ELSEVIER

Interviewers' challenging questions in British debate interviews

Sofie Emmertsen

Centre for Rhetoric, University of Aarhus, Langelandsgade 139 DK-8000, Denmark

Abstract

In recent years, some British broadcast panel interviews have taken a particularly confrontational form. In these debate interviews, news seems to be generated as arguments provided by the interviewees who participate as protagonists of opposite positions. This paper will briefly attempt to show that interviewers' initial challenging questions polarise interviewees' positions and that confrontation between interviewees is an expected and normative part of the interaction. Focusing on the grammatical, lexical and sequential design of interviewers' initial challenges, the analysis will attempt to show that these are constructed in adherence to the interviewers' formal neutrality as provided by the turn-taking system for the news interview. The paper suggests that the debate interview cannot be adequately understood as organised according to one turn-taking system, but rather as organised by the turn-taking system for news interviews as well as by a conversational turn-taking system.
© 2006 Elsevier B.V. All rights reserved.

Keywords: Conversation analysis; News interview; Questions; Confrontation; Turn-taking

1. Introduction

This paper investigates the design and sequential position of interviewers' (IR) questions in British debate interviews featuring two or more interviewees (IE) invited as protagonists of opposite positions. The debate interview is characterized by the occurrence of unsanctioned sequences of aggravated and unmitigated IE–IE confrontation. The paper suggests that the IE–IE confrontation is accomplished as a result of IRs' polarisation of IEs' positions through the use of challenging and hostile questions. Further the analysis explores how the hostile character of IRs' questions is constructed in adherence to the legal demands for IRs' formal neutrality.

E-mail address: litse@hum.au.dk.

In Britain, opposition has been a feature of IRs' formal neutrality since the advent of Independent Television (ITV) in 1958 and the end of BBC's broadcasting monopoly. In the competition over viewers, IRs at ITV launched an investigative and testing way of questioning in the pursuit of more lively, dramatic and interesting television than the competing BBC interviews offered (Day, 1961; Scannell, 1996). Until this point, the formal neutrality and impartiality legally imposed on British broadcasting had been achieved through IRs' polite, deferential and carefully scripted questioning of powerful members of the British establishment with the purpose of eliciting information, opinions and beliefs in a way that treated these as facts (Day, 1975; Clayman and Heritage, 2002). With the emergence of the aggressive line of questioning, IRs' stance of formal neutrality was interpreted more actively. The news interview was a more direct and unrehearsed event that no longer served as a mere platform for the uncritical and unconstrained announcement of IEs' facts and views. Instead, these facts were investigated and IEs' views were tested by a cross-questioning IR whose formal stance of neutrality was achieved through the IRs' enactment of opposition towards IEs' viewpoints while strictly refraining from any expression of subjective opinions, beliefs or viewpoints (Heritage, 1985). Studies of the turn-taking system underlying the investigative news interview show how the interpretation of formal neutrality puts pressure on the design and positioning of IRs' questions. In one-to-one news interviews, IRs' questions are the only means of accomplishing the double task of, and achieving balance between, voicing opposition and scepticism towards IEs' position on one hand and avoiding that the opposition be heard as expressing IRs' personal views on the other hand (Clayman, 1988, 1992; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985, 2002, 2003; Heritage and Roth, 1995).

While the turn-taking system for the news interview provides for the maintenance of IRs' formal stance of neutrality by restraining IRs' task to that of asking questions, the turn-taking system does not provide for IRs' substantively neutral conduct. Public debate as well as academic investigations of IRs' conduct have shown that the turn-taking system's provision of IRs' formal neutrality does not prevent discussion and investigation of IRs' bias that is seen as an expression of either a personal position or as a representation of the broadcasting institution's position (Clayman and Whalen, 1988/1989; Scannell, 1992). The panel interview emerged as a form of investigative news interview and features two or more advocates of opposite positions who are invited to debate their differences (Greatbatch, 1992). The panel interview can thus be seen as a vaccine against accusations of IRs' bias in its allocation of opposition to the IEs themselves (Greatbatch, 1992). Instead of incorporating opposition into each questioning turn, IRs can take on the identity as mediator of the IE–IE disagreement. The structural provision of IRs' formal neutrality through IE–IE disagreement may explain, thus, the emergence of the confrontational form of panel interview, the debate interview, investigated in this study.

2. Method and data

The data for this study consist of debate interviews broadcast on the BBC news programmes Newsnight and Despatch Box in the period 1999–2000. Newsnight is an evening current affairs programme providing back ground reportage, analysis and comment on domestic and foreign current affairs. Despatch Box is a late night programme inviting oppositional politicians and MPs to elaborate on current domestic political debates in the studio. In contrast with other types of panel interviews, such as BBC's Question Time, the recorded interactions do not involve questions or comments from a studio audience. All of the studio interactions investigated are preceded by a filmed reportage, a cue material, introducing the main argument and the opposite

positions that are subsequently represented by the IEs in the studio talk. In total, the data corpus consists of approximately 20 h of recorded interaction.

The analysis applies the method of conversation analysis, and the examples shown are transcribed according to the transcription conventions developed by Gail Jefferson (Atkinson and Heritage, 1984:ix–xvi).

3. Turn-taking in debate interviews

The debate interview is a multi-party interview featuring one IR and two or more IEs. The debate interview is opened by the IRs' questions to the IEs and closed by the IR. In the first sequences of talk, the turn-taking is organised as a panel interview. The perception of the panel interview as a form of news interview rests on the organisation of the panel interview talk through the turn-taking system underlying one-to-one news interviews (Greatbatch, 1992). As a specialisation of the turn-taking system underlying ordinary interaction described by Sacks et al. (1974), the turn-taking system for the news interview is organised to provide for the production of news for an overhearing audience through the preallocation of specific identities, tasks and activities to the interview participants (Greatbatch, 1988). The institutional identity of the IR is locally accomplished by the IR's activity of asking questions with the purpose of managing the task of eliciting information from IEs as news. The institutional identity of the IE is accomplished through the IE's activity of answering IRs' questions with the purpose of managing IEs' task of providing information as news (Heritage, 1985; Greatbatch, 1988). IRs' withholding of response tokens such as news receipts and IEs' withholding of comments on the presuppositions and character of IRs' questions show the participants' orientation to their task of producing talk for an overhearing audience represented by the IR and not for themselves, i.e. as a private or personal encounter (Greatbatch, 1992). In panel interviews featuring more than one IE, the turn-taking system for the news interview provides for the IR's role as the mediator and addressee of IEs' talk. When IEs' disagreements with co-IEs' prior turns are not invited by IRs' questions, these are treated as breaches of the underlying turn-taking system by virtue of IEs' token requests for permission to disagree or by IEs' characterisation of the disagreement as a topical shift:

(1)   [WAO: 24.1.81] (Greatbatch, 1992:280–281)

```
1    IR:   Would you want Lord Chalford would you like
2          to see .hhh bases built up to to to defend
3          from the arc of the crisis as it were=
4    LC:   =Not formal bases in the old sense of Aden
5          or Singapore: in in the days of the British
6          presence east of Suez, what I would like to
7          see: is a strong military and naval maritime
8          presence by the West in that arc,
9          [.hhhh  e:r     in-  in-    in- co-]
10   IR:   [Which would involve bases wouldn't it]
11   LC:   Well it wouldn't necessarily require
12         [a-a (      ) (      ) or] Persian kind of=
13   IR:   [In (         ) or Persia]
14   LC:   =base. But it requires arrangements with
15         (    ) perhaps in (    ) .hhh with the:
16         Kenyans in Mombassa, perhaps with the
```

17 →   Somalies, .hhh but I want to make a point
18 →   about what Peter said, .hhh a- And that is
19   that surely the the in<u>vas</u>ion of (.)
20   Afghanistan has made the whole difference=It
21   is true as he says that since nineteen
22   seventy-eight . . . (continues)

At the arrowed lines 17–18, the IE proceeds from an answer to the IR's question to disagree with the co-IE who has previously argued that the invasion by the former Soviet Union of Afghanistan has not significantly altered the power balance in the Middle East. Issuing a token request, ''I want to make a point about what Peter said'', LC characterises the following disagreement as a topical shift and thereby accounts for this departure from the activity of answering and the breach of the turn-taking system. However, placing the disagreement after the IR's question and referring to the co-IE in third person, ''Peter'', LC maintains the IR as the mediator and addressee of his talk. While departing from the turn-taking system's provisions for the type of each of the participants' turns, panel IEs can thus still be found to adhere to one central aspect of the institutional interaction, namely the institutional identity of the IR as mediator and proper addressee of all IE talk (Greatbatch, 1992).

The preallocation to the IR of the identity as mediator alleviates the need for panel IEs' disagreements to incorporate the mitigating features found in disagreements in ordinary conversation, as e.g. delays, partial agreements, etc. (Pomerantz, 1984; Greatbatch, 1992). Mitigation in the form of delay and mediation is inherent in the interview talk since the turn-taking system secures the IR the identity as addressee of all IE talk. IEs' disagreements produced in accordance with the provisions of the turn-taking system in answers to IRs' invitations to disagree as well as IEs' disagreements maintaining the IR as the addressee can thus be seen as automatically mediated and mitigated. Accordingly, the production of escalated and aggravated IE–IE disagreement is accomplished as a breach of the turn-taking system through IEs' address of their disagreements to each other instead of to the IR. The sequential positioning of IEs' disagreements right after or during a co-IE's turn further constitutes a departure from the turn position preallocated IEs as answerers of IRs' mediating questions.[1] Thus escalated disagreement in the panel interview is constructed as unmediated and therefore unmitigated disagreement.

In the debate interviews explored in this study the production of unmitigated IE–IE disagreement seems to be a normative and expected part of the interaction. IE–IE disagreements are not only unmitigated through the lack of the IR's mediation but further enhanced by IEs' positioning of counter turns as interruptions of the co-IE's turn thereby constructing the disagreement as a confrontation (Schegloff, 1988/1989).

Extract (2) below is taken from a debate interview concerning a public warning against genetically modified foods issued by the Prince of Wales. At issue is the dispute between the protagonists defending the Prince's right to speak on one side and those criticising the Prince for interfering with democratic processes on the other. Rod Hackney (RH) speaks as protagonist of the Prince. Anthony Barnett (AB) represents those criticising the Prince. The extract shows the IR's initial questions to each IE and the initiation of an IE–IE confrontation, as indicated by arrows.

---

[1] Schegloff (1988/1989) shows in detail how the sequential positioning of Dan Rather's (IR) and George Bush's (IE) turns construct these as hostile interruptions and thus the interaction as an IR–IE confrontation. From Greatbatch's analyses (1992), though, it seems that IE–IE disagreements, however, do not have to be positioned *interruptively* to be heard as aggravated disagreements, perhaps because of the alleviation of the IR's mediation and mitigation that results from IEs' positioning of disagreements right after co-IEs' turns.

(2)   (Newsnight: Prince Charles)

```
1      IR:    .hhh well with us in the studio now >(director)<
2             anthony ba:rnett >(and)< joining us from manchester
3             the architect rod hackney who: uh: has had a close
4             association with the prince of wales
5  →          .hhh (rod) hackney ↑what .hhh (.) right: does
6  →          this .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged
7  →          individua:l ha:ve: to: (0.2) take e:-w- advantage
8  →          of his position to expose his political views?
9             (0.6)
10     RH:    every right (0.2) he: i:s a citizen of the
11            country, .hhh he know:s that he hol:ds uh:
12            a lot of respect in the country, .hhh and when he fee:ls that
13            he needs to speak out he know:s that a lot of people
14            will listen to him .hhh (0.5) anybody in that sort
15            of position, hh who feel:s .hh strongly about a
16            cau:se would use their position to advocate their
17            ↑cau:se
18 →   IR:    anthony barnett what do you make of that
19 →          justification=
20     AB:    =we:ll (.) uh: we're subjects here jeremy
21            none of us are citizens uh (.) just uh: on a
22            technicality .hhh I think there are: e-a number of
23            problems >here< one of them is that: .hhh uhm: I
24            do:nt like being forced be-to chose between (.) .hhh
25            a prime minister who pretends he's a monarch
26            (.)
27            (72 lines omitted)
28            (.)
29     AB:    but (.) the (.) ↑real problem I can put it this way
30            .hhh is that: (1.0) this is a- one of the: great
31            issues of our time (.) there's no doubt about that=
32 →   RH:    =and therefore a great [pers[on should [b-bring
33 →   AB:                          [.hhh[a:nd-     [and- no:
34 →   RH:    it bring it] to the table of ↑views]
35 →   AB:    he's not a] g:reat:  p(h)e:rson   ] you were jus-
36 →          ↑first you were saying he was a citizen .hhh now
37 →          you're saying he's a great person .hhh just let
38 →          [me finish my juST LET ME FINISH JUST LET ME
39 →   RH:    [well I-I-I mean great in stature his
40 →   AB:    FINISH my argument here uh-uh-uh ↑you can]
41 →   RH:    position     in life takes   a   great person   ]
42 →   AB:    contradict yourself let me- but don't:=
43     ??:    hhhh=
44 →   AB:    =interrupt me. hhh the: point I'm trying to make
45            here .hh is that: (1.5) we: (.) ought to be having
46            this debate f:o:r ou:rse:lves ... (continues)
```

In lines 5–8 of the transcript the IR opens the studio talk with a challenging question to the first interviewee: "(rod) hackney ↑what .hhh (.) right: does this .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged individua:l ha:ve: to: (0.2) take e:-w- advantage of his position to expose his political views?" In lines 10–11, RH meets the challenge with the strong counter, "every right", whereby he immediately establishes his position on the issue as a strongly sustained position for which he accounts in the following response: "he: i:s a citizen of the country …"

Having elicited one IE's position, the IR in lines 18–19 turns to the second IE inviting him to disagree with the prior: "anthony barnett what do you make of that justification." Taking up the invitation to disagree, AB in lines 20–24 constructs his counter as a formal correction of RH' use of the category "citizen". With the characterisation "just uh: on a technicality" in lines 21–22, AB designs the correction to be heard as a preamble after which he initiates a list of rebuttals on a more general level with the preliminary "I think there are: e-a number of problems >here<." Like RH's prior position, AB's position now develops through the rebuttal of the opposing position invited by the IR's mediating question.

The next few turns at talk are occupied with the IR's follow-up challenges and both IEs' responses to the challenges. They have been omitted from the transcript in order to reach the point at which AB's ongoing response is interrupted by RH's direct counter. In lines 30-31, AB projects more talk to follow with the phrase "this is a- one of the: great issues of our time (.) there's no doubt about that." In line 32, RH interjacently launches the candidate completion to AB's preliminary: "and therefore a great person should b-bring it bring it to the table of ↑views." During the production of RH's counter, AB aborts his projected line of talk to emphatically counter RH's turn "and- no: he's not a g:reat: p(h)erson" followed by a direct attack on RH for inconsistency in the line of argumentation. At the possible completion of AB's accusation, RH in line 38 launches a defence which AB resists with a direct accusation of RH for interrupting delivered in increased volume: "just let me finish my juST LET ME FINISH JUST LET ME FINISH my argument here uh-uh-uh ↑you can contradict yourself let me- but don't interrupt me." In the clear of RH's overlapping talk and having completed his direct attack on RH for contradicting himself and interrupting, AB in line 44 resumes his line of argument: "the: point I'm trying to make here."

With the IEs' interjacently placed counters and direct address of the co-IE, the sequence is constructed as a confrontation (Schegloff, 1988/1989; Greatbatch, 1992). The sequence does not adhere to the provisions of the turn-taking system for the news interview maintaining the IR as the mediator and primary addressee of IEs' talk and preallocating activities and tasks to the participants (Greatbatch, 1992). Instead the confrontation is underpinned by a conversational turn-taking system where the type and position of participants' turns are locally negotiated (Sacks et al., 1974; Schegloff, 1988/1989).[2] The participants do not display any orientation to the

---

[2] A detailed account of IE–IE confrontation is beyond the scope of this paper. However, another example of IE–IE confrontation can be shown to support the claim that occurrence of confrontation in the debate interview is regular and unsanctioned.

At each of the first four arrowed turns (lines 4, 6, 12 and 16) the IEs place a counter argument interjacently during the co-IE's turn and address it directly to the co-IE. The arrow in line 18 points to the turn where AL engages in a response to CK's challenging question issued during CK's previous interjacently placed counters. Finally in line 28 and 30, the IR initiates an exit from the confrontation and a temporary closing of the studio talk to give room to a filmed reportage. (Despatch Box: Tuition Fees)

```
1        IR:            [b't-b't don't you automatically almost
2        IR:       (    to [say     ) every [action oppose the]
3        AL:            [what ↑charles ( [
4 →      CK:                           [↑a:ndre:w a:ndrew]
5        IR:       government whereas [the- the] liberal democrats are
```

sanctionable character of the confrontation, and a temporary exit from the confrontation is not initiated by the IR, but by one IE's claim of an ordinary conversationalist's right to complete an initiated turn at talk without interruption. Further, the IE–IE confrontation arises on a background of the IR's challenging questions that from the outset of the interaction polarise the IEs' positions. As this breach from the turn-taking system for the news interview is achieved in part through the IR's use of challenging questions and not sanctioned, I will suggest that the investigated type of panel interview cannot be adequately described by one single underlying turn-taking system, but rather by two turn-taking systems that are normatively invoked at different stages in the interaction. The term *debate interview* refers to the organisation of the investigated interaction as incorporating confrontational as well as news interview talk.

Having attempted to show that the sequences of IE–IE confrontation is organised by a conversational turn-taking system, the analysis will now turn to the sequences underpinned by a turn-taking system for the news interview. The following sections will investigate the grammatical and lexical design as well as the sequential position of IRs' first challenges to each IE in an attempt to show how IRs' challenges are constructed to polarise IEs' positions and elicit IE–IE confrontation while adhering to the provisions of the turn-taking system for the news interview.

4. IRs' challenges as expressions of criticism of IEs' positions

IRs minimally challenge IEs with turns that express a criticism of IEs' positions. Previous studies of IRs' questions in news interviews have examined how these can be employed for IRs' exerting of pressures on the IE by challenging him or her with a hostile question content

```
 6 →   CK:              [come o:n]
 7      IR:    prepared to accept when they do something ↑right
 8      IR:    >isn't< that adult p↑olitics
 9             (.)
10      AL:    (↑wull) we do that as well from time to time actually
11             ther-.hhh ↑when you go ups:tairs.hh [(into)
12 →   CK:                                          [(name the last
13      AL:    committees .hh] when you go upstairs into committees
14      CK:    thing you did  ]
15      AL:    and [I will ask- .hhh]
16 →   CK:         [name the last ti]me you did that on the floor of
17      CK:    the house=
18→    AL:    =[on the- on the floor on the] floor [of the
19      CK:    =[apart from northern ireland]      [apart from
20      AL:    house]
21      CK:    north]ern ireland
22             (.)
23      CK:    name the last thing [you (did)]
24      AL:                        [well: a-  ] actually as it ha:ppens:, .hh uh
25             northern ireland victims remain's bill ↑was in fact the last
26             time=cuz it was only: uh ↑yesterday as I remember, when we:
27             [did t]hat:
28 →   IR:    [right]
29             (.)
30 →   IR:    .hh gentlemen (.) I'm sorry (.) we have to leave it
31             there we can continue the argument late:r but uh for
32             the moment, open decent .hhh from labour back
33             benchers has been rare since mister blair came to
34             power . . . (continues)
```

(Heritage and Roth, 1995; Heritage, 2002, 2003). In the examination of IRs' challenges in news interviews, IEs' objections or attributions of controversial propositions to IRs personally show an orientation to the turn-taking system for the news interview and display that the challenges have not managed the balance between hostility and neutralistic questioning required by IRs.

(3)   [BBC TV Newsnight: 1991] (Heritage, 2002:1434)

```
1        IR:     .hh Right. (.) Okay. S:o (0.2) you have loose cannon:s.
2                (0.2) on your deck ju:st (.) as you rightly say a:ll
3                parties have .hh But if we generously put this do:wn
4                to (.) over exuberance. (0.2) tch. .hh (.) doesn't that
5                suggest that your party is still: (0.2) immatur:e. (0.3)
6                irresponsible (.) undisciplin:ed h (0.2) unserious.
7  →     IE:     Well, (0.2) prove tha:t.
8                (0.6)
9  →     IE:     <You made th'proposition,> (0.2) propose it to me.=
```

The IE's response in lines 7 and 9 treats the IR's challenge as a direct accusation by attributing the critical description of the IE's party in lines 4–6 to the IR personally and by issuing the counter challenge, ''Well, (0.2) prove tha:t'', which abandons the IE's institutional task of answering the IRs' questions. The IR's challenge thus sets off a break down of the institutional interaction maintaining the IR as the questioner and the IE as the answerer of the IR's questions.

In the debate interview, IRs' initial questions to each IE generally incorporate a criticism of the IE's position similar to the criticism in the IR's challenge in ex. (3) (see section 5 for an account of the significance of the interrogative design for the assertiveness of IRs' hostile question propositions). These challenges seem designed to be rejected. However, debate IEs' responses do not attribute the critical proposition to the IRs personally or in any other way treat it as a breach of IRs' normative conduct. Rather IRs' challenging questions in the debate interview set off IEs' answers as highly argumentative accounts for their positions and thereby seem constructed to polarise IEs' positions as a move towards IE–IE confrontation. Three examples of how IRs construct the criticism of IEs' positions will be provided. As noted, the IR's first question in extract (2) (reproduced in lines 5-8 of extract (4) below) sets off a highly argumentative answer from RH by expressing a critical stance towards the Prince of Wales: ''↑what .hhh (.) right: does this .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged individual:l ha:v:e to: (0.2) take e:w:-advantage of his position to expose his political views?'' As the IR in lines 3–4 has established RH's position in the argument by describing him as having ''had a close association with the prince of wales,'' the subsequent question challenges RH on his position as the protagonist of the Prince.

(4)   (Newsnight: Prince Charles)

```
1        IR:     .hhh well with us in the studio now >(director)<
2                anthony ba:rnett >(and)< joining us from manchester
3  →             the architect rod hackney who: uh: has had a close
4  →             association with the prince of wales
5  →             .hhh (rod) hackney ↑what .hhh (.) right: does
6  →             this .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged
7  →             individua:l ha:ve: to: (0.2) take e:-w- advantage
8  →             of his position to expose his political views?
9                (0.6)
```

```
10 →    RH:    every right (0.2) he: i:s a citizen of the
11             country, .hhh he know:s that he hol:ds uh:
12             a lot of respect in the country, .hhh and when he fee:ls that
13             he needs to speak out he know:s that a lot of people
14             will listen to him .hhh (0.5) anybody in that sort
15             of position, hh who feel:s .hh strongly about a
16             cau:se would use their position to advocate their
17             ↑cau:se
```

Rather than treating the IR's challenge as a departure from the activity of asking questions, RH in line 10 initiates the defence for his position with an answer to the interrogative part of the IR's turn: ''every right.''

Besides the criticism-by-proxy above, IRs' challenges can presuppose or imply criticisms of IEs' positions. In ex. (5) the IR's question in lines 1–3 describes Labour MP, Ben Bradshaw (BB), as a ''euro enthusiast'' and presupposes that his Party Leader, the Labour Prime Minister, has ''no intention'' of showing support to the Euro. The question's challenge thus lies in its critical presupposition and its implied proposition of an inconsistency between BB's position and the position of his Party Leader.

(5)   (Despatch Box: Euro)

```
1 →     IR:    ben bradshaw ↑does it disappoint you as a euro
2 →            enthusiast that the prime minister clearly has no
3 →            intention of leading from the front on the euro?
4 →     BB:    .hhh I don't think that's:: (.) true ann I mean I
5              think all he's do:ne is: to restate the government's
6              position which is it would be da:ft .hhh to join a
7              single currency no:w . . . (continues)
```

The challenge sets off BB's argumentative defence of his position following his initial disagreement in line 4 with the presupposition of the IR's challenge: ''.hhh I don't think that's:: (.) true ann''.[3] Further IRs' challenges can imply a criticism of the IE's position by expressing a stance in opposition to the stance taken by the IE. In extract (6), lines 4–7, the IR opens the studio talk with a challenge to the disabled Desi Gillespie (DG). The question challenges DG to accept the proposition that a certain category of disabled people, including DG, can be properly excluded from those receiving incapacity benefits. The challenge sets off DG's stance-taking answer initiated in line 9 which is continued by DG's account for his position: ''↑no I don't agree with that at a:ll? I: ha:ve: ay: pension because I paid . . .''

(6)   (Newsnight: Disabled)

```
1       IR:    .hhh >now we're not going to talk about the<
2              b:ro:ad ra:nge of reforms let's co:ncentrate on
3              sorting out this business (o'the) incapacity
```

---

[3] BB's address of the IR, *ann*, can be taken as a construction of BB's rejection of the question presupposition as heartfelt and thereby accounting for its problematic nature as not answering the question (Clayman, 1998). Thus I do not take BB's use of the address term as an attribution of the question presupposition to the IR in person, neither does BB object to the question.

```
4 →              benefits tonight .hhhh ↑desi gillespie ↑isn't it
5 →              (.) p:erfectly reasonable .hhh if you have your
6 →              own occupational pension you accordingly need
7 →              less incapacity benefit
8                (0.5)
9 →    DG:       .hhh ↑no I don't agree with that at a:ll? I:
10               have: ay: pension because I paid (.) (e)-into the
11               pension scheme ... (continues)
```

While IRs' expressions of a critical stance towards IEs' positions could be seen as a breach of IRs' formal neutrality as shown in ex. (3), the IEs in the above extracts (4), (5) and (6) treat these expressions of criticism as normative actions and do not object to them or abandon their role as respondents to IRs' challenges. Rather it seems that IEs treat IRs' challenges as *expectably* questions designed to be rejected and engage in answers and argumentative accounts for their own positions rather than in attacks on the IR. In the data corpus investigated in this study, no IE complaint of IRs' hostile questioning has been found. The following analysis will attempt to show how IRs' initial questions, although hostile and stance-taking, can avoid being heard by IEs as expressions of IRs' subjective opinions or beliefs. Focusing on the details of the grammatical and lexical design as well as the sequential position of IRs' challenges, the analysis will account for the ways in which IRs challenge IEs without overstepping the limits of IRs' normative conduct.

5. The interrogative design of IRs' challenges

Overwhelmingly IRs construct their first challenges to IEs, and particularly to the IE who is firstly addressed in the talk, through two uses of the yes/no-question format. Firstly, IRs use yes/no-question formats for challenges in which the criticism of the IE's position is presupposed rather than proposed. Secondly, IRs use negatively polarised yes/no-questions to enhance the assertiveness and confrontational character of challenges advancing a critical proposition.

Previous research on news interviews has shown that the yes/no-interrogative is a useful format for IRs' hostile or controversial questions (Heritage, 2002, 2003). In their simplest form, yes/no-questions call for a 'yes'- or 'no'-response to the question's proposition. A study of yes/no-questions in ordinary conversation shows that besides answering the question with a 'yes'- or 'no', a recipient may produce a response that does not provide a 'yes' or 'no' and does not confirm or reject the question proposition (Raymond, 2000). While both a 'yes'-answer and a 'no'-answer complies with the question in the type of response it calls for, the response that does not provide a 'yes' or 'no' does not comply with the type of response the question calls for. Accordingly the 'yes'- or 'no'-answer is termed a type conforming response and the response, which does not provide a 'yes' or 'no' is termed a type nonconforming response. In ordinary conversation, Raymond shows that there is a preference organisation involved in speakers' production of type conforming and type nonconforming responses to yes/no-questions. The type conforming response, whether it is a 'yes'- or a 'no'-answer, is constructed as a preferred response and the type nonconforming response is constructed as the dispreferred response. Structurally, the nonconforming type response marks the recipient's trouble with the yes/no-question. Whereas a type conforming response, even when it is a 'no'-answer, accepts the grounds or premises of the question, the recipient's production of a nonconforming type response displays his or her understanding that the question is somehow problematic. The type nonconforming response resets or reconstructs the conditions under which the response is forthcoming.

　　　　　　　　S. Emmertsen / Journal of Pragmatics 39 (2007) 570–591

If a nonconforming type response to a yes/no-question is a dispreferred and accountable action in ordinary conversation, it seems to be even more so in a news interview setting where the IR's formal task is that of asking questions and the IEs' that of answering them. The yes/no-question offers a formal criteria on which it is possible to determine whether a satisfactory answer has been provided: when it is a 'yes'- or a 'no' answer (Heritage, 2002). In news interviews as well as in the debate interview, this aspect of the yes/no-question makes it a resource for IRs' challenges. By limit-ing the range of formally satisfactory answers to 'yes' or 'no', the IR can constrain IEs to answer questions that they may have reasons not to want to answer. Formulating a challenge as a question beginning with 'do you think . . .?' or alternatively 'don't you think . . .?', the IR can press the IE to confirm or disconfirm a proposition that the IE may not want to comment on. In the news interview setting with its inbuilt normative expectations that IEs answer IRs' questions, the yes/no-question defines the range of satisfactory answers to 'yes' or 'no' and thus legitimises that the IR pursues a 'yes'- or 'no'- answer when it is not forthcoming. The IE who does not produce a type conforming response thus risks being held accountable for not answering the question, as well as being confronted with the IR's repeat of the question until the IE complies with a clear 'yes' or 'no' (Heritage, 2003).

The pressure that the yes/no-question exerts for a particular type of answer makes it useful for IRs' presuppositional challenges in the debate interview. As noted, presuppositional challenges are questions that incorporate premises that are critical towards or damaging for the IE. In extract (5) above, the IR challenges Labour MP, Ben Bradshaw (BB), with the presuppositional challenge "↑does it disappoint you as a euro enthusiast that the prime minister clearly has no intention of leading from the front on the euro?" Because the preferred type conforming "yes"- or "no" answer complies with and accepts the premises of the yes/no-question, this kind of presuppositional question becomes a dilemma-question to the IE. Whether BB answers 'yes' or 'no', he will subscribe to the damaging implications of the yes/no-question, i.e. that the "prime minister clearly has no intention of leading from the front on the euro". BB's response ".hhh I don't think that's:: (.) true ann" is a marked and strong rejection of the presupposition that sets off an argumentative account for the rejection in the following part of BB's response. Thus BB resets the conditions under which an answer is forthcoming and accounts for the lack of 'yes' or 'no' by pointing to the question's flawed premise. Similarly in extract (7) below the IR uses the yes/no-question format to elicit Conservative MP, Crispin Blunt's (CB), disagreement with the implied proposition that CB's position is inconsistent with his previous position.

(7)　　　(Despatch Box: Kosovo)

```
1        IR:    crispin blunt today was: uh: almost a statement of
2               achievement uh: sigh of relief >as it were that< the
3               war is over .hhhh y-ou in your time were extremely
4               critical of the tactics used by this government and
5               in fact you-you ca:lled for the resignation of
6               [the]-the (.) the chief of the defence (>staff<)
7        CB:    [mm]
8  →     IR:    .hhh do you ↑now (.) accept (0.5) that (what) mister
9               blair did was correct=that he actually used the
10              right tactics he got it right.
11              (0.4)
12 →     CB:    not in the terms that we: were told (0.5) was the
13              objective of the exercise on the twenty third of
14              march . . . (continues)
```

The IR's turn in lines 1–10 presses CB to accept a proposition that contradicts CB's previous position in opposition to the Government's handling of the war in Kosovo.[4] The IR's question in lines 8–10 is formulated as a yes/no-question, "do you ↑now (.) acc<u>e</u>pt (0.5) that . . ." and strongly proposes that the Government tactics previously criticised by CB have in fact succeeded: "he actually <u>u</u>sed the right tactics he got it r<u>i</u>ght." The question's proposition is supported by the IR's question preface in lines 1–6, where she contends that "the war is <u>o</u>ver". The question places CB in a situation where both type conforming responses to the question seem unsustainable: answering 'yes', CB will admit to having changed his position, but answering 'no' will maintain CB's critical position which has been made equally unsustainable through the IR's proving of the success of the Prime Minister (as "the war is <u>o</u>ver"). CB's response in lines 12–14 initiated with "n<u>o</u>t in the terms that we: were t<u>o</u>ld" rejects the presupposition that the Government tactics were correct because the war is over and specifies that his previous position was formed on (inadequate) information provided by the Government. CB thus accounts for any inconsistency in his position by claiming a change in his access to the relevant information. The IR's yes/no-question, then, challenges CB to ascribe to one of two equally unacceptable positions with a 'yes' or a 'no'-answer and elicits CB's 'blaming' of his political opponent.

5.1. IRs' use of negatively polarised yes/no-questions

While IRs use yes/no-question formats to press for IEs' 'yes'- or 'no'-answers to presuppositionally critical or 'dilemma' questions, they use negatively polarised yes/no-questions to press IEs for positive, confirming answers to hostile question propositions. In contrast with the yes/no-question, the negatively polarised yes/no-question not only limits the possible forthcoming answers to 'yes' or 'no', but specifically builds an expectation for a 'yes'-answer (Bublitz, 1981; Biber et al., 1999; Heritage, 2002, 2003). In choosing the negatively polarised yes/no-question format rather than the unmarked yes/no-question format, the IR shows that there are grounds for this particular polarisation and these grounds shape the expectations for a 'yes'-answer. In extract (6) above, the IR challenges Desi Gillespie (DG) with a question formatted as a negatively polarised yes/no-interrogative, "↑isn't it (.) p:<u>e</u>rfectly reasonable .hhh if you have your <u>o</u>wn occupational pension you acc<u>or</u>dingly need l<u>e</u>ss incapacity benefit" which DG responds to with a strong rejection: ".hhh ↑no I don't agr<u>ee</u> with that at a:ll?" It is through the pressing of the question format for a 'yes'-answer that the IR's turn achieves its effect as a challenge. By constraining DG to produce a 'yes'-answer to a proposition that a cut in DG's incapacity benefits is *p:<u>e</u>rfectly reasonable*, the IR confronts DG with the challenge of rejecting the proposition rather than simply answering a question. With a positively polarised yes/no-question as e.g. 'Desi gillespie is it perfectly reasonable if you have your own occupational pension you accordingly need less incapacity benefit?' the question would not assert a critical proposition but offer one and make a forthcoming 'no'-answer unproblematic.

IRs can thus use the negatively polarised yes/no-question format to make a rejecting response problematic and thereby challenge IEs to accept a question proposition that is clearly designed to be rejected. In extract (8) below, the IR challenges the Conservative MP, Andrew Lansley (AL),

---

[4] The IR's turn in lines 1–10 is a compound question consisting of a declarative question preface in lines 1–6 followed by an interrogative in lines 8–10. In an analysis of IRs' use of compound questions Heritage (2003) shows how these are useful for IRs' exerting of pressures on IEs because the question preface allows for the incorporation of critical or damaging question presuppositions and topicalisations. An increase in IRs' use of compound questions can thus index an increase in adversarialness in news interviews. However, in the data investigated in this study, IRs generally do not employ compound questions, but rather incorporate criticism and hostile presuppositions into the interrogative itself.

in a debate over the Conservatives' protests over the Liberal Democrats' 'selling out' to the
Labour Government.

(8)   (Despatch Box: Tuition Fee)

```
1          IR:     =.hhh >right< andrew lansley: obviously the tories
2                  have been making some hay about the situation in
3 →                scotland but ↑isn't it just: .hhh coalition politics
4 →                which is: (0.5) compromi:se that is that is how:
5 →                (0.5) by defi[nition you create a coalition]
6 →        AL:                  [.hhhhh well ↑no: it's it's    ] the
7                  sort of politics you get after >(a) proportional . . . (continues)
```

The IR's challenge in lines 1–5 comes across through the negatively polarised yes/no-question in
lines 3–5 proposing that the Liberal Democrats' position, for which the Conservatives have
criticised them, is in fact in line with the position that the Liberal Democrats can be formally
expected to take up: "but ↑isn't it just .hhh coalition politics." The negative interrogative format
presses for AL's 'yes'-answer, which will admit to the implicit accusation that the Conservatives
are wrong in their criticisms of the Liberal Democrats. Instead, AL in line 6 responds at a point
where the IR's turn is hearably incomplete with a disagreement-prefaced, emphatic ↑*no:* for
which he accounts in the following part of his elaborated response (omitted from the extract).

   In extract (9) below, the IR's negatively polarised yes/no-question proposes a negative
assessment of Labour politics as "labour rhetoric of-a-of cl:a:ss worry" to Labour MP, Phyllis
Starkey (PS). PS's response in line 4 disappoints the expectations for a 'yes'-answer and delivers
an emphatic rejection of the question proposition: "↑no it wasn't at all.

(9)   (Despatch Box: Rhetoric)

```
1 →        IR:     .hh phyllis starkey that wasn't just o:l:d labour
2 →                rhetoric >it was< .hhh rh-labour rhetoric of-a-of a
3 →                cl:a:ss worry wasn't it?
4 →        PS:     ↑no it wasn't at all it's-↑what this is about this
5                  uh: government announcement is about . . . (continues)
```

Note that the IR's negatively polarised yes/no-question in lines 1–3 takes the form of a tag-
question where the auxiliary "wasn't it" is placed at the end of the turn. In studies of IRs' use of
the negatively polarised yes/no-interrogatives for hostile questioning in news interviews,
Heritage (2002) makes a distinction between ordinary negatively polarised yes/no-questions
in which the auxiliary verb is placed at the beginning of the questioning turn as in extract (8)
"↑isn't it (.) p:erfectly reasonable. . . ,," and tag-questions that place the auxiliary verb after the
question proposition, as in extract (9), "it was . . . wasn't it?". In news interviews, IEs
systematically treat the two types of negatively polarised yes/no-questions differently. When
IRs' hostile questions are formatted as negatively polarised tag-questions, IEs respond to them as
questions to be answered. In contrast IRs' hostile negatively polarised yes/no-questions are
treated as stance-taking utterances that call for IEs' disagreement[5]:

---

[5] Also ex. (3) offers an example of an IR's negatively polarised yes/no-interrogative that is treated as an assertion by the
IE. However, in ex. (3) other turn design features such as the descriptions "immatur:e. irresponsible (.) undisciplin:ed h
(0.2) unserious" contributes to the turn's controversial and thus assertive character, whereas in ex. (10) it seems to be the
interrogative format in itself that constructs the turn as an assertion.

(10)   (US PBS Newshour: 22nd July 1985) (Heritage, 2003:75–76)

```
1 →   IR:   But isn't this (.) d-declaration of thuh state of
2            emergency:: (.) an admission that the eh South African
3            gover'ment's policies have not worked, an' in fact that
4            the um- United States ( ) administration's policy of
5            constructive engagement ( ) has not worked.
6 →   IE:   I do not agree with you .hhhh that the approach we have
7            taken (.) toward South Africa is- a is- an incorrect approach.
```

Note that the IE's disagreement initiated in line 6 does not include a 'yes'- or 'no'-answer to the question, but treats the prior as a statement of the IR's personal views.

In the debate interview, the distinction between negatively polarised yes/no-questions and negatively polarised tag-questions does not seem to be an issue for the participants. Rather, it seems that IEs are not just concerned with disagreeing with the negatively polarised yes/no-question but also with answering it as in extract (6). There DG responds to a hostile negatively polarised yes/no-question in which the auxiliary verb is placed initially "↑isn't it (.) p:erfectly reasonable .hhhh if you have your own occupational pension you accordingly need less incapacity benefit." However, DG's response treats the turn as a question while it explicitly disagrees with the question's proposition ("↑no I don't agree with that at a:ll?"). Although DG treats the prior as having made an assertion to be rejected, this assertion is not attributed to the IR and DG's initial emphatic 'no'-answer responds to the interrogative aspects of the prior. DG's 'no'-answer thus suggests that even negatively polarised yes/no-questions placing the auxiliary verb first are treated as questions to be answered. One possible explanation is the fact that the IR's challenging questions are hearably constructed to be rejected and many other design features such as lexicals are employed to render the questions their accusatory character.[6] When all other design features are obviously stance-occupying, the fine distinction between the two grammatical interrogative formats becomes perhaps less significant in practice. As already noted, IRs' questions are *designed* to express a criticism of IEs' positions and as such to take a stance. However, the fact that IRs' first turns are overwhelmingly formatted as yes/no-questions points to an orientation of IRs towards their task of, however challengingly, *asking questions.* IRs still do not *state* criticisms. The systematic interrogative construction of IRs' first challenges suggests that IRs' institutional tasks of asking questions in the achievement of a formally neutralistic stance is still a normative part of the IR's institutional identity.

Similarly, when IEs reject IRs' critical propositions, they do not attribute the proposition to the IR. DG's answer to the IR's challenge in extract (6) "↑no I don't agree with that at a:ll?" shows a distinction between answering the IRs' question and rejecting its propositional content. It thus seems that IRs' first challenges to the IEs express a critical stance, but the stance is not interpreted as an abandonment of the IRs' institutional neutrality. One possible explanation is that while IRs express even clearly hostile criticisms of IEs', these are not heard as expressions of the IRs' subjective views, but rather as formulations of an opposite position and most commonly as that of the co-IE. The analysis shall return to the question of whose stance IRs' challenges express later.

---

[6] Heritage (2002) argues that the distinction between the two negative yes/no-interrogative formats works off the different degrees to which their constructions incorporate a preference or press for a 'yes'-answer. Placing the auxiliary verb initially places the preference of the question across all of the turn that then becomes more assertive than the negative tag-question, which only constructs the preference of the turn with the concluding production of the tag. Hostile questions formatted as negatively polarised yes/no-interrogatives placing the auxiliary first are then heard to overstep the boundaries of questioning and embody a position or take a stance rather than to ask for information.

5.2. IRs' use of accusatory question formats

When IRs do not employ yes/no-question formats in the first challenges to IEs, they employ question formats that seem to perform accusations rather than questions. These are hostile accountability questions that, under the guise of calling for the addressee's account for a problematic position or event, imply that no such account can be given, as e.g. the question format 'how could you'. Studies of accountability questions in the news interview have shown that IEs systematically treat IRs' 'why'-questions as accountability questions in contrast with 'how can/could '-questions that are treated as accusations ascribing a highly problematic action to the IE rather than actually calling for an account (Wingard, 2002; Clayman and Heritage, 2002). In ex. (4) above, the IR uses the interrogative format "what .hhh (.) right: does this .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged individua:l ha:ve: to . . ." The format constructs the IR's turn as an accountability question calling for the IE's defence and explanation of the position ascribed to him by the questioning turn. Although the question format constructs the IR's turn as an interrogative asking for an account, the formulation 'what right', in the context of the derogatory descriptions of the Prince of Wales, implies that indeed he has no right. However, providing such an answer would establish a back down by the IE, who instead treats the IR's turn as an accountability question with the extreme case formulation, "every right." Similarly, in ex. (11) below the IR uses an accountability question to challenge the Conservative MP, Peter Ainsworth's (PA), opposition to the Labour Party's appointment of a known Labour supporter as Director General of the BBC.

(11)   (Newsnight: Greg Dyke 2)

```
1 →    IR:      ↑why is it legitimate for you:
2               conservatives to appoint (.) ay (.) known
3               conservative as h- .hhh u-chairman of the bbc but
4               not arright fo:r .hhh ay: ↑him to appoint? .hhh a
5               labour supporter [as director general]
6 →    PA:                      [.h h h h h h h h] yeah but-th-
7               I-the- (.) I'm afraid your film missed an important
8               ↑point .hhh . . . (continues)
```

In lines 1–5 the IR's question calls for PA's account for the Conservatives' criticisms of Labour for an action the Conservatives are described as having done in the past. The question describes PA's position as clearly inconsistent with his Party's prior actions and in asking "why" this position "is legitimate" the question obtains a character as unanswerable, i.e. as an accusation rather than as a question. The implication is that PA's position is *not* legitimate. PA's response initiated in line 6 is in effect a counter accusation ascribing the accusation to the preceding cue material: ".hhhhhhhhh yeah but-th-I-the- (.) I'm afraid your film missed an important ↑point .hhh."

The question formats *what right* and *why is it legitimate*, then, suggest that the IE will not be able to provide the account called for and thus construct the questioning turn as embodying a critical or hostile stance towards the IEs. Like 'How could you' these formats seem to belong to a standard repertoire of formulaic question formats that can be used in a range of settings to perform accusations. Again, while these turns are clearly accusatory, the formats are grammatically interrogative and provides minimally for the IR's achievement of the formal task of asking questions. Their employment in IRs' first turns addressed to the IEs is a means for IRs to

construct questions that elicit IEs' first turns in the debate interview as contrastive and counter-argumentative formulations of their positions and thus as a means to polarise IEs' positions from the outset of the talk.

The following examination of the lexical design and sequential position of IRs' challenges that are not formatted as questions will further explore how IRs can achieve the polarisation of IEs' positions while adhering to the norms of formal neutrality.

6. IRs' use of derogatory descriptions

Apart from assertive or accusatory interrogative formats, IRs achieve the challenging nature of their first challenges through the use of derogatory descriptions to form the critical proposition of the turn. In ex. (4) above the IR describes the Prince of Wales as an ''unelected uniquely privileged individua:l'' seen to ''take e:-w- advantage of his position to expose his political views.'' The IR thus employs not just one but a range of clearly derogatory descriptions to form a highly tendentious and critical description of the Prince and, by proxy, of the IE's position as protagonist of the Prince. Generally, IRs construct their challenges through tendentious and derogatory descriptions, and with no attribution of these descriptive terms to another party, they seem to express the IR's stance. However, preceding the interview concerning Prince Charles, from which the challenge in ex. (4) is taken, a piece of cue material has introduced the interview issue as a matter of dispute as well as it has portrayed the main arguments on each side. The latter half of the cue material featured the critics of the Prince's public warning. Extract (12) is a type-up of the voiced report, and the arrows indicate an attempt to pin down the original source of the argument proposed by the IR's challenge.

(12)   (Prince Charles/Cue material: Reporter (RR) to camera)

```
1        RR:     he ↑might be right about many things .hh but why
2 →              on ea:rth are we listening to him? .hh no one ever
3 →              voted for mister windsor .hhh nothing he says
4                breaks new ↑ground .hh and his arguments are
5                frankly .h a little woolly .hhh but every time he
6                opens his mouth the wo:rld s:tops to hear what he
7                has to say .h ↑why:? (.) su:rely in nineteen
8 →              ninety nine it shouldn't take royal intervention
9                .hh to put an issue on the map (0.5) .hh the
10→              problem i:s .hh that the more we look to the royal
11→              family to put us right .hh the less we expect .hh
12→              of the people who are supposed to r-represent us
13               .hh prince charles' interventions are dangerous
14               .hh for the very reason that they're so relevant
15→              .hh every time he opens his mouth .hh the
16→              democratic cords are set back by yea:rs ... (continues)
```

Following right after this cue material, the IR's challenge in extract (4) emerges as a formulation of the most proximate position portrayed previous to the interview. Supported by the deictic reference in line 2 of extract (4) (''**this** .hhh (.) unelected uniquely privileged individua:l''), the IR is constructing the tendentious description as a passing of the opponent's position as it was

S. Emmertsen / Journal of Pragmatics 39 (2007) 570–591

portrayed in the cue material. As a means to avoid personal responsibility for the position voiced, the IR's pass of the cue material represents a footing shift (Goffman, 1981; Clayman, 1992; Clayman and Heritage, 2002). The pass of the prior position is a device used to maintain a stance of neutrality while giving voice to controversial positions or opinions. In ex. (13), (14) and (15) the IRs' challenges employing openly tendentious and derogatory descriptions are similarly constructed as declarative passes of the co-IE's prior turn(s) or formulations of an opponent's position.

(13)   (Newsnight: Naturism)

```
1        RW:      (1.8) ((open mouth)) I ↑think h and e is a magazine
2 →               <on the r:un(hhh)> it's: u:hm been bringing naturism
3 →               into disrepute for thirty yea:rs (.) .hhhh too many
4                 ha:rd bodies(hh) (1.0) too many sexy stories(hh)
5                 too many sexy contact adds .hhh ↑ye[:s   ]
6        IR:                                        [okay] well
7                 [lets-]
8        RW:      [but I] ↑wouldn't accept that as being naturism in
9                 any sense in the sense that we understand it.=
10       IR:      =arright [((thank you)]
11       RW:              [t h i s  i s  ] .hhhh[hhhhhh]
12 →     IR:                                    [mister] nisbet you're
13 →              bringing naturism into disrepute
14 →     MN:      smt.hhhhh well these are familiar sort of u-angles
15 →              of attack from somebody like rex watson . . .(continues)
```

The extract is taken from a debate on Naturism between Rex Watson (RW) and Mark Nisbet (MN). In lines 12–13 the IR constructs his first challenge in the interview addressed to MN with a statement formatted turn accusing MN of ''bringing naturism into disrepute.'' MN in lines 14–15 rejects the accusation as ''familiar sort of u-angles of attack from somebody like rex watson.'' The IR's tendentious and strongly formulated description of MN's position is thus treated as a pass of the opponent's prior turn in lines 2–3, where RW describes the magazine MN is editor of with the phrase ''bringing naturism into disrepute.'' By employing this phrase to describe MN in person, the IR can confront MN with RW's position and aggravate the conflict between them while not being heard as expressing his own stance on the issue. While IRs in panel interviews can be seen to employ invitations to IEs to disagree with the co-IE's prior turn[7] (Olsher, forthcoming), the pass of the co-IE's position elicits the disagreement directly. Because passes are constructed as passes of the co-IE's words and at the same time designed to be rejected, they instigate rather than invite IE–IE disagreement and can be seen as a central means in the movement towards IE–IE confrontation. Extract (14) and (15) are further examples of how the IEs treat IRs' derogatory descriptions as passes of the opponent's position.

---

[7] One example of an invitation to disagree is found in ex. (2) where the IR following the first IE's turn addresses the second IE with ''anthony barnett what do you make of that justification?'' However the turn is formulated to enhance the polarisation of IEs positions (e.g. the word *justification* constructs the co-IE's prior turn as a defence), the turn is an invitation to AB to disagree with the prior but is not in itself constructed to be rejected or as a pass of RH's prior turn.

(14)   (Newsnight: Greg Dyke)

```
1        IR:       .hhh well gerald kaufmann you also know the bbc
2                  intimately: .hhh uhm ↑don't you think there's a
3                  problem that yo-everything will be seen through the
4  →               prism of being .hh a-a breakfast partner of: gordon
5  →               brown or friend of tony blair's or someone's (who's
6                  past) given fifty five thousand pounds?
7                  (0.5)
8  →     GK:       ↑did (.) william hague say: tha:t eh-u-at the
9  →               cabinet meetings .hh when they decide:d >the
10                 conservative . . . (continues)
```

(15)   (Newsnight: Gay Rights)

```
1        PT:       ....hhh change society in way:s which .hhh >↑not
2                  only address the< conce:rns .hh of lesbian and ↑gay
3                  people .hh but also promote a wi:de human rights
4                  agenda for everyone .hhh so we make the gay rights
5                  an agenda .hh a human rights agenda .hh for the
6                  whole of society
7  →     IR:       smt.hhh ivan massow uhm (0.5) gay people who are
8  →               comfortable have let other: .hhh gay people ↑down
9  →               people like you who are comfortable in business and
10→                not political have let .hh people like peter tatchell
11→                ↑down
12 →     IM:       .hhh uhm (0.4) although I v-support peter in many
13 →               respects I'd have to disagree with him strongly . . . (continues)
```

In extract (14), IR describes Labour supporter Greg Dyke as ''-a breakfast partner of: gordon brown or friend of tony blair's'' and challenges Labour Minister, Gerald Kaufmann (GK), to defend Greg Dyke's appointment as BBC Director General. GK responds with an attack on the Conservatives ''↑did william hague say: tha:t eh-u-at the cabinet meetings .hh when they decide:d >the conservative..'' GK is thus treating his opponent in the debate interview, represented by a Conservative MP, as the source of the criticism of the appointment. Similarly in ex. (15) the IR challenges Ivan Massow (IM) by describing him as someone who is ''comfortable in business and not political'' who ''have let .hh people like peter tatchell ↑down''. IM in lines 12–13 rejects the accusation by attributing it to his opponent IE, ''although I v-support peter in many respects I'd have to disagree with him strongly.''

In all three extracts, (13), (14) and (15), then, the IRs' challenges using tendentious or derogatory descriptions are treated as expressing the stance of the opponent rather than the IRs' subjective stance towards the or matter person described. While the IRs' turns are not formatted as questions which could compensate for the stance-taking action of the derogatory descriptions, the derogatory descriptions as well as the turn's sequential position after the opponent IE's turn or after a cue material voicing an opposing position seem to construct IRs' declarative criticisms as passes of an opponent's position. In ex. (13), the IR repeats descriptive phrases from the co-IE's prior turn. The repeat marks the descriptions as a formulation of a previously expressed viewpoint and points to the source of the viewpoint (Antaki and Leudar, 2001). However, in ex.

(14) and (15) the IRs' descriptions are *not* repeats of the co-IE's or others' prior used words or phrases. With the lack of repeat the descriptions are not marked as a formulation of a previously expressed viewpoint. Rather, it seems to be the exaggerated and tendentious character of the derogatory descriptions that makes these be heard by the IEs as expressing the opponent's position. One resource for this maintenance of IRs' formal neutrality seems to be the cue material preceding the studio talk. As the filmed reportage introduces the main arguments of the opposite positions on the issue, they can be heard as the source of IRs' derogatory descriptions in the opening challenge to the firstly addressed IE. Further, when IRs employ declarative formats for their first challenges, these are positioned as a challenge to the secondly addressed IE, following the first IE's turn, where the declarative turn can be more readily heard as a pass of the co-IE's prior turn. The employment of highly derogatory descriptions in these declarative challenges, then, seems to be a resource to mark the declarative turn as a pass of the prior turn. The distribution of IRs' interrogative and declarative challenges again suggests that IRs' turns are constructed in a way that avoids them being heard as expressions of IRs' subjective opinions and as a means to maintain IRs' formal neutrality. The preceding and initial establishment of two polarised positions becomes an overall resource for this maintenance, because IRs' expressions of criticisms are produced in the context of two oppositional sides that allows IRs' challenges to be heard as expressions of either of these sides unauthored by the IRs.

7. Ritual hostility and formal neutrality

The regularity of the described features of IRs' first challenges to IEs, i.e. the assertive or accusatory question formats and the exaggerated and tendentious character of IRs' derogatory descriptions in interrogative as well as in declarative turns constructs the confrontational character of the debate interview as a ritualistic and not *substantial* nor personally motivated hostility. As IRs' first question to IEs on both sides to the dispute challenge their positions with these means of hostility, the hostility is not locally occasioned but a standard part of the interaction. Hostility and confrontation are thus merely the form or the game of the interaction, and IEs' positions are not necessarily more substantially challenged in the debate interview than in the news interview. The seemingly equal distribution of hostility, i.e. the fact that IRs address all IEs with hostile questions, contributes to the ritualistic character of the hostility and signals an intended fairness in the treatment of both sides to the dispute. Adding to this the fact that IRs' challenges, however accusatory, are formatted as interrogatives or, when declarative in form, designed as passes of the opponents' viewpoint, IRs seem to still orient to a norm of formal neutrality that constrains them to asking questions and not express their subjective opinions. Although the hostility of IRs' turns seems to constitute a breach from the norm of neutrality, the details of the construction of hostility thus show that the norm is not suspended but being interpreted differently in these debate interviews than in news interviews. Globally, the IRs' hostility polarises the IEs' positions and the confrontation of the two opposing sides can be seen to construct the debate interview as a balanced news representation of the issue. Balance, objectivity and neutrality is thus interpreted as IE–IE confrontation.

8. Conclusion

In summary, then, this analysis has attempted to account for a particular form of news representation, the British debate interview. As the data investigated is recorded recently from

two evening programmes, of which one, Newsnight, is a central political broadcast on BBC2, the analysis has suggested that the data represent a particular type or genre of news interview. Considering previous studies' thorough account of British news interviews in the past 20 years, including those on the programme Newsnight, as *news interview interaction,* the analysis of the present Newsnight and Despatch Box interactions suggests that the debate interview may be one emerging genre of the panel interview. The analysis has tried to show how the genre is characterised by IRs' use of challenges to polarise IEs' positions and how this polarisation leads to sequences of IE–IE confrontation. The IE–IE confrontation is accomplished through IEs' positioning of counter turns interjacently during co-IE's turns while the turns are addressed directly to the co-IE instead of to the IR. IE–IE confrontation, then, does not adhere to the provisions of the turn-taking system for the news interview that constructs the IR as mediator and primary addressee of all IE talk. The analysis of the construction of IRs' first questions to each IE has attempted to show that these are designed to polarise IEs' positions and thereby elicit the IE–IE confrontation. However, while IE–IE confrontation is organised by a conversational turn-taking system leaving the type and position of each turn to be negotiated locally, the analysis has suggested that IRs' first questions still adhere to the norms of formal neutrality inherent in the turn-taking system for the news interview. The debate interview thus seems to be characterised by two turn-taking systems invoked in different stages of the debate interview as an emerging form of news representation where the legally demanded formal neutrality of the broadcasting service is achieved through confrontation between participants that are not representing the broadcaster. The criticism and controversy that is a crucial aspect of IRs' formal neutrality in news interviews is 'outsourced' to the IEs in debate interviews and this outsourcing can be seen as an attempt to protect IRs and broadcasters against accusations of bias. The emergence of the debate interview in Britain is perhaps only part of a general development in the media towards confrontation. The conversational turn-taking of IE–IE confrontation can be seen as part of a more general conversationalisation of public discourse as well as the mass media where conversational patterns of discourse, in e.g. advertisements, docu-soaps and talk shows enhance the liveliness, playfulness and spontaneity of the discourse to attract costumers and viewers (Tolson, 1991; Fairclough, 1994; Scannell, 1996). From a historical perspective the conversationalisation of public discourse can be seen as a result of the revived oral and democratic culture that electronic media has reinvoked in contrast with the until 1950s dominant written, literate culture of Western societies that had overtaken the oral culture of antique and early societies (Ong, 1982). Part of the oral culture is antagonism and conflict. Whether the rise of confrontation in news interview should be seen as a sign or a result of a cultural evolution initiated with the advent of electronic media, journalists and academics have noted an increase in conflict as a method to install IRs' formal neutrality and news reporters' objectivity particularly in US media (Hoyt, 1995; Bishop, 1997; Tannen, 1998). The present study contributes to this understanding of confrontation in its suggestion that confrontation underpinned by a conversational turn-taking system is elicited *as a result* of IRs' *work* to careful design formally neutral confrontational questions in British debate interviews.

Acknowledgment

References

Antaki, Charles, Leudar, Ivan, 2001. Recruiting the record: using opponents' exact words in Parliamentary argumentation. Text 21 (4), 467–488.

Atkinson, J. Maxwell, Heritage, John (Eds.), 1984. Structures of Social Action. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Biber, Douglas, Johansson, Stig, Leech, Geoffrey, Conrad, Susan, Finnegan, Edward, 1999. Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English. Longman, London.

Bishop, Ed, 1997. Doing journalism to 'Public Journalism'. St. Louis Journalism Review (March), 10–11.

Bublitz, Wolfram, 1981. Conducive yes/no-questions in English. Linguistics 19, 851–870.

Clayman, Steven E., 1988. Displaying neutrality in television news interviews. Social Problems 35 (4), 474–492.

Clayman, Steven E., 1992. Footing in the achievement of neutrality: the case of news interview discourse. In: Drew, P., Heritage, J. (Eds.), Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 163–198.

Clayman, Steven E., 1998. Some uses of address terms in news interviews. Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communications Association, San Francisco.

Clayman, Steven E., Whalen, Jack, 1988/1989. When the medium becomes the message: the case of the Rather-Bush encounter. Research on Language and Social Interaction 22, 241–272.

Clayman, Steven E., Heritage, John, 2002. The News Interview. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

Day, Robin, 1961. Television: A Personal Report. Hutchinson, London.

Day, Robin, 1975. Day by Day. William Kimber, London.

Fairclough, Norman, 1994. Conversationalization of public discourse and the authority of the consumer. In: Keat, R., Whitely, N., Abercrombie, N. (Eds.), The Authority of the Consumer. Routledge, London, pp. 253–268.

Goffman, Erving, 1981. Forms of Talk. University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia.

Greatbatch, David, 1988. A turn-taking system for the British news interview. Language in Society 17 (3), 401–430.

Greatbatch, David, 1992. On the management of disagreement between news interviewees. In: Drew, P., Heritage, J. (Eds.), Talk at Work: Interaction in Institutional Settings. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 268–301.

Heritage, John, 1985. Analyzing news interviews: aspects of the production of talk for an overhearing audience. In: van Dijk, T.A. (Ed.), Handbook of Discourse Analysis, vol. 3. Academic Press, London, pp. 95–117.

Heritage, John, 2002. The limits of questioning: negative interrogatives and hostile question content. Journal of Pragmatics 34 (10–11), 1427–1446.

Heritage, John, 2003. Designing questions and setting agendas in the news interview. In: Glenn, P., LeBaron, C., Mandelbaum, J. (Eds.), Studies in Language and Social Interaction. Erlbaum, Mahwah, NJ.

Heritage, John, Roth, Andrew, 1995. Grammar and institution: on questions and questioning in broadcast news interviews. Research on Language and Social Interaction 28 (1), 1–60.

Hoyt, Mike, 1995. Are you now or will you ever be, a civic journalist. Columbia Journalism Review (September/October), 27–33.

Olsher, David, forthcoming. Inviting interplay in panel format news interviews.

Ong, Walter, 1982. Orality and Literacy: The Technologizing of the Word. Methuen & Co., London.

Pomerantz, Anita, 1984. Agreeing and disagreeing with assessments: Some features of preferred/dispreferred turn shapes. In: Atkinson, J.M., Heritage, J. (Eds.), Structures of Social Action: Studies in Conversation Analysis. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 57–110.

Raymond, Geoffrey, 2000. The structure of responding: type conforming and nonconforming responses to yes/no-type interrogatives. Unpublished Ph.D.-dissertation, UCLA.

Sacks, Harvey, Schegloff, Emanuel A., Jefferson, Gail, 1974. A simplest systematics for the organization of turn-taking for conversation. Language 50 (4), 696–735.

Scannell, Paddy, 1992. Public service broadcasting and modern public life. In: Scannell, P., Schlesinger, P., Sparks, C. (Eds.), Culture and Power. Sage, London, pp. 317–348.

Scannell, Paddy, 1996. Radio Television and Modern Life. Blackwell, Oxford.

Schegloff, Emanuel A., 1988/1989. From interview to confrontation: observations on the Bush/Rather encounter. Research on Language and Social Interaction 22, 215–240.

Tannen, Deborah, 1998. The Argument Culture: Changing the Way we Argue. Virago Press, New York.

Tolson, Andrew, 1991. Televised chat and the synthetic personality. In: Scannell, P. (Ed.), Broadcast Talk. Sage, London, pp. 178–200.

Wingard, Leah, 2002. Accountability questions in news interviews: a comparison of 'How can/could' versus 'why'. Paper given at the International Conference on Conversation Analysis, Copenhagen.

Sofie Emmertsen is Assistant Professor at the Centre for Rhetoric, University of Aarhus, DK, where she combines research on rhetorical argumentation with conversation analysis. Her PhD dissertation on institutional argumentation in British broadcast debate interviews investigated the rhetorical aspects of mediated confrontation. Sofie Emmertsen currently works on the assessment of argumentation through participants' orientation to normativity.