A Critical Discourse Analysis to Power Relations in Chinese TV News Interviews: A Case Study

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Abstract—This is a case study on the power relations in TV news interviews, aiming at studying the interaction in TV news interviews between interviewers and interviewees in terms of power relations. Given the significant relationship between language and power, this study adopts Fairclough's analytical framework to conduct a critical discourse analysis to four Chinese TV news interviews. Data analysis is carried out from three aspects, the description of textual features, the interpretation of the situational context and discourse type and the explanation of social determinants that contribute to the power relations in discourse.

Findings based on the above analysis show that 1) the power relations between interviewers and interviewees in these four TV news interviews are generally equal, but interviewers still possess more power than interviewees at average; 2) power are exercised through discourse by the using of interrogative clauses, interruptions, formulations, as well as initiating turns and controlling topics; 3) the discourse type as news interview entitles journalists, the interviewers, with some natural right to exercise power, with the purpose of fulfilling their duty to cover news issue; 4) social factors like higher social status which derives from profession and age give interviewees more power than interviewers and shape the power relations in these interviews.

These findings have some theoretical and practical implications for interpersonal communications and journalism, as well as limitations for future improvements.

Index Terms—Chinese TV news interview, critical discourse analysis, power relation.

I. INTRODUCTION

The present study is to explore the power relations in Chinese TV interviews through detailed analysis of interactive discourse between the interviewers and interviewees. It takes a sociological view towards language and adopts the critical discourse analysis approach. Though there have been a lot of studies about the power relations in conversations [1]-[4] and TV news interviews[5], [6], a relatively few researches about power relations in TV interviews have been conducted from a critical discourse study perspective, let alone empirical exploration into the power relations in Chinese TV news interviews. This study is motivated against this background and aims to fill up the research gap. Through this study, the author hopes to figure out not only the linguistic features of participants' discursive practice through which they exercise power, but also the social ideologies that lie behind. More ideally, the study will come about with some practical implications for interpersonal communication and encourage more in-depth

study on this issue.

This study adopts the case study methods and focusses on collection and analysis of quantitative data. Four Chinese TV news interviews from two TV news programs are studied. The videos of these interviews were downloaded from the Internet and then are transcribed into written text. A mini data base of about 25,000 Chinese characters is then established. In this study, the linguistic and pragmatic features in the interviews are described, the context of discourse is interpreted and social factors are explained, in order to get a deeper understanding of power relation in these chosen TV news interview. Because of words limit, excerpts presented in this paper are only in English which are translated from Chinese.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is a branch of discourse analysis, which mainly studies with the language in its context. It was developed from the Critical Linguistics in 1970s in Britain. According to van Dijk's definition [7], CDA is a type of discourse analytical research that aims to study how social power, dominance and inequality is exercised or achieved through text and talk in its social and political context. In short, CDA is the discourse analysis with an "attitude", targeting at existing social issues or problems. It is not a sub-discipline of discourse analysis but an approach with "critical" perspective to study discourse and its social context [8]. Massive studies of politics, advertising, mass media and even classroom discourse have been conducted using CDA.

During the decades since CDA has come into being, several distinct research methodologies in CDA has been developed, among which Fairclough's approach views discourse as a social practice, in which the discursive practice takes the core position. It emphasizes the interrelationship between discourse and social practice. Since this study is aimed at revealing the power relations between the interviewer and the interviewee in news interviews and its social factors behind, the Fairclough's approach is adopted as the analytical framework in this study.

Fairclough [9] divides discourse into three dimensions: text, interaction and context. Text is the product of the process of text production and interaction is the process of production and interpretation of the text, while *context* is the social condition of the production and interpretation. Corresponding to the three dimensions of discourse, Fairclough distinguishes three stages for critical discourse analysis: *description*, *interpretation* and *explanation*. In the *description*, linguistic feature like the feature and value of

vocabulary and grammar, mode and modality, speech acts, turn-taking system, directness and indirectness, interactional structure, etc. should be analyzed. In the *interpretation*, situational and intertextual context and discourse type should be studied. In the *explanatio*n, the social determinants, ideology and effect should be studied [9]

Fairclough's approach in doing critical discourse is a synthesis of different theoretical and analytical framework, such as conversational analysis, discourse analysis, systemic functional grammar, continental pragmatics, and so on [9]. Therefore, this study adopts the Fairclough's method as major ways to analyze the power relation in TV news interviews and its ideology behind.

B. Power Relations and Discourse

Many linguistics have reached the common ground that power is a "discursive phenomenon" [9]-[11], in spite of disputes. Fairclough studied the power, which he referred as "the domination of some people by others through language", in terms of its relationship with language from two angles, power in discourse and power behind discourse. According to Fairclough [9], power in discourse is about "powerful participants controlling and constraining the contributions of non-powerful participants" and the three types of constrains are constrains on contents, relations and subjects. Power behind discourse refers to "the whole social order of discourse that is put and held together as a hidden effect of power". The point that Fairclough [9] emphasizes is that both these two types of power are not permanent. They are always won, exercised, sustained and lost in and through social struggles (p. 57).

Questions, regarded as a powerful tool of exercising power over other participants in talks, are a major perspective that researchers take to study power relations. Harris [12] studied the questions in British magistrates' courts with statistical analysis. Lahlali [1] took the use of questions and answer as one of the focuses to study discursive practices in Moroccan classroom which reflects the power relations between teachers and students. Mishler [13], West [14], and Ainsworth-Vaughn [2] concluded that doctor's controlling of question-and-answer interaction was also the major instrument of power control in medical interviews between doctors and patients. Archer[3] studied the question-and-answer interaction between judges and defendants in early modern English courtroom. Mayr [4] analyzed the question and answer sequence in detail between the prison officers and prisoners, focusing on the power shifting and power struggles. Kress and Fowler [15], Heritage and Greatbatch [16] and Greatbatch [5] all held that questioning was the main linguistic device for the interviewer to control over the interviewees in news interviews. In terms of casual conversations, Wang [17] studies the questions as a latent means to exercise power in informal talk with friends and peers.

Besides from the perspective of questions, those institutional conversations have also been studied and analyzed from other diverse aspects in the language uses. Ainsworth-Vaughn [18] approached the power and gender reflection, as well as discourse change in physician-patient interviews from topic transitions, while Fisher and Groce [19] studied the accounting practices in medical interviews. Some studies combined different methods together in terms of the pragmatic features of the targeted conversations. Fairclough [9] in his book analyzed the police-witness interaction, teacher-student interaction and doctor-patient interaction in regards of the turn-taking system, interruptions, topic shifting, speech acts, questions and answers, etc., to explore the power relations and unequal status between the participants.

C. Empirical Studies on TV News Interview

TV news interviews, being an important member of institutional conversation, have also been studied massively, not limited in the field of power relations or power struggles.

Greatbatch [20] studied the neutralism in British news interviews with conversational analysis, in order to explore the relationship between the interactional organization of news interviews and the requirement of journalists to maintain impartiality and balance in their coverings. Clayman and Hertiage [6] studied how journalists manage to balance the objectivity and adversarial treatment of public figures in news interviews. Heritage and Greatbatch [16] examines the basic characteristics of broadcast news interviews and how they were involved in the construction of the so-called "news interview". They concluded that the interviewers maintained neutralistic stance by renewing questions and interviewees' contribution to the maintenance of interviewer's neutralistic stance also contributed to their compliance with the turn-taking. Greatbatch [5] also studied the relationship between the turning-taking system and the management of disagreement between interviewees in news interviews.

The study of question is also vital for TV news interviews. Question and answer format is regarded as the defining figure of news interview [21]. It is mainly by journalist asking questions and interviewee answering questions that the news interview is conducted and information is conveyed to the audiences. Bull [21] provided guidelines for identifying questions, replies and non-replies to questions in political interviews. Based on the previous researches, Heritage and Roth [22] explained how questioning as an activity constituted the news interview as a social institution.

However, although there are many studies about power relations in conversations and TV news interviews, little research about power relations in TV news interviews has been conducted. Besides, many of the conversations which reveal the powerful participant's dominance over the non-powerful participants or power struggles between participants are analyzed under the framework of pragmatics, discourse analysis or conversational analysis, which do not endeavor to dig out the social factors that contributes to these phenomena. What's more, most of reviewed literature above are studies about English or western language use. Related studies about Chinese language are lacking. Therefore, a critical discourse analysis to the power relation in Chinese TV news interviews is of great significance, to identify not only how the power is exercised through discursive practices, but also how the power is constructed by social orders.

III. METHODLOGY

A. Research Questions

The present study intends to investigate how power is exercised through discourse between the interviewer and interviewee in four Chinses TV news interviews. The study

endeavors to answer the following questions:

1. How do interviewers exercise power over interviewees and control over the interviewees' contributions to the conversations through language? What are the linguistic and pragmatic features?

2. How interviewees fight against interviewers' dominance and take the control over interviewers through language? What are the linguistic and pragmatic features?

3. How can these linguistic and pragmatic features be associated with the discourse context?

4. What are the power relations in these four interviews? What are the social ideologies behind?

B. Data Collection

The subjects of this study are four Chinses TV news interviews. The basic information about these four interviews is listed in Table I, II and III. In these four interviews, interviewers are all very experienced and excellent journalists, equipped with professional interviewing skill. They know how to use different tactics to lead their interviewees to speak out the information they want. Four Interviewees in these interviews are all very-educated scholars in one certain field and politicians.

The power struggle between interviews and interviewees in these four interviews is quite obvious. Interviewers try to manipulate the directions of the interviews and interviewees constantly fight against the manipulation of interviewers', which makes them conform to traditional news interviews and at the same time have some unique features that are worthy of detailed analysis.

C. Analytical Framework

Based on the dialogical features of chosen interviews and pilot studies, this study adopts Fairclough's framework of description, interpretation and explanation in doing critical discourse analysis.

The description of linguistic features will be conducted on two levels, the grammatical level and the structural level.

On the grammatical level, the study chooses the system of mood to analyze the power relation in the interviews. There are three general options in the mood system: interrogative, declarative and imperative. In Chinese, an interrogative clause is usually marked by an interrogative particle like *ma* at the end of the clause or by a question word like *weishenme* that indicates the type of information being asked[23]. The former one belongs to the polar interrogative (yes-no interrogative) and the latter one belongs to the elemental interrogative (question-word interrogative).

TABLE I: BASIC INFORMATION OF FOUR SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Number	Origin	Broadcast Date	Time Span
No.1	*Face to Face*	2010.3.21	21'
No.2	*Face to Face*	2012.5.11	42'14''
No.3	*Face to Face*	2003.4.30	34'56''
No.4	*News Probe*	2002.3.23	38'48''

TABLE II: INTERVIEWERS OF FOUR SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Number	Interviewer	Occupation	Gender	Age
No.1	Chai Jing	Journalist	Female	34
No.2	Wang Zhi	Journalist	Male	47
No.3	Wang Zhi	Journalist	Male	38
No.4	Wang Zhi	Journalist	Male	37

TABLE III: INTERVIEWEES OF FOUR SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Number	Interviewee	Gender	Age	Occupation
No.1	Ding Zhongli	Female	34	Academic Divisions of the Chinese Academy of Sciences
No.2	Yi Zhongtian	Male	47	Professor in the College of Humanities of Xiamen University
No.3	Wang Qishan	Male	38	Acting Mayor of Beijing
No.4	Liu Shuwei	Male	37	Researcher in the Institute of Economics of Central University of Finance and Economics

The polar interrogative is further divided into the unbiased and the biased. The unbiased polar interrogative is known as an A-not-A interrogative. The biased polar interrogative is a semantical device which carries the speaker's presuppositions and the speaker seeks for the addressee's confirmation or deny. It is both achieved by two simultaneous systems: particle and declarative, positive and negative.

Besides, when declaratives and imperatives are added with tags at the end of clauses, the tagged declarative clause is formed. According to Li [23], there are two types of tag structures: the A-not-A type like *shi-bu-shi*, *dui-bu-dui*, and the A-particle type, like the positive one *dui-ba* and the negative one *bu-shi-ba*. Like the biased interrogative clause, speakers indicate assumptions or statements in tagged declarative clauses, with higher expectation of confirmation by addressees.

On the structural level, the study will analyze the turn-taking system, interruption, controlling topic and formulation of the discourse. According to Fairclough[9], turn-taking in conversation depends on power relations between the participants. In conversations between unequals, the powerless participants' rights to take turns are usually constrained by the powerful participants. Interruption is used by speakers to control other's contributions, to stop others' repeating information or giving irrelevant information. The topics in conversations may be determined by the more powerful participants. Formulation is the rewording of what has been said by oneself or others, or the wording of what is assumed to follow or be implied by what has been said. It is used to check understanding or reach agreements. It is also used to lead participants into the version that is understood by the speaker and thus to constrain their future contributions.

The interpretation will be done based on the discourse context to examine how discourse type and common assumptions exert influence on the linguistic feature of the discourse. The explanation will be made from the dimensions of the social determinations of discourse, by investigating at three levels of social organizations: the societal level, the institutional level and the situational level.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Description of Textual Features

1) Grammatical features: Interrogative

This study marks the questions types and numbers in four

the selected TV news interviews according to the Li's categorizations. The results are showed in following tables.

Tables Ⅵ shows that both interviewers and interviewees in the four interviews address questions. In the interview No.1 and No.2, interviewees raise more questions than interviewers, while in the interview No. 3 and No.4, interviewers' questions exceed interviewees' questions. Table IV and V show that the most frequent type of interrogative is the elemental interrogative in all four interviews. Biased polar interrogative appears more frequently than unbiased polar interrogative. These figures indicate that both interviewers and interviewees use interrogative mode to exercise power over the other part.

In both four interviews, interviewers use unbiased polar interrogative and biased polar interrogative, to not only leading out information from the interviewees, but also seeking for the interviewees' responds, thus dominate the interviewers' contributions and control the directions of the conversation. The high frequency of biased polar interrogative reflects that interviewers are constantly controlling over the interviewees' contributions in the conversations and trying to maintain the interviews toward the directions that benefit them most.

TABLE IV: THE NUMBER OF INTERROGATIVES CLAUSES IN THE FOUR SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Interview		The Elemental Interrogative	The Polar Interrogative	Tagged Declarative Clauses	Total
No.1	IR	10	11	2	23
	IE	9	18	0	27
No.2	IR	25	36	0	61
	IE	23	25	3	51
No.3	IR	19	16	0	35
	IE	9	7	7	23
No.4	IR	34	18	0	52
	IE	26	9	1	36

TABLE V: THE NUMBER OF THE POLAR INTERROGATIVES CLAUSES IN THE FOUR SELECTED INTERVIEWS

Interview		Unbiased Polar Interrogative	Biased Polar Interrogative			
			Particle		Declarative-like	
			Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
No. 1	IR	5	2	3	1	0
	IE	8	5	3	2	0
No. 2	IR	3	19	3	9	2
	IE	4	13	3	5	0
No. 3	IR	6	9	0	1	0
	IE	3	2	2	0	0
No. 4	IR	2	10	1	4	1
	IE	0	5	4	0	0

TABLE Ⅵ: THE DISTRIBUTIONS OF QUESTIONS BETWEEN INTERVIEWERS AND INTERVIEWEES

Interview	Interviewer		Interviewee		Total	
No.1	23	47%	26	53%	49	`100%
No.2	61	54%	51	46%	112	100%
No.3	35	60%	23	40%	58	100%
No.4	52	59%	36	41%	88	100%

Excerpt 1:

IR: Television for many scholars who always confines themselves in the studies is an awkward thing. Doesn't Professor Yi feel that?

IE: I just feel that even the most knowledgeable person need to satisfy their basic needs in life.

IR: Do you feel comfortable?

IE: Tell the truth?

IR: Of course.

IE: Sometime yes, sometimes no.

IR: When do you feel uncomfortable? When do you feel comfortable?

IE: I feel uncomfortable when I appear on a boring show and meet an unqualified host who ask me a lot of gossips. You don't know whether you should reply them or not. So it is uncomfortable.

IR: But the *Lecture Room* is different?

IE: There are no gossips and no hosts in the Lecture *Room*, so I feel comfortable. You know, I am teacher who loves teaching and I feel happy and excitement in this job.

In this excerpt, the interviewer addresses three biased polar interrogatives every time he wants to ask for the confirmation of the interviewer. These questions carry interviews pre-assumptions and he expects to receive interviewer's affirmative answers. For example, the interviewer assumes that all scholars are always occupied in studying and stay far away from secular life, so attending television programs is not suitable for them. Therefore, he uses a negative biased polar interrogative to emphasize his assumption. So is the same when the interviewer asks the interviewee if he feels comfortable when he attends television programs, with stress on the word "comfortable". Interviewer's power to control over interviewees is overt in this form of interrogative.

As interviewees, they also addressee interrogative to interviewers when they disagree with interviewers. They throw back questions to challenge interviewer, which gives them position of controlling the conversations within several turns.

Excerpt 2:

IR: If all it simulates and computes is reliable, why can't it be an evidence?

IE: How do you know it is reliable?

IR: We almost believe in what is computed based on statistics in laboratory…

IE: It is not laboratory. It is computer. How do you know it is reliable or not?

IR: Academician Ding, of course we know that there are doubting and disapproving voices in scientific community. But it gives us the impression that because of the existence of IPCC as an organization where scientists of different countries give a report together, countries all over the world would go there and have a conference on climate. So it gives us the impression that it is approved by the mainstream of scientific community.

IE: Is there any mainstream in scientific community?

IR: What we consider as mainstream is…

IE: Does science depend on the number of its supporters? Science is the judgement of truth.

In this excerpt, at the beginning the interviewer addresses a question, expecting to lead out the interviewee's answer. However, instead of directly answering the interviewer, the interviewee throws back a how-question to challenge the interviewer, showing his disagreement with the interviewer's words. Then the interview explains, followed by another

elementary interrogative from the interviewee. So the interviewer further justifies herself, using IPCC and other scientists as supporting evidence. But the interviewee doesn't buy that, again pointing out the problem in her explanation with biased polar interrogative, in order to emphasize on his opinion and seeking for the interviewer's response. At last, he gives another biased polar interrogative clause and self-answers it, not even giving any opportunity to the interviewer. The dominating position of interviewee is very obvious in this excerpt. He decides on the direction of the conversation and the interviewer just follows his logic.

Besides, tagged declarative clause is used, mainly used by interviewees, to attract interviewers' attention. Tagged questions carry more addressers' expectations to be confirmed by the addressees, thus they can be used for reinforcing addressers powerful position in the conversations. Such as the following example.

Excerpt 3:

IR: I agree with your statement that we must control the source of infection. But what you say seem to be impossible in my imagination.

IE: No. We must now turn something impossible to something possible. So can we win this war. What we should do now, firstly is the to put all sources of infection together, for example the quarantine measures we have taken before, haven't we? No matter in the Northern Jiaotong University or the Central University of Finance and Economics, the buildings in which there are infected people have been quarantined. We sent food and drinks to them, as well as did the cleaning and sterilization, didn't we? Thus the problem has been solved, hasn't it? … So the cutting off the sources of infection is very essential.

IR: We see a very clam and firm mayor, but at the same time we see the number of infected people in Beijing is constantly increasing.

IE: The infectious disease has its own law, doesn't it? … But to tell the truth, we are analyzing and we have assumptions at the bottom.

To conclude, both interviewers and interviewees use interrogative clauses to constrain the contributions of the other part and thus shift the conversations towards the directions they want. They use the elemental interrogative clauses to challenge the counter-parts' opinions and show their disagreements, the biased polar interrogative clauses to emphasize underlying pre-assumption, the tagged declarative clauses to call for attention and maintain powerful position. The number of interrogative clauses doesn't vary significantly between interviewers and interviewees, which shows the relatively equal power relations, even though interviewers addressee more questions for interviewees to answer and interviewees have more self-answering questions.

(2) Structural Features: Turning-Taking System

Turn is the basic analytical unit in conversation and participants take turn when they speak [24]. The turn-taking system consists of two components: the turn-allocational component which regulates the changeover of turns by selecting the next speaker or regulating the order of turns, and the turn-constructional component which embraces the size or length and linguistic texture of turns. The turn-taking patterns in four interviews are listed in Table VII.

The table shows that in each interview, the quantity of turns doesn't vary much between interviewers and interviewees. In the interview No.3, the interviewer and interviewee have exactly the same turn. In the interview No.1 and No. 2, interviewers take more turns than interviewees, but the difference is very small. In the interview No.4, the interviewee takes much more turns than the interviewer, compared with interview No.2 and No.4. This can be interpreted that interviewers and interviewees have relatively same power in terms of the turn-allocational system.

TABLE VII: THE NUMBER OF TURNS AND WORDS IN THE INTERVIEWS

Interview		Total Turns	Total Words Number	Average Words Number in Each Turn
No.1	IR	34	976	28.7
	IE	36	2679	74.4
No.2	IR	78	1658	21.3
	IE	79	4594	58.2
No.3	IR	41	1303	31.8
	IE	41	5972	145.7
No.4	IR	55	908	16.5
	IE	68	6285	92.4

However, the number of words in interviewers' and interviewees' turns varies significantly. Although interviewers and interviewees take same turns, interviewees speak far more words than interviewers in their turns. In interview No.3 and No.4, the average words number of interviewees is nearly four or five times as big as that of interviewers. Even the smallest difference takes up 2.6 times. Therefore, in terms of turn-constructional system, interviewees speak for much longer time than interviewers do thus possess more power than interviewers.

Besides, there is another pragmatic feature that needs illustration. Although interviewers speak less than interviewees, they initiate more turns than interviewees. In most cases, turns are changed by interviewers addressing questions to interviewees and conversations procced by interviewers constantly raising new questions from interviewees' answer to the previous questions. The following example is in the situation where all turns of interviewees are initiated by interviewer.

Excerpt 4:

IR: So you occasionally notice Lantian?

IE: Yes, very occasionally. And before that, none of the banks had ever mentioned it to me.

IR: Because of an occasional chance, you noticed Lantian.

IE: Yes.

IR: Then does Lantian have any difference, compared with other listed companies?

IE: I started to analyze Lantian's financial report with multipole methods on October 9th. When the result came out, I was very astonished, because its result was something I had first seen.

IR: What have you seen?

IE: In 2000, its current ratio decreased to 0.77 and quick ratio to 0.35, return on working capital to -1.27, which means that its three main financial figures had already gone beyond their critical points.

Still, there are some cases like excerpt 3 where the interviewee initiate turn changes and interviewers responds,

but the frequency is comparatively low. Situations in excerpt 5 are much more common in the four interviews.

To conclude, interviewers and interviews take similar amounts of turns but interviewees' turns are much longer. Interviewers initiate more turn changes than interviewees. As a result, the power relations revealed by turn-taking system is that interviewers possess more power than interviewers in a boarder sense.

2) Structural features: Interruption

Interruption is used by powerful parts in the interactions to control the contributions of the powerless parts, to lead out the information that is wanted and stopping others to give irrelevant information[9]. It is regarded as another linguistic mark that shows the power position of the participants in the conversations. The interruption patterns in the four TV news interviews are listed in the following table.

TABLE VIII: THE NUMBER OF INTERRUPTED TURNS IN THE INTERVIEWS

Interview		Interrupted Turns	Total Turns	Percentage
No.1	IR	6	34	18%
	IE	2	36	6%
No.2	IR	4	78	5%
	IE	0	79	0%
No.3	IR	7	41	17%
	IE	0	41	0%
No.4	IR	0	55	0%
	IE	5	68	7%

As the table demonstrates, both interviewers and interviewees interrupt others to exercise their power. Interviewees interrupt interviewers more other than in the interview No.4. The interviewer in the interview No.3 is interrupted most by the interviewee and the interviewee in interview No.4 is interrupted most by the interviewer. Interruptions appear most frequently in interview No.1.

Excerpt 5:

IR: You are now directly criticizing IPCC…

IE: Yes, why can't I? Science should be open to criticism. Since you admit you are science, you should bear other's criticism. My essay in the China Science directly criticizes the third group of IPCC…

IR: And I see your words…

IE: Very harsh…

In this excerpt, the interviewer and interview cut into each other utterance rudely in turns, to show their strong emotions and disagreements. The interviewer interrupt interviewee's turn to emphasize on her point that the interviewee is criticizing an "authoritative" organization in her eyes, which underlies her disapproval and some kind of criticism. She stops the interviewee to say more and draws back the focus of the conversation on. The interviewee interrupt interviewer two times to show his strong disagreement with interviewers' words. He tries to convince the interviewer and justify himself, by shifting the focus of the conversation on another aspect. Using interruption, the interviewer and interviewee have a fierce battle on language.

3) Structural features: Topic controlling

Powerful participants always have the ability of controlling topics in the conversations[9]. Although there is set theme of each interview, the specific topics of content about which interviewers and interviewees talks change several times. In the four selected interviews, all topics shifting are initiated by the interviewers.

Take Interview No.3 as an example. The central theme of this interview is about how Wang Qishan, after he had been appointed to be the acting mayor of Beijing, took actions to fight against the SARS in Beijing in 2003. At the beginning of the interview, interviewer asks him what is the biggest problem in this battle against SARS and the methods he takes to control the sources of infection. This topic lasts for 24 turns. In the next 12 turns, the topic shift to Wang's perception of people's anxiety towards this disease and his information resources. Then from turn 37 to turn 45, Wang clears up two rumors about government's action to take to fight against SARS. In turn 46 to turn 50, the topic is about the hospital in Beijing. In turn 51 to 64, they talk about the how the SARS in Beijing affect people in other provinces and to how to control the transfer of labor between Beijing city and other regions in China. In turn 65 to 68, the topic is more personal, concerning on Wang's own choices and actions. In the last 14 turns, the topic focus on the citizens' life in Beijing. Wang gives suggestions and responses to some of people's doubts, as such economic and commercial issues.

Excerpt 6:

IR: How did he know your ideas? By what channel…

IE: One is television and one is newspaper, along with my officers at all levels. They should all open their mouth…

IR: I have received many messages on phone, saying that the government is going to spread some medicine from the air. So everyone please close windows and doors.

IE: Yes.

IR: It that truth? Or is it just a rumor?

IE: We have never thought about that…

In this excerpt, the topic of conversation is abruptly shifted from the channel of information to the rumor of government action, where the interviewer plays the role of topic controller.

4) Structural features: Formulation

According to Fairclough[9], formulation is widely used in radio interviews as a way of leading participants into accepting the version that he speaker understand, and so limiting participants' option for future contributions. It is a device for control. The formulation patterns in the four selected interviews are showed in the below table.

TABLE IX: FREQUENCY OF FORMULATION IN THE INTERVIEWS

Interview	No.1		No.2		No.3		No.4	
	IR	IE	IR	IE	IR	IE	IR	IE
Formulation	6	2	2	2	0	1	3	0

As the table shows, interviewers use formulations more frequently than interviewees at average. Formulations appear most frequently in interview No.6 and least frequently in interview No.3. The variation between interviewers and interviewees is also the largest in interview No.1, with six formulations of interviewer and only one formulation of interviewee. These figures justify another way of interviewers to exercise power over interviewees.

Excerpt 7:

IR: The time I know the total amount of CO_2 emission, I

immediately realized that this amount was very small…If the target of 450PPM is settled, the per person emission will be only 0.8 ton of carbon in the future.

IE: So it is like a ceiling, isn't it?

IR: Yes…

Excerpt 8:

IE: There is a big trap in it.

IR: Trap?

IE: Yes, it is a trap. If emission is strictly limited over the globe in the future, the CO2 emission will be a very precious commodity.

IR: So it means that if you want to emit, you may need to buy the emission?

IE: If you don't have enough emission, you need to buy…

In the excerpt 7, interviewer uses a formulation which is in the form of a tagged question to rephrase the thing that interviewee says according her own understanding, thus to make the interviewee reply and confirm her. In the excerpt 8, the interview first raises a formulation from the previous turn of the interviewee by repeating the word "trap" to ask interviewee's explanation. After the interviewer confirms her and makes some further explanation, the interviewer again raises a formulation to check understanding. Then the interviewee replies it with a formulation of the interviewer's words. This reflects that each of them try to emphasize the opinions of their own and make the other one to the acceptance of their versions of understanding. Therefore, the power struggle between two participants is revealed.

B. Interpretation of Situational Context and Discourse Type

According to Fairclough[9], participants in an interaction arrive at the interpretation of situational context and decide on what appropriate discourse type to drawn upon, in terms of four dimensions: what's going on, who's involved, what relationships are at the issue, and what is the role of language in what's going on. These four dimensions respectively determines the four components of discourse type: contents, subjects, relations and connections. This study approaches from the above four dimensions of situational context to link the textual features described previously in this chapter with discourse type as interview.

'What's going on?' has been subdivides by Fairclough into activity, topic and purpose. In these four selected dialogues, the activity type is interviewing someone who plays important role in a certain event. For example, the interviewee of the interview No.1, Ding Zhongli, was a representative of China to attend the World Climate Conference in Copenhagen in 2009. He made speech on the conference and expressed his opinions about emission reduction to the world. Liu Shuwei, the interviewer in the interview No.4, was the central figure in the Lantian issue. She spotted the financial problems in Lantian Cooperation and wrote a short essay asking banks to stop the loan to Liantian. Her behavior triggered series of cases in the following months and eventually uncovered some problematic phenomena in the China's market economy system. Since they are all important figures in society, their stories and opinions need to be heard by more people. Thus the topic in these four dialogues is the description of personal stories and expression of personal opinions, and the purpose is for reporting news event from the perspective of the parties involved. In this sense, the textual figures of overused interrogative clauses can be justified, in order to lead out the information that should be told to the audiences.

'Who's involved?' is answered from three dimensions. The first dimension derives from the activity type which in these cases is interview, and an interview has positions of interviewers and interviews. The second dimension ascribes social identities to the subjects involve in. In these four interviews, there are journalists, as the interviewers, and member of the public, as the interviewees. Although all these people are all important figures in some areas, they are all the same as the subjects of news reporting in these interviews. The third dimension associates different situations with different speaking and listening positions. In these four interviews, there are interviewers acting as speakers and interviewee as addressees.

'In what relations?' mainly depends on the relationships of power, social distance, and so forth that are set up and enacted in the situation. In these interviews, it is natural to concern the relationship between members of journalist and member of the public. As journalists, it is their obligations to dig out the truth and covering issues to the audiences. So by the usage of a lot of interrogative clauses, interruptions and topic controlling, journalists in interviews get the information that they want the audiences to know and set up the character figures that they want to convey to the public, thus fulfill their duties. Meanwhile, interviewees also have the duty to be cooperative out of the requirements of news interview. This relation between journalists and subjects of news reporting in news interviews gives interviewer natural power to exercise over interviewees.

"What is the role of language?" is determined by both the genre and channel of the language. Interviews of these type are obvious way to obtaining information of news events and opinions of the involved parties. The channel is through spoken language. In these cases, the abandonment of written language indicates the degree of control which journalists exercise over all aspects in these cases: information from subjects of news reporting is valuable enough to convey to audiences when it is mediated and checked by journalists.

In sum, the situational context of these conversations determine the discourse type as news interviews. This discourse type entitles journalists, as interviewers in these interviews, with natural power which they exercise over interviewers. In this way, those textual features described early in this chapter which reflects power relations between interviewers and interviewees can be justified. Since journalists are naturally more powerful in news interviews, their language use will manifest the features like interrogative clauses, interruptions, topic-controlling, formulations and turns-initiating.

C. Explanation of Social Determinants

It is interpreted above that discourse type of news interviews justify journalists' predominant positions in interviews, which gives rationale to some of the textual features described and analyzed in the chosen four TV news interviews in this study. However, from the linguistic and pragmatic features summarized and excerpts listed above, interviewees' exercise of power over interviews is also overt.

But the interpretation of discourse type makes little senses of it. Consequently, the explanation of social determinants is needed, in order to form a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of the power relations in the selected four TV news interviews.

Based on Fairclough's analytical framework, the social determinants are analyzed from three levels of social organizations: situational, institutional and societal levels, to examine how power relation at these levels helps to shape the power relation in discursive practices.

On the situational level, interviewees, being the targeted subject of news interviews, are the participants or involved parties in the issues the news interviews aim to cover. They have more experience and intuitive feelings about the news issues than journalists, when journalists are just outsiders. So they give information about the issues to interviewers. In this sense, information givers can also be the powerful parts because they own the information others want to have[9]. Thus, interviewers in the four interviews gain power from situational level of interviews.

On the institutional level, interviewees in the four news interviews have more power than interviewers because they are all people with profession in certain fields. Three of them are scholars and one of them is politicians. Ding Zhongli, Yi Zhongtian and Liu Shuwei, the interviewees in interview No.1, No.2 and No.4 are scholars in advanced scientific research institutions, Ding being an Academic Divisions of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Yi being a professor and doctoral supervisor in the College of Humanities of Xiamen University, Liu being a researcher in the Institute of Economics of Central University of Finance and Economics. Wang Qishan, the interviewee in the interview No.3, is an experienced politician who has been working as a high-level government officer for decades. These four people all possess expert power [25], [26] as they have unique and professional knowledge or ability in certain fields that the interviewers don not have. Their exercising of power to interviewers in the news interviews, similar to teachers' exercising of power over students in classrooms, reflects the power relations between knowledgeable people and ordinary people on institutional levels.

On the societal level, interviewees in four interviews have more power than interviewers because their higher social status is higher than interviewers'. Not only their occupations as scientist, professor mayor and researcher give them high social status, but also their age put them in higher positions in society. In the four interviews, all interviewers are younger than interviewees, with a biggest age gap of 19 years and a smallest age gap of 13 years. Therefore, concerning age factor and profession factor, four interviewees are in higher social hierarchy than interviewers who are only young journalists. Their exercising of power reflects the power relations between people of high status and low status in the whole society.

In conclusion, the social determinants of power relations in the four interviews derive from multiple sources, from a situational level to a societal level. The power relations in discursive practices are the reflection of power relation in social struggles.

V. CONCLUSIONS

This study finds that power relation exists in TV news interviews between the interviewers and interviewee. The power relation is relatively the equal in general, when interviewers possess a bit more power than interviewees do at average in the four selected interviews.

Certain amount of linguistic and pragmatic features can be observed with the exercising of power in the discursive practices between interviewers and interviewees. In terms of interviewers' controlling over interviewees, interrogatives clauses, especially biased polar interrogative clauses, are used to lead out the information they want and manipulate the directions of interviews. Interviewers also initiate more turns to interviewees to take and follow. They interrupt interviewees' turns and control the topic-shifting in interviews. They use formulation for checking understanding and re-emphasis. In terms of interviews' fighting against interviewers' control, interrogative clauses are still the main device to constraining other parts' contributions in the interviews. Besides, interviewees use more tagged declarative clauses to seek confirmation of the interviewers, thus lead the interview to the direction they expect. Interviewees speak much longer time than interviewees. They also use interruptions and formulations to exercise power.

These textual features are partly associated with the situational context and discourse type as news interview. Interviewer, as journalists, have the right to control and exercise power over the interviewees, out of their obligation to report news issue and establish public figures of the subjects they interviewed. Interviewees, as the target of news interviews, have the duty to be cooperative in order to keep the interviews proceed on effectively, out of their common assumptions about news interviews.

However, deeper social determinants are embedded behind that contributes to the power relations in discursive practices between interviewers and interviews. Interviewees being the role of informative-provider in micro situational level and knowledge-possessor in macro institutional and societal levels, are more powerful than interviewers because they are in higher social status than interviewers are. The power relations and struggles in society shape the power relations between interviewers and interviewees in TV news interviews, which corresponds to Fairclough's discourse views of language that language is a form of social practice [9].

One theoretical implication of this study is that power relations between participants in discourse can be viewed as the reflection of power relations between non-linguistic elements in institutional and societal levels, for power is always dependent on social relations. Another is that the division of biased and unbiased polar interrogative is very useful in identifying the textual figures of power in discourse.

However, the current study still has some limitation for improvement. This is only a case study with four selected TV news interviews. More studies on power relations in more news interviews are hoped to be carried out to get a more general pattern of power relations in news interviews.

Moreover, the subjects in this study are all TV news interviews which are not natural institutional conversations. The interviewers and interviewee may have rehearsed before

or gotten prepared with possible questions and answers before. The video tapes of these interviews may be edited artificially so the whole conversations are not presented. These may cause some problems in the analysis of turn-taking system, interruptions and interrogative mood. Studies on power relations in institutional conversations in more natural senses are needed to improve the findings of this study.

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