

Power Relations in Institutional Discourse: A Conversation Analytic Approach

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Abstract—Language is one of the dominant channels through which power can be exercised and struggled over during social interaction. In institutional discourse, power can interactionally be achieved and negotiated through the use of a variety of discursive resources at the disposal of discourse participants. This study employs a conversation analytic approach (CA) to data collection and analysis. The main objective of the study is to find out how power and control are exercised throughout the course of news interviews. Data analysis of a substantial extract from a BBC news interview with former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, revealed four discursive features of particular significance in terms of the management of power and control: questioning, interruption, topic-controlling, and formulation. These discursive control devices enable the interviewer to exercise power and control over the interviewee. The use of each of these discursive features is examined and the implications of the analysis for language teaching and learning are discussed.

Index Terms—institutional discourse, media interview, conversation analysis, power

I. INTRODUCTION

The news interview represents a common type of the media interview that makes up the news. Heritage (1985) defined the news interview as “a functionally specialized form of social interaction produced for an overhearing audience and restricted by institutionalized conventions” (p. 112). This type of institutionalized interaction is developed for varying purposes, including the gathering of information, accountability, questioning, and reporting of the voices of political or public figures (Abdulkadir, 2023; Bannink & Albaladejo, 2018; Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Ekstrom & Kroon, 2011; Jagtiani, 2012; Huls & Varwijk, 2011; Montgomery, 2008). Montgomery (2008) identified four main sub-types of the news interview based on the role and social identity of the interviewee as well as the kinds of questions asked. These four sub-genres are interviews with: (a) correspondents and reporters (affiliated interview), (b) ordinary people (experiential interview), (c) experts (expert interview), and (d) political or public figures (accountability interview). Accordingly, the news interview can be used for reporting, expressing opinions, explaining, and accounting (Montgomery, 2008).

The accountability interview calls “a public figure to account in relation to an issue or event of the moment either for their own deeds or words or for the actions/statements of the institution with which they are associated” (Montgomery, 2008, p. 262). The participants in the news interview are the interviewer, the interviewee, and the imagined overhearing audience (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Ekstrom & Kroon, 2011). It is worth mentioning that while news interviews in general, and the accountability sub-genre in particular, develop out of a news story, they “have the potential to feed into subsequent coverage—particularly by providing a topical resource in the form of quotation for a later news item” (Montgomery, 2008, p. 265). The present paper utilises conversation analysis of a substantial extract from a news interview with former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, to illustrate the dynamics of power and control in this common discourse genre. The following research questions guided the study: How does the interviewer exercise power over the interviewee and control over the interviewee’s contributions to the interview through language? What are the main discursive features?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. *Language and Power in News Interviews*

In the course of the news interview, the interviewer (host and conductor of the interview) and the interviewee (a political or public figure) typically compete by playing different institutionalised roles, each with his or her own commitment set. As a result, Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle and its four conversational maxims of quality (be true), quantity (be brief), relation (be relevant), and manner (be clear) are often purposely violated. Interview participants often intentionally flout some or all of these principles by using various discursive tools in order to meet their own needs. Among the distinctive aspects of the news interview discourse, the accountability sub-type in particular, is the control and power struggle it tends to involve. In his most often cited definition of power, Weber (1978) pointed out that the concept of power refers to “the probability that one actor within a social relationship will be in a position to carry out his own will despite resistance regardless of the basis on which this probability rests” (p. 53). According to Fairclough, power is “conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse

events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed in particular sociocultural contexts” (1995, p. 1).

Ekström and Stevanovic (2023) pointed out that the concept of social power encompasses two basic types: the power-to (what actors can do) and the power-over (actors’ influence over others). Whereas the former refers to actors’ “capacities to accomplish actions and make a difference”, the latter indicates actors’ “abilities to govern the situation and action of others” (Ekström & Stevanovic, 2023, p. 3). Obviously, language represents one of the dominant channels through which power can be exercised during social interaction. Power can be interactionally achieved and negotiated through the use of various discursive resources at the disposal of actors engaged in a particular discourse event. As argued by Ng and Bradac (1993), language has the capability to reveal, create, reflect, and depoliticizes power.

It is worth stressing that the nature of interviewing is inescapably asymmetrical in the sense that one person is solely responsible for beginning and ending the interview, choosing the topics, asking questions, and introducing new issues. The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee can be described as “negotiation of power” (Kress & Fowler, 1979, p. 63). As noted by Thornborrow (2002), “power is accomplished in discourse both on a structural level, through the turn and type of space speakers are given or can get access to, and, on an interactional level, through what they can effectively accomplish in that space” (p. 8). Interviewers may exercise power over interviewees due to the conversational possibilities at their disposal. For example, it is the interviewer who tends to drive what happens in the interview, plan, and control it. On the other hand, the interviewee might also use such oppositional devices as indirectness (implicitness), avoidance of confrontation, and manipulation of information. Evidence of these competing features can be revealed through careful examination of various linguistic choices made by interaction participants (Wenjie, 2019).

B. Conversation Analysis and Power

Conversation analysis (CA) has become an effective methodology for studying the nature of social interaction in institutional settings (Albert, 2017; Kasper & Wagner, 2014). An applied CA approach to analysing institutional discourse considers not language per se as its focus but rather how language can be used to exert power and control in social interaction (Hutchby, 2013; Sidnell, 2009). As noted by Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008), applied CA involves “an analysis of power, where power is viewed in terms of differential distributions of discursive resources which enable certain participants to achieve interactional effects that are not available, or are differentially available, to others in the settings” (pp. 216-217). Antaki (2011) identified six types of applied CA: foundational, social-problem-oriented, communicational, diagnostic, institutional, and interventionist. Institutional CA considers not only micro analysis of the interview in terms of turn-taking rules, adjacency pairs, and other conventions of interaction, but also their influence on the dynamics of interactional control and power. Ong et al. (2021) indicated that CA “provides a method for accessing power as a set of practices and normative orientations employed and negotiated in conversation, rather than an abstract concept” (p. 1219).

Thus, applied CA provides a useful analytical tool for understanding how power is “interactionally achieved” (Talmy, 2009, p. 206). As noted by Ekström and Stevanovic (2023), applied CA studies on power relations have increased recently, particularly in research on social interaction in institutional contexts (see, for example, Clayman & Heritage, 2021; Stephenson, 2020). This study utilises applied CA approach to data collection and analysis. The study’s main objective is to analyse how power is exercised and struggled over through language in the news interview.

III. DATA AND METHOD

A. Participants

- The interviewer (IR): Owen Bennett-Jones: journalist and BBC's announcer who conducted the interview as part of his then institutional role as a BBC's correspondent and presenter.
- The interviewee (IE): Kofi Annan, a political figure who held an institutional position at the time of the interview as Secretary-General of the United Nations. In 1997, Mr. Annan became Secretary-General of the United Nations. In 2001, he and the United Nations were awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for their ongoing work in global peace and cooperation. His second term began in 2002 and runs through the end of 2006.
- Imagined/overhearing audience that does not actively participate (covert participation), likely to be socially and politically diverse.

B. Setting and Purpose

The interview lasted for half an hour and took place on BBC World Service at UN headquarters in New York. It was broadcast on the 18th of September 2004. The purpose of the interview, in my view, was to reach a wide and general audience who witnessed the interview. One of the obvious purposes of the interview was to add to the already existing political discourse concerning some of the most contentious topics in politics at the time of the interview, such as the war on terror, the situation in Sudan, and the US-led war on Iraq. Thus, as with other news interviews, this accountability interview is cued by the surrounding news items.

C. The Data

As noted above, the text (see the appendix) I shall be analysing is a substantial extract from a news interview between Owen Bennett-Jones (IR henceforth) of the BBC World Service and the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan (IE henceforth). I obtained the excerpts used in this analysis from the BBC News website archives [accessed 20 March 2023]. Analysis covers a corpus of about 1,348 words sampled from this interview. This particular news interview was chosen because it, as noted in the Interview program Archive on the BBC website, was one of the Interview program's episodes that made the headlines at that time. After the interview aired, it formed the basis for widespread reports that Mr. Annan, the then UN Secretary-General, admitted for the first time that the US-led war on Iraq was illegal. By the next day, newspapers and news channels in the UK, the US and elsewhere carried headlines such as "Iraq war was illegal and breached UN charter, says Annan" (the Guardian), "U.N. Chief Ignites Firestorm by Calling Iraq War Illegal" (New York Times), "Annan: US invasion of Iraq was illegal" (Al-Jazeera Online), and "Iraq war illegal, says Annan" (BBC Online).

D. Analytical Framework

As previously stated, this study employs CA to explore power relations in institutional discourse. Data analysis of the news interview transcript reveals four discursive features of particular significance in terms of the management of power and control in this interview. These are: questioning (employing different question-answer sequences to enforce explicitness), interruption, topic-controlling, and formulation. These linguistic features seem to enable the IR to exercise power and control over his IE. On the other hand, the IE, while being required by his interactional role in the context of the interview to be accessible to the IR's interrogations, struggles to use ambiguity and ambivalence as discursive devices to deal with the IR's critical questions. These control devices are applicable in many institutional discourse settings and are briefly discussed in the following subsections.

(a). Questioning

Heritage (2002, p. 1430) argues that news interview questions:

- set agenda for responses by establishing topical domains and requesting recipients; perform various types of actions within those domains;
- assert propositions and establish presuppositions with varying levels of explicitness;
- are frequently desired 'prefer' (in a conversation analytic sense) particular interviewee responses.

The way an interview question is constructed can significantly impact how the interviewee behaves during the course of the interaction (Clayman & Heritage, 2002; Heritage, 2002; Roca-Cuberes, 2014; Quirk et al., 1985).

(b). Interruption

A conversational turn refers to "continuous talk by one speaker, uninterrupted by the other speaker" (Taboada, 2006, p. 332). Zimmerman and West (1975) refer to conversational interruption as "an initiation of simultaneous speech which intrudes deeply into the internal structure of a current speaker's utterance" (p. 113). Although commonly used signals of backchanneling (e.g., I see, hmm) do not represent instances of turn change, other competitive forms of interruption in a conversation can function as a control device that can be used to claim the floor and display power and dominance (Cerny, 2010; Fairclough, 1989).

(c). Controlling the Topic

Related to the previously mentioned control devices in function, is the interviewer's right of choosing and controlling the topics to be talked about. The interviewer is able to control the interview as the one who initiates the first topic, and thus always gets the initial turn. As the interviewer's initial turn is often a question in news interviews, it leaves the interviewee in a position where he or she only has a responsive turn to answer the interviewer's posed question. As pointed out by Greatbach, whereas "news interviewers are effectively afforded sole rights to manage the organization of topics", the interviewees' roles are "limited to dealing with the topical agendas which interviewers' questions establish for their turns and, as such, in contrast to interviewers, are not able to shift from one topic or topical line to another" (1986, p. 441).

(d). Formulation

Formulation refers to "any commentary by one speaker, in whatever format, which may be taken to propose or imply a reworking of events described or implied by a previous speaker" (Antaki et al., 2005, p. 643). As argued by Vázquez (2010), the use of formulations in interactional contexts can fulfil two main functions at the textual and relational dimensions: "simultaneously perform the textual-level work of clarifying meaning, and they also serve the interpersonal functions of negotiating and establishing common ground among participants within an interaction" (p. 750). Heritage and Watson (1979) made a distinction between two different types of formulations, namely, gist and upshot. While a gist formulation aims to provide a summary of the preceding talk, an upshot is more likely to serve the agenda of the speaker as it provides an implication of the content of the previous turn. A formulation represents a first part of a particular type of adjacency pair, of which the second part is typically a preferred confirmation by the interviewee (Heritage & Watson, 1979). However, other possible responses to a formulation include a qualified confirmation or simply a disconfirmation (see Hak & de Boer, 1996).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The IR begins the interview by using a conventional interviewing procedure. He welcomes BBC listeners, introduces himself and his IE and thanks him for agreeing to be interviewed by the BBC. It becomes quite apparent throughout the course of the interview that the IE's contributions to the interview are controlled by the IR's uses of various control devices. As previously noted, data analysis focuses on four main devices employed by the IR: questioning, interruption, topic-controlling, and formulation.

A. *Questions-Answers Sequences*

Throughout the interview, the IR relies on questioning as a vehicle to drive the interview from one topic to another. The IR manages and controls the interaction through his reliance on his questioning authority. Thus, questioning appears to be one of the major linguistic devices that the IR uses to control the interaction. Data analysis reveals that the IR employs various forms of interrogatives, including yes/no questions, wh-questions, and declarative questions.

(a). *Yes/No Questions*

Yes/No questions (see, for example, turns 3, 11, 21, 25) can be effectively used to control the discourse. In turn 21, the IR uses the word 'honestly' to put even more pressure on the IE to overtly utter his position and to avoid getting what can be called a dispreferred second pair part of the question/answer adjacency pair.

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|----|----|--|
| 3 | IR | Do you agree with him? |
| 11 | IR | Can you tell us what the factors that would lead you to make this decision; this designation that it's genocide? |
| 21 | IR | But do you <u>honestly</u> expect elections in January? |
| 25 | IR | Are you bothered that the US is becoming an unrestrainable, unilateral superpower? |

(b). *Wh-Questions*

The IR's employment of wh-questions (turns 11, 13) do not appear to be neutral. They entail conflict and clash of judgements over the crisis in Sudan and thus such critical questions are not meant to elicit information. The IE's response (turn 12) is limited to the defence of his own position as opposed to those of the report produced by the World Health Organization (WHO).

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|----|----|--|
| 11 | IR | I mean we have the WHO saying thousands are dying every month, what makes the difference to make it genocide? |
| 12 | IE | I think this is based really on the on the, don't don't get me wrong. I'm not...I've talked about the atrocious and systematic and gross violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. But you have to start with the convention the language of the convention itself which indicates that the intent and the systematic attempts to eliminate a group an ethnic, so all that will have to be looked at. |
| 13 | IR | How long will it be before you're in a position to make that designation? |
| 14 | IE | I can't give you a time... |

(c). *Declarative Questions*

Declarative questions are yes/no questions that are produced with rising intonation to solicit the IE's confirmation (Heritage, 2002; Roca-Cuberes, 2014). In turns 27, 31, 33, and 35, the IR uses four positive declarative questions produced with rising intonation. Turn 35 is an exact repetition of the same declarative question in 33. These declarative questions are proposed for the IE's confirmation. Clearly, such questions put more pressure on the IE because "positive questions have positive orientation and can therefore accept only assertive forms" (Quirk et al., 1985, p. 814). It is notable, in this context, that each of these questions is strongly designed by the IR to seek a confirmation (a 'yes' answer) regarding the legality of Iraq-war. Thus, the questions strongly invite the IE to confirm rather than to deny the IR's re-representation of his (the IE's) stated position.

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|----|----|--|
| 27 | IR | Done without UN approval - or without clearer UN approval? |
| 28 | IE | Without UN approval and much broader support from the international community. |
| 31 | IR | So, you don't think there was legal authority for the war? |
| 32 | IE | I have stated clearly that it was not in conformity with the Security Council – with the UN Charter. |
| 33 | IR | It was <u>illegal</u> ? |
| 34 | IE | Yes, if you wish |
| 35 | IR | It was <u>illegal</u> ? |
| 36 | IE | Yes, I have indicated it is not in conformity with the UN charter, from our point of view and from the Charter point of view it was illegal. |

As shown above, the IE's face is threatened because he has been imposed on when repeatedly asked such critical questions. In 36, the IE has been pressed to use the words 'yes' and 'illegal' to describe the American-led war on Iraq. As previously noted, this word (i.e., *illegal*) has been widely used in the media to describe his position and it seems to

inflict real damage on his policy objectives. In turns 28-36, the IE has been guided to gradually adopt such an overt critical view of the US-led war on Iraq.

The IR used 11 yes/no questions (turns: 5, 15, 17, 21, 23, 25, 27, 28, 31, 33, 35). In addition, two wh-questions were used (turns 11 and 13). Thus, the IR uses 13 of his 18 turns (72%) to ask questions. This sequence of questions allows the IR to control and determine what the IE talks about. Furthermore, the IR's critical and persistent questions are not, in my view, designed to elicit information about topics such as Sudan and the war on Iraq because "yes/no questions cannot be used to extend the scope of a conversation, because the questioner, in using them, restricts the information which is introduced" (Kress & Fowler, 1979, p. 68). In addition, the second person pronoun (you) is continuously used as the subject in these questions in order to maximize the level of involvement and thus to force directness. In the beginning, the IE has succeeded in being indirect through his diplomatic answers to many of these questions by turning over the meaning to avoid explicitness. Consider the following examples:

- 3 IR And can I start by asking you about Sudan? The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell a few days ago described the situation there as genocide, do you agree with him?
- 4 IE Uh.. I can't make that determination...In fact, I think the Secretary of States on his assessment says that they are preliminary investigations indicate there is a genocide. And we need to send a team out to do it very quickly and I hope the Council will do it because this the first time that a referral has been made to it on the Article 8 of the genocide convention. But, of course we don't have to wait for that determination to take action. Everybody agrees that we have a catastrophic situation in the region and serious crimes are being committed and we have to act now, not necessary wait for the result or to wait to put a label on it before we act.
- 31 IR So, you don't think there was legal authority for the war?
- 32 IE I have stated clearly that it was not in conformity with the Security Council – with the UN Charter.

As it can be seen, in 4, the IE starts with 'Uh' (a hesitation marker) which is an indicator of a planning process to provide an indirect answer to the IR's question in turn 3 "Do you agree with him?" During conversations, meaning is usually communicated and interpreted through the use of adjacency pairs (Paltridge, 2000). Thus, if the first part of the exchange is a yes/no question, the second speaker is expected to produce a yes/no answer in the second pair part. In turn 4, the IE's answer is "I can't make this determination." Such a reply represents an unexpected answer to the IR's yes/no question "do you agree with him?" By answering in such a way, the IE provides a dispreferred second part in order to get over the meaning to avoid directness. Politicians and diplomats often avoid giving direct and straightforward answers during news interviews in order to allow themselves enough space to deny and manipulate the meaning of their words later on. Furthermore, straightforward answers on controversial and sensitive topics might inflict real damage on their career prospects. Thus, the IE sometimes relies on the use of hedges (e.g., I think) in order not to take full responsibility of his speech (see, for example, 26 below). In his answer, the IE flouts Grice's maxims of quantity and manner since his answer is neither clear nor brief.

- 26 IE Well, I think over the last year, we've all gone through lots of painful lessons. I'm talking about since the war in Iraq. I think there has been lessons for the US and there has been lessons for the UN and other member states and I think in the end everybody is concluding that it is best to work together with our allies and through the UN to deal with some of these issues. And I do not think or I hope we do not see another Iraq-type operation for a long time.

However, as has become obvious towards the end of the interview, the IE has been led by the IR' sequence of yes/no questions to reply directly and explicitly (turns 27-36). As shown above, the IR continues to press the IE until he gets the typical preferred second pair part of the adjacency pair (question/answer). Indeed, the IR appears to be like a police investigator or an experienced lawyer who addresses his questions to a witness in a court. The IE has carefully avoided the word "illegal" before by saying that the war was "not in conformity with the UN Charter". However, he has been pressed to use the word "illegal" and thus to overtly criticize the war on Iraq. This enforcement of explicitness appears to be caused by and resulted from the uneven distribution of power and control between the IR and the IE.

B. Interruption

Analysis of the data shows that interruption is a control device that has been employed by the IR to claim the floor. For example, the IE has been interrupted in turns 6 and 8. Clearly, the IE has not been given the chance to get the floor. Instead, the IR immediately interrupts him and continues to speak over the IE's attempt to take the turn. To do so, the IR marks his utterances at the beginning of turns 7 and 9 with louder voice. As a result, the IE couldn't continue his turn. These instances of interruptive overlaps clearly show that the interview is unilaterally controlled by the IR and therefore can be interpreted as a display of dominance. Interruptive overlaps (turns 6 and 8) tend to occur at a high rate during accountability news interviews, particularly at "turn boundaries" as shown below (see Bannink & Albaladejo, 2018).

- 5 IR Is it that simple- isn't important to call it what it is?
- 6 IE [Oh absolutely..]
- 7 IR LET me let me quote what you said back in January. You said genocide has happened in our time. I think you were talking about Rwandan and Srebrenica.

- 8 IE [This is ..]
- 9 IR RIGHT, that's right. States even refused to call it by its name to avoid fulfilling their obligations. Now, we have the United States call what it is and you, you not?

C. Controlling the Topic

Thanks to his institutional role during the interview, the IR initiates all the topics throughout the interview. He has also driven the interview from the discussion of the situation in Sudan, to the war on terror, and finally to the war on Iraq (see, for example, turns 3, 15 below). Thus, discursively, the IE is left in a restricted position with an interactional role that has been limited to turn taking level; a role which is often interrupted and challenged by the IR as illustrated above.

- 3 IR Can I start by asking you about Sudan?
- 15 IR Let me ask you about the war on terror.

D. Formulation

Formulation (e.g., so you're saying) represents one of the effective discursive resources employed by the IR to negotiate meaning within the interview. Close analysis of the employment of this resource reveals important aspects of the dynamics of power and control. It is noticeable that the IR's formulations do not act as a form of cooperation as might happen between interactants in more intimate conversations. Instead, the IR's employment of formulations is, in my view, uncooperative in these contexts. To face the IE's indirectness, the IR tends to provide a biased paraphrase of what the IE has said. The IR also tries to draw out some implications (i.e., upshot) in order to clarify the meaning of the IE's indirect responses. Consider the following two instances of formulation in Examples 1 and 2 below.

(a). Example 1

- 21 IR But do you honestly expect elections in January? It sounds impossible.
- 22 IE You cannot have credible elections if the security conditions continue as they are now.
- 23 IR And so, you're saying there's a good chance there will not be elections in January?
- 24 IE Well, the judgment will have to be done, the judgment will have to be made by the Iraqi government which is going to run the elections who will be supporting them. Obviously there may come a time when we have to make our own independent assessment.

In turn 23, the IR provides a biased paraphrase of what the IE says in turn 22. As it can be seen, the IE's answer doesn't mean that "there's a good chance there will not be elections in January". However, as a result of the IR's upshot biased statement, the IE has been put in a defensive stance of a position that he doesn't take in his previous turn. In turn 24, the IE starts by using the discourse marker "well" which is, in this context, used as "a marker of insufficiency, indicating some problems on the content level of preceding utterance" (Jucker, 1993; cited in Locher, 2004, p. 117). Thus, the IE resists the IR's formulation by providing a replacement statement in the form of a disconfirmation which is, as noted above, the least preferred response. The IE's response is an attempt to clearly present his own position that the election in Iraq is an Iraqi internal issue which should be determined by the Iraqi government.

(b). Example 2

- 29 IR I wanted to ask you that - do you think that the resolution that was passed on Iraq before the war did actually give legal authority to do what was done?
- 30 IE Well, I'm one of those who believe that there should have been a second resolution because the Security Council indicated that if Iraq did not comply there will be consequences. But then it was up to the Security Council to approve or determine what those consequences should be.
- 31 IR So, you don't think there was legal authority for the war?

As can be seen, in turn 31, IR provides a rewording of the IE's account in turn 30. The IR uses formulation for the purpose of control so as to offer the IE the conclusion and to enforce explicitness. Moreover, the IR tries to portray the IE as being in conflict with the United States and its allies. Through formulations, the IR aims at committing "the interviewee to a stronger (and more newsworthy) version of his position than he was not initially prepared to adopt" (Heritage, 1985, p. 110).

V. CONCLUSION

Utilising a conversation analysis approach, the current study addressed two questions related to the exploration of how power can interactionally be achieved and negotiated through the use of discursive resources by participants in media news interviews. Data analysis revealed that the employment of a variety of linguistic devices, such as questioning, topic-controlling, interruption, and formulation, enabled the IR to exercise power and control over the IE who attempted to challenge the interviewer's "question authority" (by sometimes being somehow evasive under the interviewer's critical questions). Power-over becomes visible during the course of the interview as the IR, thanks to his

claimed authority and discursive role within the context of the interaction, was the one who has control over the agenda of the interaction by sometimes taking on the roles of the “inquisitor” and “manager” of the disclosure (Bannink & Albaladejo, 2018; Huls & Varwijk, 2011). The IE, on the other hand, due to his restricted power during the social interaction, is expected to accept and answer the IR’s questions. Such defined roles represent common practices in the media and are based on what Ekström et al. (2006, p. 29) termed “unspoken contract” between journalists and public figures.

Clearly, media interview discourse provides a rich and interesting authentic material that can be used in the second language (L2) classroom. In this regard, the results of the analysis in this paper offer some pedagogical implications. Firstly, the results can be used to raise learners’ awareness of the various ideologies hidden within this form of spoken interactions. Secondly, teachers can bring to the attention of their students some of the interactional aspects of interviews, including the turn taking system, adjacency pairs, the use of hedges (e.g., I think, ‘uh’), formulations (e.g., so you’re saying), and the impact of suprasegmental phonemes (e.g., intonation and stress) in the context of L2 speech production. Thirdly, teachers can introduce their students to other important hidden interactional aspects such as relations of power and devices of control amongst interactants and then offer them some suggestions to improve their L2 oral performance. Finally, the news interview context, as analysed above, is a rich context to teach L2 questioning practices because this form of face-to-face interaction can be viewed as “a virtual laboratory of question design” (Heritage, 2002, p. 1444).

APPENDIX. INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPT

This text is extracted from an interview with Secretary-General Kofi A. Annan (IE) conducted by Owen Bennett Jones (IR) of the BBC World Service in 2004 [accessed 20 March 2023]. For easier reading, only minimal transcription conventions were added: [] speech overlap, ? rising intonation, underlined stress; ALL CAPS louder voice.

- 1 IR Hello and welcome to the interview. I am Owen Bennet-Jones... Kofi Annan, thanks very much for agreeing to talk to us on this interview.
- 2 IE I am glad to be here.
- 3 IR And can I start by asking you about Sudan? The US Secretary of State, Colin Powell a few days ago described the situation there as genocide, do you agree with him?
- 4 IE Uh.. I can't make that determination...In fact, I think the Secretary of States on his assessment says that they are preliminary investigations indicate there is a genocide. And we need to send a team out to do it very quickly and I hope the Council will do it because this the first time that a referral has been made to it on the Article 8 of the genocide convention. But, of course we don't have to wait for that determination to take action. Everybody agrees that we have a catastrophic situation in the region and serious crimes are being committed and we have to act now, not necessary wait for the result or to wait to put a label on it before we act.
- 5 IR Is it that simple- isn't important to call it what it is?
- 6 IE [oh, absolutely]
- 7 IR LET ME let me quote you what you said back on January. You said genocide has happened in our time. I think you were talking about Rwandan and Srebrenica.
- 8 IE [This is]
- 9 IR RIGHT, that's right. States even refused to call it by its name to avoid fulfilling their obligations. Now, we have the United States call what it is and you, you not?
- 10 IE No. No. We have sent several teams there. We have a human rights team and a human rights reporters. They gave us two reports but not describe it as such. And this why it is extremely important that it the Council's right in thinking in sending an independent commission of inquiry to go to Sudan and submit a report to us for that determination to be able to be made.
- 11 IR Can you tell us what the factors that would lead you to make this decision this designation that it's genocide? I mean we have the WHO saying thousands are dying every month. What makes the difference to make it genocide?
- 12 IE I think this is based really on the on the, don't don't get me wrong. I'm not..I've talked about the atrocious and systematic and gross violations of human rights and violations of international humanitarian law. But you have to start with the convention the language of the convention itself which indicates that the intent and the systematic attempts to eliminate a group an ethnic, so all that will have to be looked at.
- 13 IR How long will it be before you're in a position to make that designation?
- 14 IE I can't give you a time. We are going to be prepared to move as quickly as possible. But I also made it clear to the Council that we don't have to wait for the results to act. The situation is serious enough for us to take action to maintain the pressure on the government to do everything we can to assist the people in Sudan and they are going to support the expanded African force that is going to go into Sudan.
- 15 IR Let me ask you about the war on terror. Do you believe that it has diverted attention from perhaps more important global issues?
- 16 IE It's a sudden impact it's a sudden impact on the broader agenda. In fact, earlier this year I

- indicated we should make a rebalance in the international agenda. Five years ago we came up with the millennium developmental goals in the fight against poverty, education, the fight against HIV, environmental degradation, but all that was pushed aside because there was so much focus on the fight against terrorism, so much focus on Iraq that the all the challenges cannot get the attention they need and we need to try and bring those up.
- 17 IR So do you think that, you know there is a debate that's going on the United States, do you think that the world is a safer place than it was three years ago?
- 18 IE I cannot say the world is a safer place honestly. When you look at what's happening around us, not just in Iraq, in Afghanistan, in Burslan, in Madrid and in all the locations around the world and countries that live on the constant alert of terrorist threats.
- 19 IR You mentioned Iraq. There's a plan to have elections in January. I've just read the comments from your envoy in Iraq and it sounds like it's going to be extremely difficult to hold elections.
- 20 IE Absolutely there's a lot that needs to be done. We have helped the Iraqis set up a legal framework for elections. Despite the security situation, I took a calculated risk and sent in two teams: one led by Brahimi, that helped them set up the interim government and another one led by Karina Pereira, who is the head of our electoral division, and we helped them set up the legal framework for election political parties law, an independent electoral commission. And we've had some of the officers trained in Mexico and ready to go. And there are quite a lot of things the Iraqis have to do themselves. We will advise and assist them; they will be running the elections not us. We will be giving advice and assistance and I hope they will be able to do everything they have to do but of course security will be a factor.
- 21 IR But do you honestly expect elections in January? It sounds impossible.
- 22 IE You cannot have credible elections if the security conditions continue as they are now.
- 23 IR And so you're saying there's a good chance there will not be elections in January?
- 24 IE Well the judgment will have to be done, the judgment will have to be made by the Iraqi government which is going to run the elections who will be supporting them. IRviously there may come a time when we have to make our own independent assessment.
- 25 IR Are you bothered that the US is becoming an unrestrainable, unilateral superpower?
- 26 IE Well, I think over the last year, we've all gone through lots of painful lessons. I'm talking about since the war in Iraq. I think there has been lessons for the US and there has been lessons for the UN and other member states and I think in the end everybody is concluding that it is best to work together with our allies and through the UN to deal with some of these issues. And I hope we do not see another Iraq-type operation for a long time.
- 27 IR Done without UN approval - or without clearer UN approval?
- 28 IE Without UN approval and much broader support from the international community.
- 29 IR I wanted to ask you that - do you think that the resolution that was passed on Iraq before the war did actually give legal authority to do what was done?
- 30 IE Well, I'm one of those who believe that there should have been a second resolution because the Security Council indicated that if Iraq did not comply there will be consequences. But then it was up to the Security Council to approve or determine what those consequences should be.
- 31 IR So, you don't think there was legal authority for the war?
- 32 IE I have stated clearly that it was not in conformity with the Security Council - with the UN Charter.
- 33 IR It was illegal?
- 34 IE Yes, if you wish.
- 35 IR It was illegal?
- 36 IE Yes, I have indicated it is not in conformity with the UN charter, from our point of view and from the Charter point of view it was illegal.

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