

Preference organisation in broadcast political interviews

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Introduction.

Discovering the principles of language in use is largely coincident with discovering the principles that rule social relationships in everyday interactions. Independently of the goal which a speaker wants to achieve, human interaction operates on the basis of respect towards the listener. In order to attend to this principle of social behaviour, participants in a verbal interaction resort to specific strategies, which focus primarily on the management of ideas.

Most of the work done in the field of discourse analysis has focused on polite behaviour as manifested in everyday informal conversation (Brown & Levinson, 1987; Coulmas, 1981; Fraser, 1981; Leech, 1983; Wootton, 1981). Despite strong interest in the content of broadcast diplomatic interaction, little attention has been paid to the examination of political interviews (but see Beattie, 1989; Bull & Mayer, 1989; Heritage, 1985). The study of genre-specific constraints on polite behaviour as manifested between interviewer and politician has so far been neglected.

The aim of this study is, therefore, to account for polite behaviour between interlocutors in broadcast British political interviews. From this framework results an examination of politeness as manifested in the management of ideas and in the management of the personal relationship between the participants. More specifically, the present paper will focus first on the way in which agreement/disagreement is related to a preference organisation; secondly, and closely related, on the examination of mechanisms oriented to the achievement of polite behaviour; and thirdly, on a potential cause-effect relationship between the general goal or purpose of the interviews and the use of politeness techniques, that is, why and to what extent the use of politeness mechanisms influences the goal of the genre.

The study of the political interview will be genre-specific and, therefore, restricted by factors such as the social roles of participants, the medium and the goal of the interaction. The study will draw on the discipline of Conversation Analysis. It will be approached on the basis of certain universal preconditions for communication which are explained in the section below.

I. Politeness theories.

As a feature that defines communication between rational beings, politeness belongs to the universal scope of pragmatics. The basic frameworks for the study of this universal feature of communication are Goffman's (1972) notion of *face*, Grice's *Co-operative Principle* (CP) (1975), Leech's *Politeness Principle* (1983) and Brown & Levinson's *politeness strategies* (1987).

The guidelines on which an effective use of language is based underly the *Co-operative Principle* (CP). According to this principle, conversation is characterized by a joint effort between communicators to achieve a certain purpose or goal in the interaction. Grice expresses the principle as follows:

"Make your conversational contribution such as is required, at the stage at which it occurs, by the accepted purpose or direction of the talk exchange in which you are engaged" (Grice, 1975: 45).

Under this principle Grice distinguishes the following maxims and submaxims:

-The maxim of **quality**, or truth:

- (i) do not say what you believe to be false
- (ii) do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

-The maxim of **quantity**, or amount of information:

- (i) make your contribution as informative as is required
- (ii) do not make your contribution more informative than is required

-The maxim of **relation**:

- (i) be relevant

-The maxim of **manner**, which includes the supermaxim "be perspicuous" and the sub-maxims:

- (i) avoid obscurity of expression
- (ii) avoid ambiguity
- (iii) be brief
- (iv) be orderly

Grice also recognizes that there are aesthetic, social or moral maxims that regulate conversation. One of these maxims is *politeness*. The high ranking of this principle on the scale of social behaviour leaves the CP at times in the background. This situation may be caused by a clash of maxims, that is, the impossibility to observe two maxims at the same time.

Goffman (1967) was the first to define the notion of *face*. He did it in the following terms:

"...*face* may be defined as the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact. *Face* is an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes..." (Goffman, 1972:5)

Face is shaped by the person's attitude and behaviour among others. Nevertheless, it is not an egocentric notion, that is, one person's *face* is not only constituted by the concern for one's own self but also by the concern for the other participants' (ibid.:6). Many events can threaten a person's *face* during an interaction. In order to counteract these "incidents" (Goffman's term), *face-work* is needed; that is, "the actions taken by a person to make

whatever he is doing consistent with face" (ibid.:12).

The Brown & Levinson framework (1987) is based on the notion of face derived from Goffman. Nonetheless, they distinguish between two types of face:

"negative face: the want of every 'competent adult member' that his actions be unimpeded by others.
positive face: the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least others." (Brown & Levinson, 1987:62).

Brown & Levinson (1987) analyze politeness from the perspective of the emotional distance between participants. Their framework refers to three types of strategies which the speakers mutually use to minimize face-threatening acts (FTAs): **bald-on record**, which do the FTA in the most clear and direct way without paying attention to face; **negative politeness**, which is oriented at satisfying the hearer's negative face by interfering as little as possible with his freedom of action; and, **positive politeness**, which is oriented at the hearer's positive face, thus showing common wants with him/her.

Leech (1983) formulated his **Politeness Principle (PP)** in its negative form as "Minimize (other things being equal) the expression of impolite beliefs" (Leech, 1983:81). The principle has a positive counterpart, namely, "Maximize (other things being equal) the expression of polite beliefs" (ibid.). From this principle derive the maxims of **Tact**, **Generosity**, **Approbation**, **Modesty**, **Agreement** and **Sympathy**. Politeness as expressed in these maxims is more listener than self centred; and, it is more important to minimize cost to another than to maximize benefit to another.

II. Genre-specific characteristics of interviews.

Behaviour in communication varies a great deal depending not only on factors such as the status of the interlocutors, their social relationship or the context of situation pertaining to individual speech events, but also on the constraints that specific discourse types or genres impose. Goal, set of goals, participants and functional setting are key elements in the analysis of genres (Swales, 1986:10). In the genre of the interview, the participants are the interviewer and the interviewee. The interviewer has the superior **internal role**¹ because it is his function to lead the encounter toward its intended goal; conversely, it is the interviewee who has the higher social status or **external role**. The goal of the communicative event is to obtain information about an issue of public interest; and, finally, the setting is the institutional context of the media.

The political interview is by its very nature a formal event whose goal is of a 'transactional' sort². The aim of the speaker is to transfer information efficiently. The main characteristic of transactional communication is the non-observance of the PP in favour of the CP, while in interactional communication the reverse happens. However, political interviews although primarily transactional also display interactional elements. There is a tension between observance of the CP in order to achieve the goal and of the PP that respects face. An interview is successful when its goal is achieved in a polite manner.

¹ See Cheepen & Monaghan (1990) for internal vs. external roles.

² See Cheepen & Monaghan (1990) for the distinction between transactional vs. interactional speech events.

III. Methodology.

As a type of spoken discourse, interviews fall under the scope of discourse analysis. The approach used will be empirical and inductive; that is, the study will be based on the analysis of real face-to-face interaction; and, within the limitation of data, potential generalizations will be based on the results obtained from the analysis. For this purpose the methodology will be **Conversation Analysis (CA)**.

The approach will also be genre-specific. The study of politeness will be approached from within the structure which organises this particular sub-genre³, since it is this structure⁴ that ultimately determines which techniques the participants use.

For the purpose of the present study, it is necessary to define the following notions. An **elicitation** is the utterance or sequence of utterances produced by the interviewer to obtain information. The term includes not only questions but also assertions which are expected to be confirmed or denied by the politician. **Description** is the account of events as they happened on a temporal and spatial coordinate. **Evaluation** refers to the act of judging or assessing the significance or value of something; and, **clarification** is synonymous with removing any doubts or confusion about the policy of the party that the interviewee represents.

Closed questions restrict the answer to yes or no; conversely, **open questions** request an answer other than yes or no. A **general question** will be considered one that requests overall information about a topic, whereas a **concrete question** narrows down the information requested to specific details.

III.1. The Recordings.

Two interviews were video-recorded from British television in late June 1991. The first interview is with Ex-Premier Mrs. Margaret Thatcher and the second with Mr. George Robertson (MP), Frontbench Spokesman on European Affairs for the Labour Party.

The choice of the one-to-one party interview was based on the fact that it is the most representative of the sub-genre under examination. Their duration vary from 6 minutes for the interview with Mr. Robertson to 23 minutes for the interview with Mrs. Thatcher.

These interviews were chosen for the seeming difference between the ways in which the participants managed the flow of conversation; although their aims seem to be similar, at first sight they appeared to be using a different degree and technique of politeness. The difference in length did not appear to be a factor that could render the comparison invalid; nevertheless, I was aware of the possibility that time constraints might influence the number of politeness techniques used.

The contents of the interviews differ from one another. Mrs. Thatcher is asked for her version of the events that led to her resignation, whereas Mr. Robertson is questioned

³ Political interviews are considered a sub-genre within the broad genre of interviews.

⁴ See M. E. Rama Martínez (1991) for a detailed account of the structural organisation of the interviews.

about the position of his party with regard to European political union, single currency, a European Central Bank and their anti-European attitude compared with the Government.

The present paper includes seven extracts from the interviews⁵ transcribed in standard orthography. The conventions used in the transcriptions are the following:

+ indicates a short pause;

++ indicates a long pause;

+++ indicates a very long pause;

an utterance placed under a pause indicates that it was produced while the interlocutor paused;

// indicates overlapping speech;

: indicates extra vowel lengthening;

MT stands for Margaret Thatcher;

GR stands for George Robertson;

I stands for interviewer;

IV. Analysis of data.

Firstly, it is necessary to clarify what is meant by **preference organisation**. This concept as discussed by Levinson (1983) refers to a concept of markedness; a preferred second part in an adjacency pair⁶ is a simple utterance, while a dispreferred second part is complex. Levinson emphasizes that the notion is structural and not psychological. I would argue the contrary, that the notion combines both a structural and a psychological element. A conflict is structurally characterized by its complexity manifested in the number of side-sequences or asides (Jefferson, 1972) between question and answer. But it is important to emphasize that the conflict occurs because of the interviewer's and the politician's individual preferences; that is, a question can be said to be preferred when it matches the expectations that the interlocutor claims for his face; and vice versa, a question can be called dispreferred when it threatens the interlocutor's face. Likewise, a response can be said to be preferred when it answers directly the question by observing the CP, satisfying in this way the interviewer's wants; when the contrary happens the answer is dispreferred. Preference is therefore hearer-oriented since it is the participant to whom the question or the answer is addressed who judges if it suits his/her wants. So, in this section, mainly the notion of psychological preference will be used in relation to agreement/disagreement and FTAs.

In both interviews preferred elicitations are followed by immediate and direct responses. Elicitations can appear in the form of an open or closed question or in the form of an assertion which requires confirmation or denial on part of the politician.

The system of question-answer evokes an organisation of sequencing of the type elicitation followed by preferred response. A closed question such as "do you agree with

⁵ For full transcriptions of interviews, see M. E. Rama Martinez (1991).

⁶ An adjacency pair (Sacks & Schegloff, 1973, in Heritage, 1984:246) is a sequence of two adjacent utterances produced by different speakers, and ordered as a first part that requires a particular second part. Eg: question-answer, offer-acceptance.

the convergence's idea that..." or "do you remember the moment when..." requires a preferred yes/no answer which may or may not be followed by explanation. Open questions and assertions require as a preferred response an explanation or clarification. This means that in order to render the exchange effective it is necessary to observe the CP. The non-fulfillment of this requirement is the origin of conflicts in the two interviews. At the same time, observance or violation of the CP has to do with the degree of face-threat that the interviewer creates for the politician. Conflicts occur because of a chain of cause-effect relationships. In other words, elicitation A threatens intentionally or unintentionally the politician's face; as a result, the politician reacts un-co-operatively by failing to answer straightaway and delaying the expected response by introducing clarifications, to save his/her image. When this occurs the politician is at least violating the Maxim of Relevance. Non-observance of the CP then causes the interviewer to remind the politician of his/her duty to stick to the co-operative rules, which in turn only prolongs the conflict. Thus it might appear that the politician is the only agent of conflicts. However, it should be remembered that it is the interviewer who threatens the politician's face with his questions and remarks; without threat one might assume that no conflict would result since the reason for conflict would no longer exist. It seems that conflicts are vicious circles which are broken only when one of the participants 'surrenders'. In the two interviews, it is the interviewer -in his role of manager of the speech event- who puts an end to conflicts by letting the politician carry his/her point and then dropping the topic.

Seven extracts from the interviews will now be used to exemplify the organisation of agreement and conflict, and to show the techniques used to achieve the goal of the encounter in the most effective way.

First however, the notion of neutrality needs some explanation. Neutrality in the context of the interviews refers to the position taken by the interviewer which neither supports nor goes against the politician's point of view. Nevertheless, it is worth bearing in mind that the notion of neutrality is only relative since complete neutrality is almost impossible to achieve. This notion is especially slippery when applied to the media. It may well be that there are professional journalists who reveal their own political ideals in their everyday work. But, having no evidence to the contrary, the positions taken by the interviewers in the data will be considered as neutral. Their, at times, apparent opposition to the politician's ideas will be taken as a mere task-required characteristic.

Extract 1

- I: where do you stand on political union
 MP: major difference between us and the government but I'll
 tell you where we stand we believe that er + the political
 dimension of Europe is extremely important + that if you are
 5 going to create institutions in Europe ++ eer towards the
 integration of Europe then there has to be democratic
 accountability ++ we believe that there should be majority
 voting in the council of ministers + in the social area +
 that means that ++ when there's majority voting i e + easy
 10 decision making + in the Community + on business and
 commercial areas there should also + be majority voting on

15 the social sphere + the social dimension as well + that's
the only way you can create a fairer + i i level playing
field + on the the environment we want majority voting and
we believe that the European Parliament should be given +
some more powers to reflect the fact that decisions have
already gone to the European level but there is not //an//
equivalent level of accountability

I:

//o.k.//

The elicitation is an open wh- question, which appears quite neutral. Mr. Robertson gives a preferred response to it, namely, an explanation. He seems aware of the co-operative rules he is expected to observe and he makes it clear in the following way. His response starts with a side-sequence, "Major difference between us and the government...", which signals a potential violation of the Quantity Maxim by starting to give more information than requested; but immediately after he says "but I'll tell you where we stand we believe...". He is using a semantic introducer or 'gambit' (Keller, 1981) in order to state explicitly that he will constrain himself to the information he has been asked for, thus observing the CP. The rest of the turn is the explanation of the position of the Labour Party with regard to European political unity.

Extract 2

I: because er + that was erm + an evening that + none of us I
think who watched it on television and certainly those who
were there w will quite forget + now + what we saw + on that
occasion + was + almost + you come bursting out of that
5 embassy door + to the waiting microphones and you very
quickly said ++ that you were going + to stand for the +
second ballot + but + I wonder if you could tell us actually
how it was because moments before that you were waiting
upstairs weren't you for a phone call

MT: 10 hh yes we were ++ er we were and I couldn't go off to the
evening's engagement until we'd had it + and there I was
told the results immediately I said that this means a second
ballot + so we had not in fact got enough but then it seemed
+ did not seem to me at that stage it would be difficult er
15 to get er er three or four more people to vote with us + on
the second ballot + hh and erm + although it was not very
easy to go to a second ballot it didn't seem to me to be
very difficult ++ er something happened while I was away
that night there were various meetings (broadcast
20 interruption) situations slip away from you I'm a politician
+ I know + I can feel it + I can sense it + and when erm
some people whom I expected to be + absolutely ++ er staunch
+ erm ++ er had very different views said look I will
support you but I don't think that erm ++ it is a foregone
25 conclusion + then alright ++ no general can fight + without
a really good army behind + and I've indic + I've indicated
was a view which I took + I'm still sure that is was the
right one under + those + circumstances

The elicitation in this example is double: first, an open question ([...] I wonder...how it was[...]), and, second, a closed question ([...] before that...for a phone call). Mrs. Thatcher responds to both immediately giving the expected answer to the second question

and then reporting the facts as she recalls them. It is significant that the order of the answers is inverse to the order of the questions. This is a clear example showing that an utterance is to be interpreted as relating to the prior. The preferred answer to the closed question is strongly marked by means of the question tag. The interviewer, Mr. Brunson, is asking Mrs. Thatcher to confirm the assertion he is making. By this means agreement is reached; a dispreferred *no* might have caused a conflict.

These two extracts have shown that agreement in both interviews relates to neutral elicitations and preferred responses which observe the CP. Disagreement, as extracts 3 & 4 will show, is related to threatening elicitations, and non-observance of the CP and the PP.

Extract 3

- I: so how would you deal with the phrase which crept into the
+ current summit at Luxembourg + the idea of having + not
very much + having another conference to talk about the er
+ prospects of strengthening the federal character of union
+ what's wrong with that
- 5 GR: well ++ I sss you'd whether we get hung up on the word
federal I think is a bit daft + I don't think that we should
quite frankly if if somebody means by
yes or no to that
- I: well we don't like the word federal + if it means + a United
10 GR: States of Europe like the United States of America + or the
Federation
I: what words would you use
15 GR: well w were're talking about a loose + union + of States +
co-operating where it is necessary + now these are not my
words these are the words + of the Luxembourg Foreign
Minister and it was Luxembourg + the Foreign Ministry of
Luxembourg that put forward + this contentious draft earlier
this week we we're in favour of co-operation at whatever
20 level in Europe it makes sense and //that is what//
I: //you object to//
GR: what everybody else believes in this world
I: do you object to the words ever closer union as used in the
original treaty of Rome
25 GR: no + of course not we're talking about //u//nifying
I: //so that//
GR: here we're ta a + where at a practical level + where it
matters + where it's relevant + so we're talking about
acting + //at a// European level where it
30 I: //o.k.//
GR: //makes sense// + a local level where it makes sense
I: //so that s//ounds
GR: + and a national level
I: so on that issue you sound exactly + th the same as Douglas
35 Hurd he says he uses the 'same words + says the same things
as //you//
GR: //w// but but but we see it in a completely different
//way// +
I: //no// no I understand //I understand//
40 GR: //they they say// no: majority of
voting on the social area + no: majority of voting on the
//environment//

- I: //I understand//
 GR: 45 and we they don't want the European Parliament to have any more power + any more influence than it has just now
 I: but they may end up conceding it ++ now
 //h what about//
 GR: //I think// they may well + but then that would be a failure of tactics + were in the main stream

That the first elicitation is an FTA to Mr. Robertson can be demonstrated by his response. This consists first of *well*, which is a marker of dispreferreds (Heritage, 1984), followed by a long pause and laugh. These elements are fillers which delay the actual answer to the question. After these fillers Mr. Robertson still hesitates to give a clear answer. Instead he introduces a side-sequence formed by two subordinates ("whether..."; "if...") which further deviate from the expected response. He is violating in this way the Maxim of Quantity –he does not give the necessary amount of information– and of Manner –he is not clear. The interviewer, Mr. Hanna, opts to attract Mr. Robertson's attention to the CP by posing a question that restricts the choice of answer only to *yes* or *no*. Mr. Robertson is still hesitant to admit that the Labour Party is against a federation of European States. This can be observed by the repetition of the filler *well* (ll. 10,14), the use of subordinate clauses (ll. 10–12) and of pre-sequences (ll. 14–19). These pre-sequences delay the actual answer until line 19. They serve as an explanation or clarification of the position of the Labour Party which is here defined by contrast to the position of Luxembourg.

From line 25 onwards the image of the Labour Party regarding European Affairs is becoming more and more threatened. The interviewer is handling a delicate situation without much attention to the politician's face. He is trying to bring to the fore the negative aspects of the Labour Party's policy and for this purpose he uses the bald-on record strategy (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

When criticism on the part of the interviewer is strongest, Mr. Robertson's response is curiously very quick and flat, not hesitant. "no + of course not..." (l. 25) and "w but but but we see it in a completely different way" (ll. 37–38) show an offended politician who tries to defend his image and that of his party from the faults and weaknesses which the interviewer charges him with.

Since the degree of tension has reached its highest point (ll. 34–36) the interviewer is trying to seek a minimum of agreement in order to keep the encounter within the limits of respectfulness. The repetition of "I understand" (ll. 39,43) serves this purpose. Search for agreement is a mere signal of social politeness and not an expression of actual agreement of ideas between the participants. This is expressed by the interviewer's remark "but they may end up conceding it ++ now h what about" (ll. 46–47). Despite all the clarification Mr. Robertson has made about the difference in positions between the Labour Party and the government, Mr. Hanna still disagrees. Disagreement is emphasized by the position of the subordinative conjunction *but* (l.46) at the beginning of the utterance and by the position of the whole utterance at the very end of the exchange. In this way he underlines that although the exchange has come to an end the disagreement still persists.

The following extract from Mr. Robertson's interview shows disagreement reaching

impoliteness.

Extract 4

- I: and what of your policy for having a European Central Bank
 GR: well + it's another institution + along the way + and
 I'll tell you + we believe + that if there is going to be
 5 a Central Bank + then it must have a degree of
 accountability + to Eco Fin + that is the Council of
 Finance Ministers + the elected + er + politicians in that
 + we believe that that level of accountability now the government does not
 believe in that //accountability//
 I: //well it// says it
 10 does
 GR: no no no it wants an independent + bank + for bankers +
 by bankers + they've made it clear + that
 //they are not in favour// + they don't want it
 I: //answerable to politicians//
 GR: 15 answer + answerable to any level of accountability we
 believe Eco Fin is established + as an organisation
 within + the Community and provides the proper level of
 //accountability//
 I: //but that's// it's exactly what the government said
 GR: 20 no it's not
 I: but that's what they said
 GR: oh yeah well Vincent you can't say to me only talk about
 what the //Labour Party// believes in and then
 I: //wh//
 GR: 25 contrast the government don't believe in that

After three turn exchanges expressing disagreement about the difference between the Labour Party and the government regarding a European Central Bank, Mr. Robertson calls attention (ll. 22-25) to the fact that Mr. Hanna is violating the Maxim of Agreement (Leech, 1983) by minimizing agreement and maximizing disagreement. Moreover, it appears that the interviewer is imposing his view on Mr. Robertson by not leaving him another option but to accept the interviewer's view; he is thus violating the maxim DON'T COERCE (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

Extract 5

- I: you've said in the past that you thought that what happened
 + that what led to your departure was really because people
 took fright of the opinion polls ++ isn't it really
 5 the case + that what had happened was ++ that your Cabinet ++
 had in a sense ++ begun to desert you + because they were
 worried about the way + you were handling things like
 Europe and + like the poll tax + wasn't that the real
 reason why things turned out the way they did
 MT: 10 hhh no I don't think it was ++ and I would say so if I
 thought it was there had been some controversy about the
 community charge + h er + but everyone agreed it was based
 upon the right + principles ++ the right principles + but
 we just got it up too high + and that would have they've
 been corrected + by putting in more tax a bigger proportion

15 of of taxpayers' hhh no + I think it genuinely was what
I've said that certainly there's some on the back benches
who were getting very alarmed at the opinion polls + but .hh
I think we perhaps had + fewer + people who + this time had
had experience of what happened before + and they er they
20 demonstrated that + in that they didn't give one a clear
run + on the first ballot er that was worrying I thought it
would come alright + but when I + er returned ++ I thought
well I simply must speak er to the members of my Cabinet
and one or two other + senior ministers + er and I'm not
25 going to say who said what + but they weren't a hundred per
cent + erm and + they were very concerned ++ although they
said most of them not all that they would certainly support
me ++ hh there was just + a feeling + er that I thought
well + if we get through + we'll probably get through + but
30 the + things will go on being divided + with this kind of
+ erm + little bit of uncertainty ++ I had just better
decide ++ because it should've come clear on the first
ballot

Extract 5 corresponds to the first elicitation of the first interview. It constitutes an FTA to Mrs. Thatcher since the interviewer is casting doubt on the words she has said in the past. The closed question "isn't it really the case + that..." (l. 3) projects as a preferred answer an affirmation. Instead the answer obtained is a dispreferred immediate and flat negation. In this case there seems to be a clash between her desire to avoid dispreferreds and to observe the CP. Using her own words, "...I would say so if I thought it was..."; she opts to stick to the maxim of quality and to say what she thinks to be the truth ("...I think it genuinely was what I've said..."), thus, at the same time, saving her face from the negative remarks. The rest of her turn is divided into a clarification of the controversy about poll tax and an explanation of the events that led to her resignation. The interviewer does not question her words; the degree of tension is almost non-existent at this point.

Extract 6

I: in the end + when you had to come to that decision after
you'd seen the members of the Cabinet individually + and
one or two + one understands had said right point blank
they would resign if you carried on that only underlines
5 what you've been saying with such force that you couldn't go on
oh //I don't// think anyone said to me +
I: //but but//
MT: no one said to me +++ no one said to me ++ they would
resign ++ if I carried on +++ no one
I: 10 that is interesting because + it is reported + that at
least
//one//
MT: //no one// said to me ++ they would resign ++ if I carried
on I didn't see them all +++ I didn't see them all I think
15 I saw about eleven or twelve and one or two other people
but no one said to me not one +++
I: but the crucial thing is that you then went back to number
ten ++ er you had a conversation + with ++ Sir Denis
Thatcher + Denis + DT + as he's always known +
20 //er now// he has always been an absolutely
MT: //yes DT// + yes

I: staunch + defender of you of course as any husband would be but he's been very valuable to you

Extract 6 shows a moment of conflict caused by an assertion made by the interviewer, namely, that Mrs. Thatcher had apparently lost all support from the Cabinet because of her policy. As happened in extract 3 (l. 25), critical comments are responded to immediately. Unlike Mr. Robertson, Mrs. Thatcher does not start with a flat *no*; she mitigates the dispreferred response with the utterance "I don't think anyone said to me" (l. 6). Disagreement on the part of the interviewer is expressed by repetition of the conjunction *but* (l. 7) and especially by the doubt he casts on her observing the Maxim of Quality (ll. 10-11). Although he questions the truth of her words, he does it avoiding full responsibility for the truth of his utterance. Thus he minimizes the FTA by using a quality hedge (Brown & Levinson, 1987), "it is reported". Mrs. Thatcher repeats over and over again that the report is wrong. Contrary to Mr. Hanna, the present interviewer does not pursue the question further; instead he seeks agreement by claiming common ground with a safe topic (Brown & Levinson, 1987), namely, the valuable support that Mr. Denis Thatcher had given her at the moment of her resignation.

Extract 7

I: and then the following morning of course + you had I suppose //what must have been//

MT: //I got up early// ++ erm and things hadn't changed ++ so I decided to take the course of action which

5 I did ++ and then I went into the House +

I: could I just + first of all + ask you to recall ++ what must have been ++ a very difficult meeting + of the Cabinet

MT: yes of course it //was// ++ of course it was ++ you

I: //then//

MT: 10 don't take a decision like that ++ without it being difficult ++ without heartbreak ++ hh heartbreak there maybe been but it was the right decision +++

I: but you had to get through it Bernard Ingeman in his + memoirs has said ++ that it was a traumatic experience +

15 those are his words

MT: yes it was ++ and it would've been very strange if it hadn't been +++ but we got through it

I: in fact you broke down

MT: we got through the House

I: 20 you broke down during that + Cabinet didn't you ++

MT: yes but I carried on +++

I: and then the House ++

MT: hhh by that time I was back fighting fit +++ as you saw

I: 25 just before that though th the image that people will perhaps remember ++ as you've said the Cabinet was extremely difficult ++ then you had to come out into Downing Street ++ and you had to face + the cameras + in effect you had to face the world

MT: hm hm

I: 30 you had to come + and make ++ what was + perhaps + ehm ehm the statement of your life ++ and then ++ I

MT: hh hh

I: see that + now + we notice now that it is affecting you now + and it must've been the://most difficult//

- Mi: 35 //yes it's not//
 affecting my voice now + it's not affecting my voice you're
 thinking back to traumatic things + hh erm + but I managed
 to get through them ++ I managed to get through the
 television + I managed to get through the Cabinet + again
 40 because there was something else to do + I had to erm + er
 get on to people and I must say this + both Douglas Hurd +
 and John Major said if you wish to go on ++ we'll propose
 you and second you again ++ and and + that was marvellous
 ++ that was marvellous + and then one had to er er get
 45 through Cabinet and one or two people wanted to leave
 because they too of course wanted to to make provision for
 their own + er for their hh own candidature ++ quite right
 quite right + but by that time I had other things to do and
 so I got on with them
- I: 50 the eh ++ almost final act + if you like + of + the drama
 + and it was a drama + of your resignation + that speech
 you gave to the House ++ now you've said how difficult it
 was going through all the run-up talking to the Cabinet +
 and all of + that the emotional stain that had obviously
 55 and we've seen put you through + what about the business of
 going to the House and making that resignation speech +++

This last extract corresponds to the climax proper of the interview, when Mrs. Thatcher's face is most threatened. She has to acknowledge the fact that she broke down during the resignation speech. Furthermore, she not only accepts the fact but she emphasizes it by showing emotion produced by her recollections.

Again in this extract, the FTA is approached by the interviewer with great tact. The use of fillers and pauses emphasizes his hesitation to express the FTA. Yet a further negative politeness technique consists in stressing that he does not claim the assertions he makes as his own. In order to refer to the "traumatic experience" (l. 14) he refers to Bernard Ingeman's words. His desire to hedge flat assertions of his own is also shown in the following utterances:

- 1) "I...as you've said the Cabinet was extremely difficult" (ll. 25-26);
- 2) "I...and make ++ what was + perhaps + ehm ehm the statement of your life" (ll. 30-31);
- 3) "I...er you've said how difficult it was going through all the run-up talking to the Cabinet" (ll. 52-53);

The responses given by Mrs. Thatcher to his threatening assertions consist of short utterances separated by long pauses. She never hesitates to accept the FTA but adds immediately a face-saving remark which praises her ability to get through the ordeal, thus violating the Modesty Maxim (Leech, 1983). This remark, as the following examples show, is emphasized by the use of *but* which minimizes what precedes it and maximizes what follows.

- 4) "MT: yes it was ++ and it would've been very strange if it hadn't been +++ but we got through it" (ll. 16-17);
- 5) "MT: yes but I carried on +++" (l. 21)

There is only one instance (l. 19) where Mrs. Thatcher violates the Maxim of Relevance. It is precisely when the interviewer mentions for the first time that she had broken down during the speech (l. 18). Her response violates the CP by failing to refer to

his assertion. Instead she repeats "we got through the House", which is the response to the previous elicitation. This emphasizes her violation of the Modesty Maxim. The interviewer repeats the elicitation a second time but now adding a question tag which restricts her answer and coerces her to admit the truth.

At the moment when she breaks down during the interview Mr. Brunson observes the Sympathy Maxim (Leech, 1983) by expressing his concern for her suffering (ll. 30–34); this act in turn stresses further the FTA because it states a negative remark to Mrs. Thatcher. Again, Mrs. Thatcher accepts the remark but immediately emphasizes that "it's not affecting my voice" (ll. 35–36). Her remark that the interviewer is "thinking back to traumatic things" (l. 37) can have a double interpretation. On the one hand, it may be understood as an attempt to defend her face by calling attention to the interviewer's behaviour of maximizing the conflict and thus violating the CP. On the other hand, it may be seen as an expression of self-justification for her crying.

V. Discussion of results.

As a type of transactional encounter between two participants, the structure of the political interview is defined by its goal. In turn, the goal of a political interview is only achieved if co-operation is established on a basis of respect to face. Face in a political interview refers especially to satisfaction of the interviewee's wants and interests since the encounter is based on an unequal power relationship of superior versus inferior, where the politician has the superior status and therefore deserves deference.

The data reveal that production of FTAs seems to be a sub-genre-specific feature of political interviews. Threatening politicians' face is related to the goal of the interview, that is, attacking the interviewee on the deficiencies of his/her party's policy. The way of approaching FTAs depends on the type of interview and on the interviewer's personal style. Mr. Hanna demonstrated an aggressive approach in his verbal attacks; Mr. Brunson, in contrast, made FTAs in a very subtle way, appearing to be less offensive.

Conflicts originate due to a verbal attack on the part of the interviewer, which may appear in the form of an assertion or of a question. The different impression given by the interviewers' attitudes towards FTAs was the result of the use of different techniques. The data suggests that there are at least two techniques: the first is the direct approach or bald-on record strategy, that is, talking in conformity with Grice's maxims, as used by Mr. Hanna; the second is the indirect approach or negative politeness technique, as used by Mr. Brunson. He uses as a major device point-of-view distancing and pauses in order to express hesitation over performing FTAs, while Mr. Hanna appears to show little or no hesitation. Mr. Brunson's behaviour proves the conflict that results from the attempt to observe both the PP –in order to save the politician's face want– and the CP in order to achieve his goal.

The limitation of the data does not reveal whether face-work is related not only to status but also to sex and age. It is not clear whether the attention to Mrs. Thatcher's face on the part of Mr. Brunson is the result of a special address form towards an older female or if it is the interviewer's personal style independent from age and sex-related criteria.

The reactions shown by politicians to FTAs suggest that interviewees tend to defend themselves from accusations and only rarely do they seem to accept negative remarks without putting themselves on the defensive. The difference lies in the various devices used to defend themselves. Interviewees, as the data show, do not limit themselves to the use of one single strategy. Gricean maxims, it appears, are violated deliberately, not so much for politeness reasons but for the sake of the speaker's own set goal.

VI. Conclusion.

This study has explored the realizations of politeness as manifested in the management of ideas in the sub-genre of political interviews. The present study has shown that polite behaviour in political interviews is determined by sub-genre-specific characteristics. From this conclusion derive the following points:

1) Effective achievement of the goal is interrelated with politeness techniques. Nevertheless, as has been proved, at times the principle of maximum efficiency overrides the principle of politeness. It was also demonstrated that the goal of the politician does not always coincide with that of the interviewer.

2) The use of politeness techniques is aimed at the satisfaction of the participants' wants. These wants are intrinsic factors of the roles and statuses of the participants. The politician has to satisfy the interviewer's wants by talking in accordance with Grice's maxims; in turn, the interviewer has to satisfy the politician by attending to his face, which derives from his superior social status. Non-observance of each other's wants results in conflict.

3) Violation of Gricean maxims on the part of the politicians was produced not so much for reasons of politeness, as Grice (1975) argued, but for the sake of the speaker's own set goal.

The conclusions that have been drawn are only applicable to the two interviews which constituted the data for this study. The conclusions are mere indicators of the potential restrictions that the sub-genre of political interviews imposes on the behaviour of participants. The data analyzed is not sufficient to establish by induction general patterns of polite behaviour for any type of political interview on British TV. However, the methods employed to analyze the data should be of quite general application.

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