penalties. Perhaps in her haste to return to point out that many of China's problems can be traced

back to poor living standards, her next turn overlaps with the previous turn as she gives an account of some large families in countryside-China. The IR's eagerness to reformulate the IE's account is evident in lines 10 and 12, where his utterance overlaps with the IE's response to his previous question. Finally, in line 13, the IE's dispreferred response appears.

Interview 2

IR: George Negus

IE: Ambassador Lui Guijin, Special Envoy to Darfur

Text 5

- 1 IR:→ One thing that I would like to suggest to you though is that- (0.3) because of this
- 2 issue, is- is China (.) to be trusted is China telling us the truth?
- 3 IE:→ I think they have every reason to trust China (continues)

In text 5, the IR starts to make a prospective comment but abandons it mid-sentence, possibly because completing the prospective comment (a suggested answer) would compromise his journalistic neutrality. Instead, the IR asks whether China is to be trusted in line 2 to question the IE's sincerity. By doing this, the IR displays his own scepticism to the overhearing audience, yet the success of his comment cannot be validated.

Text 6

- 1 IE:→ That is something quite no:rmlal (.) but today definitely not the proper time for us to
- 2 discuss freedom (0.2)
- 3 IR: ((laughs)) °Right° I understand (0.3)
- 4 IE: Yes (.)
- 5 IR:→ Talking about freedom- °okay° (.) are we free to talk about Darfur (.) and Sudan (.) that is
- 6 your area of expertise is that okay that's not one of the forbidden are [as]
- 7 IE:→ [No]
- 8 no no you can
- 8 talk about whatever (0.3) you know issues with regards to Darfur (.)

Here in text 6, the IE expresses his unwillingness to discuss freedom in line 1. This reversal of roles is an example of disorderliness, to which the IR responds by asking the IE whether it is okay to discuss the issue of Darfur (line 5). On the surface, the IR is merely changing the topic but pragmatically, he is reminding the IE to cooperate by answering the questions. With a successful appeal to felicity conditions, the IR restores the orderliness of the exchange

and makes the IE commit to answering the questions that will follow. The use of ‘we’ in line 5 also points to an attempt to imply complicity.

Text 7

- 1 IR: But am I wrong in presuming, (0.3)
- 2 IE: Yes (0.3)
- 3 IR: that that (0.3) the money that the Sudanese Government gets from China, (0.3) by (.) um
- 4 your purchase of their ^ooil^o (.) is then used in turn to buy arms (.) which contributes to the
- 5 conflict (.) that’s left hundreds of thousands [^oof]
- 6 IE: [You know-]
- 7 IR: people dead^o)
- 8 IE: You know [the-]
- 9 IR:→ [Is that] too [simple?]
- 10 IE:→ [You know] the government of Sudan, (0.3) actually (.) has
- 11 claimed by itself (continues)

In line 3 above, the IR spells out a specific situation with additional clarity (pauses) in an attempt to confirm China’s responsibility for genocide in Sudan. In fact, this is the second time that the IR has explicitly made the connection between China’s oil interests and Sudan’s purchase of arms. Having met a disagreement the first time, here the IR again tries to elicit a preferred response by commenting on his own question with a retrospective comment (line 9). The IR does not wait to hear the IE’s response and tries to prevent the departure. If the IE confirms the retrospective comment ‘is that too simple?’, he commits to elaborating on his response. However, if the IE does not address the question, it provides the IR with ‘an escape route’ (Thomas 1985: 771). In this case, the IE manages to avoid the question.

Text 8

- 1 IR:→ Could I ask you this question do you- (.5)
- 2 IE: ^oYes^o (.)
- 3 IR: do you believe that the President (.) of Sudan has contributed to the genocide and the
- 4 suffering and the deaths (0.8)
- 5 IE:→ Er- well I::: I do not like to use the term genocide because (continues)

Here in text 8, the IR once again appeals to felicity conditions to remind the IE that the IE should answer rather than dodge the IR’s questions (line 1).

The IR does not wait for a response (during the half-second gap the IR seems to be formulating a question in his mind). Despite the IE's 'yeah' in line 2, his response in line 5 departs from the agenda topic which results in a failed MPC.

Text 9

- 1 IE: I think there are real (.) humanitarian crisis (.) the Government of Suda:n, (1.2) is part of
- 2 the problem, should be responsible (.) for what's happening (.)
[in Darfur]
- 3 IR: [I guess-]
- 4 IE: because THEY HAVE NOT (0.5) handled the issue properly (1) but:: (0.6) I (.) don't (.)
- 5 know whether (0.5) you know it:: (.) can constitute the full reason for him- (.) for
- 6 president to be (.) charged (0.5)
- 7 IR:→ So you're saying that we are wrong if we see China acting out of (.) self-interest here
(0.3)
- 8 IE:→ I think that is very normal, justifiable (1) and open (1) and mutual benefit (continues)

In text 9, the IE implies that despite China's sale of arms to Sudan, China should not be held responsible for the conflict (line 1). In line 7, the IR performs an upshot in an attempt to 'trap' the IE but the IE manages to avoid the IR's question.

7. Discussion of MPAs

The occurrence of MPAs in the two interviews are summarised in Table 1:

Type of MPA	Interview 1	Interview 2
Upshot	2	1
Reformulation	2	
Prospective comment		1
Retrospective comment		1
Appeal to felicity conditions		2

Table 1: Occurrence of MPAs

Although this analysis above is confined to two ten-minute interviews, it seems that, at least structurally, there is a relatively higher level of orderliness

in interview 1. On the other hand, the topic agenda in interview 2 seems to be more sensitive, involving instances where the IE explicitly refuses to answer particular questions. The IR responds by employing a range of MPAs to elicit preferred responses and to repair interactional trouble such as departures and role-reversals. According to the analysis conducted thus far, the effectiveness of the MPAs are summarised in Table 2 below:

Text	Interview	Purpose of MPA	Success or failure
1	1	Elicit agreement	S
2	1	Elicit agreement	S
3	1	Elicit agreement	F
4	1	Elicit agreement	F
5	2	Question IE's sincerity	?
6	2	Prevent departure	S
7	2	Prevent departure	F
8	2	Prevent departure	F
9	2	Elicit agreement	F

Table 2: Effectiveness of MPAs

8. Expanded Question Sequences

Gardner (2004) uses adjacency pairs (Sacks 1992) to examine expanded question sequences (EQSs) in ordinary conversation. Adjacency pairs cover a broad range of paired utterances (Levinson 1983:303) but Gardner (2004) focuses exclusively on 'question-answer'. He points out that after asking a question, the speaker can expand the question to clarify the question before the answer comes. He identifies three types² of EQSs:

1. Type-1: EQSs that pursue a missing answer (see text 13)
2. Type-2: EQSs with immediate question expansions (see texts 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15)
3. Type-3: EQSs that provide background after the question (see texts 11 and 12)

Gardner (2004) mentions that the overwhelming majority of EQSs occurring in his data (conversations as relatively encounters) were type-1, and concludes that this is probably due to the perception of a lack of language proficiency among the non-native English-speaking participants. In my analysis, type-2 EQSs occur the most. The IE uses this technique to hold the floor while delivering his question. The IR uses EQSs not only to contextualise his questions, but also to seek agreement from the hearer (as in Gardner 2004) and to prevent departures.

9. Analysis of EQSs

Interview 1

IR: George Negus

IE: Xinran Xue, author

Text 10

- 1 IR: What about the fact that we see- we look at China and we see this strange animal, this
- 2 very strange animal with if you like a communist (0.5) head, (0.5) and a capitalist body
- 3→ how can it be both (.) how can it be even vaguely like a democracy while the communist
- 4 party still has as much influence and sway over the country and people's lives (.) as it
- 5 does (0.4)
- 6 IE:→ .hh but from my personal opinion I never believe any country has work out communist
- 7 ideas so far (0.3) they just use the idea to rule their peoples (continues)

Preceding line 1, the IR had already criticised the state of China's government and China's notion of freedom, yet, here he raises the issue again. The IR first poses a question and then in an attempt to elicit agreement, poses another question without waiting for a reply (line 3). The IR tries to make the IE agree with the idea that the Chinese government is repressive, and the IE's response suggests that despite defending China (line 6) she does, in fact, agree.

Text 11

- 1 IR: You had an amazing life for a while as a talkback radio host, listening to people's
- 2→ problems all over mainland China how did you get away with it- because I- looking at
- 3 what you have written about it (0.4) .hh you talked about incest and rape and poverty and
- 4 wasted lives (0.6) .hh abuse repression, (0.5) I mean if China is the repressive country
- 5→ that we have been led to believe it is how did you get away with being able to talk about
- 6 subjects like that (.) openly on radio (0.3)
- 7 IE:→ Er not really: (0.3) openly (continues)

In line 2 of text 11, the IR asks the first question ('how did you get away with it?'). The IR goes on to seek agreement from the IE by 'challenging' her to solve the problematic notion of openly discussing taboo topics in spite of media censorship. With the IR's extended turn (line 5), which he uses to hold the floor, he elicits a preferred response in line 7.

Text 12

- 1 IR:→ Mm could you openly criticise the government? (0.4) if I said to you what do you think
- 2 of the Chinese government is it a good government or a bad government do you think it
- 3 should remain communist (.) what- would you be fearful of answering? (0.3)
- 4 IE:→ Well you have to understand that the government is not a one person figure=
- 5 IR: °Yeah°
- 6 IE: =that is group of the people (0.3) some may understand the situation but some might not (continues)

In line 1 above, the IR poses his first question ('could you openly criticise the government?'). In the pursuit of the preferred response ('no'), he narrows the focus by limiting the IE to two choices ('is it a good government or a bad government?'), thus blocking her from an open-ended answer. Despite this, the IE manages to dodge the extended questions with a non-committal 'it depends' response in line 4.

Text 13

- 1 IR: At the moment we're hearing a lot (0.5) er about the one-child policy (0.3) in- in China (.)
- 2 and for the first time we're hearing that Chinese people are getting very angry (0.5) some
- 3→ anyway (0.5) .h about that policy (0.6) what's your attitude? Is that policy in trouble? (1)
- 4 IE: Mm:[::]
- 5 IR:→ [or are] we just hearing a few sensational incidents (0.3)
- 6 IE: Actually single-child policy first time was point out by (continues)

In text 13, the IR starts with an open-ended question ('what's your attitude?') in line 3 and immediately reduces it to a yes/no question. The IR adds an increment ('is that policy in trouble?') to further narrow the focus of the response and prevent departure. After a one-second silence, perhaps while the IE is thinking about how to respond to two separate questions, the IR extends his question yet again to pursue a response (line 5). The IE manages

to escape the narrowed question sequence by not addressing the topic of the question.

Interview 2

IR: George Negus

IE: Ambassador Lui Guijin, Special Envoy to Darfur

Text 14

- 1 IR:→ Talking about freedom- °okay° (.) are we free to talk about Darfur (.) and Sudan (.) that is
- 2 your area of expertise is that okay that's not one of the forbidden are [as]
- 3 IE:→ [No]
no, no you can
- 4 talk about whatever (0.3) you know issues with regards to Darfur (.)

Text 14 is the same as text 6 (above) reinterpreted as an EQS. After asking the first question in line 1, the IR increases his chances of a preferred response by framing his question around the obvious interview conditions (that Darfur issues are the expertise of the IE) and at the same time builds rapport with the overhearing audience by sharing a joke with them. By agreeing to the IR's EQS, a sense of order is restored to the interview.

Text 15

- 1 IE: I- I don't think so and I cannot agree with the- the (0.3) rationale of that (0.6) we do
- 2 recognise that we have some oil interests there in [Sudan]
- 3 IR: [About-] about what
seventy-five to
- 4 eighty percent of that oil- or your oil is-
- 5 IE: In Sudan. [Well with regard to the-]
- 6 IR:→ [The biggest contribut-] the biggest contributor, ambassador?
Is China the
- 7 biggest (0.6) purchaser of Sudanese oil? (0.7)
- 8 IE:→ I think so personally I think so (0.2) China (.) (0.3) But that- (0.3) how can you (0.2) you
- 9 know, link that with you know the so-called genocide or humanitarian crisis or war or
- 10 bloody conflicts (0.2) in the region with [the-
- 11 IR:→ [That's the-] that's the question,
isn't it-

In text 15, the IE not only denies China's responsibility in the Sudanese situation, but also challenges the ideology that the IR is attempting to reinforce (line 1). To repair the trouble, the IR quotes statistics to defend the validity of his question. The statement is either ignored or not noticed by the IE so the IR rephrases the question in line 6, making it more direct. Despite the IE giving a preferred response in line 8 ('I think so'), the IE then goes on to challenge the IR again. The IR hastily repairs the trouble in line 11 by interrupting the IE.

10. Discussion of EQSs

All except one of the question-extensions analysed above were made without hesitation. This suggests that the IR used EQSs as techniques to control the IE's response while holding the floor, even in texts 11 and 12, where the EQS had the double-purpose of providing background information. The data shows that EQSs are effective for eliciting agreement but not effective for preventing departures in the interviews (see Table 3).

Text	Interview	Purpose of EQS	Success or failure
10	1	Elicit agreement	S
11	1	Elicit agreement	S
12	1	Prevent departure	F
13	1	Prevent departure	F
14	2	Elicit agreement	S
15	2	Prevent departure	F

Table 3: Effectiveness of EQSs

The data suggest that narrowing the focus of a question with an EQS does not guarantee a preferred response because the IE can still choose not to address the question, or alternatively provide a response that does not answer the question. However, the use of EQSs to elicit agreement is apparently quite effective.

11. Further Comments

Over the two interviews, the IR uses a total of nine MPAs and six EQSs in attempt to control the discourse. The effectiveness of these techniques for seeking agreement (see Table 4) and preventing departure (see Table 5) are summarised below.

Text	Interview	Technique	Success or failure	Effectiveness
1	1	MPA (Upshot)	S	
2	1	MPA (Reformulation)	S	

3	1	MPA (Upshot)	F		
4	1	MPA (Reformulation)	F		
9	2	MPA (Upshot)	F	(2/5)	40%
10	2	EQS	S		
11	2	EQS	S		
14	2	EQS	S	(3/3)	100%

Table 4: Effectiveness of techniques for seeking agreement

The figures presented here are raw scores and do not claim to make a statistically reliable statement. Rather, they are intended merely to give perspective to some of the various pragmatic acts that appear in the two interviews. The results in table 4 suggest that MPAs are effective in less than half of their occurrences (40%). Of the five occurrences, four of them appeared in interview 1, suggesting that IR mostly paraphrased what the IE said to seek agreement. On the other hand, EQSs are very effective (100%) for eliciting agreement. It seems that the IR was better able to constrain the IE's response by extending his questions.

Text	Interview	Technique	Success or failure	Effectiveness	
5	2	MPA (Prosp. comment)	S		
6	2	MPA (Appeal to F. conditions)	F		
7	2	MPA (Retrospect. comment)	F		
8	2	MPA (Prosp. comment)	F	(1/4)	25%
12	2	EQS	F		
13	1	EQS	F		
15	2	EQS	F	(0/3)	0%

Table 5: Effectiveness of techniques for preventing departure

Regarding the prevention of departure (see Table 5), six out of the seven occurrences come from interview 2, suggesting that both participants were aware of the sensitive content of the discourse. More than half of these occurrences were MPAs, which achieved a 25% success rate. Attempts at EQSs proved even less effective, none of which were successful. These results are based on Clayman's (1988) definition of 'departure', which does not account for answers that are co-developed across turns. Indeed, this would be an interesting aspect to investigate further. In sum, it seems that EQSs are less efficient in 'cornering' the IE than maintaining a sense of orderliness in the interaction.

12. Constraints

In order to get a clearer picture of how IRs maintain orderliness in interviews, a large corpus of data should be analysed systematically. The analysis I offer here is intended as a demonstration only. Further, there is an overlap in the categorisation of some of the texts analysed above. For example, in text 7, the IR's utterance was interpreted as both an MPA and an EQS. In addition, the two interviews I have analysed both featured an Australian IR and Chinese IEs. The issue of cross-cultural pragmatics (for example Thomas 1983), which is outside the scope of this analysis, is another important perspective to consider. Due to spatial constraints, this paper could not include discussion of another Dateline interview with English economist Will Hutton (Negus 2007a) about the same Chinese issues discussed above. Although the IR (George Negus) explored many of the same themes, the interview with Hutton seemed significantly more orderly, displaying just one MPA (a reformulation) and no EQSs. Is it possible to attribute the higher orderliness of the Hutton interview to native-speaker pragmatic proficiency? Or is it more a question of shared ideological background knowledge (Fairclough 1985)? Exploring such questions, from both linguistic and multimodal perspectives, would provide even deeper insights an analysis of the kind presented here.

In addition, it must be acknowledged that the editing process carried out by the broadcasting company and media elites has a major effect on the type of discourse that was available for analysis. This analysis has focused exclusively on spoken discourse in interaction, and has ignored important clues such as narrative framing in the introduction to the program and the post script at the end of interview 2:

You have to admit, whether they're arguing their case for why it's okay to gag the media or genocide in Darfur, they spin a pretty good line. If you ask me, there'd have to be a pretty good chance for at least a bronze medal for hair-splitting. (Negus 2008)

Here, the IR makes an appeal for solidarity with his audience, free from the constraints of the interview. Since he could not elicit the responses he had intended during the interview, here he makes a special effort to assert his personal opinion.

13. Conclusion

In the analysis of two media interviews about China it has been argued that the IR uses various techniques including MPAs and EQSs to maintain the orderliness of the interview. It has been illustrated that MPAs are quite effective and EQSs are very effective for seeking agreement with the IR. Unlike Thomas' (1985) sample interviews, the use of MPAs seems to be less effective in the media interview, possibly due to the constraints of journalistic neutrality necessitated by the presence of an overhearing audience. In contrast with ordinary conversation (Gardner 2004) which tends to display mostly type-1 ('pursue a missing answer') EQSs, this analysis has shown that media interviews often display type-2 ('immediate question expansion') EQSs in an attempt to control the type of response. In my analysis, I have tried to

illustrate how orderliness in a media interview is essential for maintaining 'naturalised' ideology, i.e. ideology assumed as common knowledge. In interactions where the IE's responses are not 'orderly', the IR has several techniques to repair them. Although the broader socio-political context was not examined thoroughly in this article, even a micro-level conversation analysis of two media interviews brings certain underlying assumptions to the surface. The aim of this paper was not to argue either for or against such assumptions or to make a political statement about the issues discussed in the interviews. Rather, I have aimed to show how critical analysis can empower the reader by revealing some methods that are used to convey, affirm, and challenge ideology and bias in the seemingly neutral discourses that we encounter and consume every day.

Notes

- ¹ Mahbubani (2010: para 3) suggests that China's 'goal' to become a Western-style democracy is a flawed Western assumption.
- ² Here, I refer to Gardner's (2004) EQSs as type-1, -2 and -3 for convenience. These are not Gardner's own terminology.

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