

**INDIRECT DEFENSIVE RESPONSES  
TO HOSTILE QUESTIONS  
IN BRITISH BROADCAST NEWS INTERVIEWS**

**(2 Volumes)**

**(Vol. 1)**

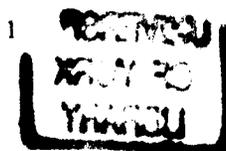
**Dangjie Ji**

**PhD**

**University of York**

**Centre of Communication Studies**

**December 2008**



## ABSTRACT

Live broadcast interviews came into existence from 1950s in the western media. Over the last 40 years the previously deferential style of questioning in broadcast news interviews has become more direct, challenging, penetrating, pursuing—in a word, hostile. These hostile questions create ‘avoidance-avoidance conflict’ for the interviewee (IE), i.e. these questions can be sufficiently hostile that the only available direct responses are negative, yet a reply must be made. To avoid the negative consequences of direct replies, the IE often provides a response with ‘evasion’, ‘equivocation’ or ‘indirectness’. My research sets out to explore the phenomenon of ‘indirectness’ in IE answer turns. Data was collected from BBC radio 4 ‘Today Program’ (January-May 2005). Conversation Analysis was used as the research method. In addition to reviewing the current literature on CA applications in live interactions of news interview and linguistic theories related to ‘indirectness’, the analytical part of this thesis has made considerable contributions to the existing literature. The findings of this thesis on ‘indirectness’ in news interview settings contribute to the linguistic field of ‘indirectness’ and the application of CA in news interview interactions. For example, the observations about the technical practice of ‘indirectness’ enhance the existing literature on the theoretical explanation and illustrations of ‘indirectness’ and exploring ‘indirectness’ in the Second Pair Part of the interaction adds to current work on ‘indirectness’ in the First Pair Part. These findings also have considerable practical implications for other interactive situations, such as those between doctor-patient, police-suspect, and lawyer-client.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My most sincere gratitude goes to Paul Drew, my main supervisor, who has made a tremendous contribution to the completion of this work. I really appreciate his patience in guiding a student like me with little knowledge of Conversation Analysis at the beginning of PhD, step by step; his regular supervision where careful feedback and constructive criticism were given; his patient correction of my English language; and very importantly, his fatherly care for an international student in a completely different culture, which provided tremendous reassurance and encouragement. Without his professional feedback, careful guidance and warm support, this PhD project would not have been possible.

I would like to thank John Local, my second supervisor, who provided very enlightening feedback for my work, especially at major stages of my study. His grasp of the big structure and insights for detailed analysis both contributed to the improvement of my analysis and writing.

My gratitude goes to Celia Kitzinger (and Paul Drew, again) for the instructions on Conversation Analysis in my first four terms of study. And to Riina Kasterpalu, Wen Ma, Martine Nordegraaf, Monika Voge, Liisa Voutlainen, and Ruslan Bayramukov, for their feedback on my work during and after data sessions at the University of York.

My special thanks go to Shehzad Ali, who provided support when I was down, gave me information and guidance when needed, and continued to be a loyal PhD 'colleague' through all the three years of acquaintance.

My thanks also go to the Graduate Training Unit in the University of York during my PhD years, which provided useful information for various aspects of study, and offered a place to acquaint and communicate with other PhD students.

I would also like to thank my father, Yuhua Ji, who devoted a lot of energy into sponsoring my study, silently worried and whole-heartedly supported me through the years; and my mother, Huijuan Zhu, who called me every now and then to check my well-being.

And to friends in York, Chichih Lien, Richard Lamoure and others, who gave me company and support when I needed a break from study.

## **AUTHOR'S DECLARATION**

I, Dangjie Ji, hereby declare that this thesis entitled, *Indirect Defensive Responses in British Political News Interview*, is my own work. I have not taken ideas from any author without citation and the data here analyzed were collected solely by myself (York, 2005).

Some of the ideas discussed in this thesis have been presented at academic conferences.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## Volume 1

<b>Part I.</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter One: Introduction</b>	<b>10</b>
1. Area of research	11
2. Historical development of British political news interviews	12
3. Pragmatics of questioning and answering	16
4. Hostility of questioning in news interviews	20
5. Indirectness in IE response	25
6. Structure of the thesis	30
<b>Chapter Two:</b>	
<b>Literature Review: Interactions in British news interview</b>	<b>33</b>
1. Turn-taking in news interview	34
2. IR questions in news interview	40
3. IE answers in news interview	54
4. Conclusion	71
<b>Chapter Three:</b>	
<b>Literature Review: Linguistic Theories Related to News Interview</b>	<b>73</b>
1. Introduction	74
2. Indirect speech act: first pair part of conversation	78
3. Politeness: 'why'	87
4. Conversational implicature	98
5. Other literature: figurative speech—an area of 'indirectness'	104
6. Other literature: equivocation	108
7. Conclusion	114
<b>Part II.</b>	<b>116</b>
<b>Chapter Four: Data and Methodology</b>	<b>117</b>
1. Data collection	118
2. Research methodology: conversation analysis	120

## **Chapter Five:**

### **“Evasive” Response Types to Hostile Questions:**

<b>Evasion, Equivocation and Indirectness</b>	<b>130</b>
1. Introduction	131
2. Co-existence & intertwine of multi-dimensions: close connection between ‘evasion’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘indirectness’	134
3. A practice of evasion: agenda shifting	141
4. Practices of equivocation: saying something without being fully committed to it	158
5. Indirect responses	172
6. Summary	178

## **Chapter Six:**

### **Two Types of Challenging Questions and the Subsequent**

#### **Defensive Responses**

1. Introduction	181
2. Questions in broadcast news interview: from deferential to challenging	181
3. Two Types of challenging question turns	186
4. Defensive responses to these two types of challenging question turns	190
5. ‘Indirectness’ in defensive responses	197
6. Summary	211

## **Chapter Seven:**

### **The General Practices for Constructing Defensive Answers**

#### **Indirectly: The Strategies**

1. Introduction	<b>215</b>
2. Referring to history	226
3. Referring to a third party	231
4. Citing the IE’s experience	238
5. Insertion: a common phenomenon across these different practices	244
6. The ‘general practices’: components but not essence of ‘indirectness’	250
7. Summary	258

<b>Chapter Eight:</b>	
<b>The Linguistic Practices for Constructing Defensive Answers Indirectly</b>	<b>261</b>
1. Introduction	262
2. Contrast: further implemented by lexical selection	267
3. Lexical selection	278
4. Raising the question: constructing skepticism and thereby indirect criticism of an opponent	285
5. Change of reference: constructing resistance	290
6. Summary	297
<b>Chapter Nine: Conclusion</b>	<b>300</b>
1. Definition of an ‘indirect answer’ in this thesis	301
2. Need for inference: the essence of indirectness	302
3. Functions of different ‘indirect practices’	302
4. The two levels of ‘indirect practices’: strategies and tactics	303
5. Contributions of the thesis	304
6. Potential drawbacks of the data set	308
7. Practical applications of this research	309
8. Implications for research in other fields	310
9. Future research in news interview interactions	310
<b>Volume 2</b>	
<b>Cover (Vol. 2)</b>	<b>312</b>
<b>Table of Contents (Vol. 2)</b>	<b>313</b>
<b>Appendices</b>	<b>314</b>
Appendix A: Transcript Symbols in this thesis	314
Appendix B: Transcripts for this research	320
<b>Notes</b>	<b>568</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>570</b>

## **Tables**

Table 1: The Four Felicity Conditions in Speech Act	80
Table 2: “Do you know + embedded question” as indirect request, pre-announcement or pre-request	86
Table 3: Two types of challenging questions	189
Table 4: Parallels between history and the present	223
Table 5: Illustration of ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selections’ in #142	265

## **Diagrams**

Diagram 1: Relation between the ‘general practices’, ‘linguistic practices’ and ‘indirectness’ when linguistic practices are used to implement general practices	221
Diagram 2: Direct relation between ‘linguistic practices’ and ‘indirectness’ when linguistic practices are used independently to achieve ‘indirect response’	221
Diagram 3: Relationship between linguistic practices, general practices and ‘indirectness’	304

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

**PART I**

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

## **Chapter One**

### **INTRODUCTION**

## 1. Area of research

This thesis endeavors to explore the interactions between the Interviewer (later in text abbreviated as ‘IR’) and the Interviewee (later abbreviated as ‘IE’) in British political news interviews. The political news interview is an interesting and rich environment to study interactions, as the IR routinely poses difficult or hostile questions to challenge the IE, and the IE struggles to defend the party or interest group he or she represents. As Steensig and Drew (2008) points out, there are different perspectives in the study of ‘questioning’, such as: the grammar of questioning (i.e. the interplay between syntactic, intonational and pragmatic resources) (Steensig and Drew 2008: 5-6), the apparent indirectness of questioning (in contrast with the directness of declarative and imperative forms) (Steensig and Drew 2008: 6), the many actions that can be managed or performed through questioning (including doubting, challenging, accusing, suggesting, inviting, requesting, complaining, etc.) (Steensig and Drew 2008: 6), and the constraining force of questioning (i.e. ‘questions require answers, which is perhaps why so many other actions are performed through interrogative constructions’) (Steensig and Drew 2008: 7). Due to the complexities of questioning, an IE can only make an appropriate response if they have a good understanding of the IR’s question. On the other hand, the IE’s answer turn is also typically complex—there can be different dimensions in the responses (i.e. ranging from rejecting to answer, through evasion, equivocation, indirect answer, appearing to answer, to direct answer) (Bull 1994; Bull 2003; Bavelas, Beavin, Black and Chovil 1990; Bavelas, Beavin, Black and Bryson 1988; Clayman 2001; Clayman and Heritage 2002; Greatbatch 1986; Harris

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

1991), as well as specific practices for each dimension (e.g. various practices to construct an ‘indirect’ answer, which will be examined in detail in later chapters). These complexities in questioning and answering make the political news interview a rich environment for research.

**2. Historical development of British broadcast news interview: a brief account**

The appearance and development of news interview in the western world is a relatively recent phenomenon. Such interviews in the British media showed a similar development to those in America.

Conducting interviews

Interviews appeared first in American print journalism. ‘Asking questions’ was not regularly practiced until the 1820s and it was not an activity acknowledged in print until after the Civil War. By the end of the 1900s, interviews became one of the central activities of the journalists. In the late nineteenth century the British journalists began to conduct interviews. These interviews were ‘conducted with public figures who sought publicity, and generally the IE spoke only to the representative of a newspaper favorably disposed toward him’. (Schudson 1995: 79)

Impersonal surveillance

A history of the news interview contributes to the history of ‘intrusive perception’ and ‘impersonal surveillance’ (Schudson 1995: 89). The phrase ‘intrusive perception’ means the information-gathering process of the IE by the IR, for the sake of the media profession as well as the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

general public. The IR then writes or speaks it out to the general public. Therefore, the media and the general public administer ‘surveillance’ of the IEs, including politicians and other public figures that are at the centre of public interest. The relationship between the IR and the IE during the interview is rather ‘impersonal’, not only in the sense that it contains specific goal of information gathering (for the IE) and passing (for the IR), but also in that the ultimate benefit of the interview is for the purpose of public surveillance. (Schudson 1995: 89)

Broadcasting ‘live’ interviews

Until the mid-1950s, *broadcasting* spoken words was traditionally regarded as a matter of reading printed words aloud. (Heritage 1985: 112) Interviews (i.e. asking questions to politicians or other public figures) were generally conducted behind the scene, and the results were later read aloud during the broadcast. The broadcasting per se was a ‘reading’ activity rather than a ‘live’ journalistic inquiry to public figures or ‘live’ political communication from the politicians (or public figures) to the media and public. The interactions between the IR and the IE took place behind the scene before the broadcast rather than during the broadcast. Therefore, at that time, broadcasting per se was not much more important than the printed media. (Heritage 1985: 113)

It was only when the ‘live’ interviews were introduced, i.e. when the public figures were invited to the studio and asked questions there and then in front of the public, that broadcast interviews started to have their irreplaceable significance. This way, the public could witness the whole process of live interactions between the IR and the IE, see how the IR asks

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

questions on the public's behalf and more importantly, how the IE responds to questions, which evolved from deferential questions into more and more hostile questions as history developed.

#### BBC monopoly

British broadcasting was at first monopolized by the British Broadcasting Company (BBC). During this period, as Dimbleby (1975: 214, in Heritage 1985: 113) notes, the interview was not

“a means of extracting painful or revealing information; it did not test or challenge ideas, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions. The interviewer had not yet become an unofficial tribune of the people, or prosecuting counsel, or chat-show host. His job was to discover some very simple facts: if he did more than that, it was chance, not design. It was not thought proper to enquire (even gently) into private lives, or social problems; to ask about money, or industrial relations, or politics.”

Therefore, the IRs' questioning style was rather 'deferential' at that time ('deferential' is the way a certain questioning style has been described widely in the literature, as well as in media analysis of earlier media reporting styles). It was for the IE (i.e. the politicians or other public figures) to decide how far the questioning could go before the IE refused to answer. This pattern or style of questioning was later broken when the monopoly of broadcast was broken.

#### Breaking the monopoly

The advent of Independent Television broke the BBC's broadcasting monopoly and rapidly undermined this deferential style of news interview.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

“The producers of its nationally networked broadcasts adopted a less restrictive interpretation of their statutory obligations [i.e. to remain impartial in the coverage of current affairs] so as to include inquiry and investigation into news stories. Therefore, a more direct, searching, and penetrating style of interviewing was developed. (Day 1961) In the new kind of unrehearsed investigative interview, responses were no longer permitted to stand as stated by interviewers who simply moved on to the next question. Instead they were pursued, challenged, probed, and where necessary, clarified and reformulated. As a result, the NI became a more flexible, lively, and influential instrument of journalistic inquiry.” (Heritage 1985: 113)

Together with breaking the monopoly, a change of interviewing style also came. The IRs started to adopt a less deferential attitude towards the IEs: they asked more ‘direct, searching and penetrating’ questions, i.e. more hostile questions; and they often pursued a question in next turn if the IE had not provided an answer to it—via evasion, equivocation or plainly refusing to answer. (For more about IR questions, see the next section on ‘pragmatics of questions’ and the section on IR questions in Chapter 2.)

Public accountability

One result of British democracy is the *public accountability of politicians*, including both those in government and those in opposing parties. In the every-five-year general election, the electorate can pass judgment on the performance of the government in power. If that performance has been perceived as being poor, the government is likely to be voted out. The ‘people power’ in a democratic system even goes down to the town level. Because of the ‘people power’, politicians are held

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

responsible and obligated to communicate to the public about their policies, ideas, achievements, targets, or justification for some failures. They have to keep the public informed of their achievements so as to maintain public trust and make continuation or renewal of the current governance possible in the next election. The most efficient way for the politicians to communicate with the public and for the public to know about government and other parties is through the media. Politicians seek public exposure, trying to gain favor from the public. The media take the initiative to find politicians for news interviews, so as to question on the people's behalf about party policies, supervise and challenge politicians. Therefore, there is a close connection between the 'public accountability of politicians' in British democratic system and the popularity of broadcast interviews. We might even say that, the 'public accountability of British politicians' directly leads to the popularity of broadcast interviews, both for the politicians and for the public.

Having briefly reviewed the history of broadcast interview, we now turn to the live interactions between the IR and the IE, i.e. the questioning and answering acts in live interview.

### **3. Pragmatics of questioning and answering**

As we have noted in the previous section, in early interviews the IR questions were firstly quite deferential and later on became more and more hostile when the BBC monopoly in broadcasting clasped. Understandably, as a first pair part<sup>1</sup> of an interactional pair (i.e. 'adjacency pair' in Conversation Analysis terms), the questioning has much constraining

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

force on the responding (as a second pair part). Before moving to features of questioning and answering in British news interviews, let us firstly have a look at the pragmatics of questioning and answering in general.

Firstly, different resources (such as syntactic, intonational and pragmatic resources) can be used to do questioning.

“In English questions are formed through subject-verb (or operator) reversal of the declarative form (generally polar yes/no questions), sometimes with pre-positioned interrogative words such as *when, who, where* etc.. So-called tag questions, post-positioned constructions such as *aren't you?*, are another such resource. However, the grammatical/syntactic nucleus of interrogative constructions has necessarily been supplemented by both phonetic analysis, to account for how declarative constructions can come to have an interrogative function (through rising intonation); and pragmatic analysis, to account for how utterances can accomplish the pragmatic force of questioning without taking grammatically or intonationally interrogative forms.” (Steensig and Drew 2008: 5-6)

For a glimpse of the complexity of questioning, see the following question sequence:

#1

- 1 A: Where are you?
- 2 B: I'm in York.
- 3 A: But where ARE you?

#1 is an example where it is unclear how specific the questioning is. B interprets it as asking which town he is in, while A is asking more specifically—where about in York B is.

On the contrary, there are also ‘interrogative forms that do not do questioning, i.e. in which grammatical form does not determine an

utterance's function, such as so-called rhetorical questions (Schegloff 1984 provides an analysis of an especially characteristic case)'. (Steensig and Drew 2008: 6) The complex interplay between syntactic, intonational and pragmatic resources 'has had to broaden its scope to include investigation of how utterances can come to have the *performative force* of questioning, without being constructed in any conventionally syntactic form' (Steensig and Drew 2008: 6). In British political news interview, the questioning can be achieved via: a) interrogatives; b) declaratives; c) preface plus interrogative or declarative; d) one word or phrase; or e) other syntactic formats. (For more details on the structure and functioning of questions in British political news interviews, see later analysis chapters.)

Secondly, 'interrogative' syntax can be used to achieve other actions besides 'questions'; that is, 'questioning' may be done not so much to seek information, as to do or perform inviting, requesting and so on.

"...it's plain that whilst an utterance may be formed interrogatively, and indeed may 'question' the recipient, the utterance simultaneously does or 'performs' another action. 'Question' is therefore only a minimal characterisation of an utterance, interactionally. A clue to this is that 'questioning' has another meaning, beside asking someone whether they are going to a meeting, asking them what the time is etc. That meaning is something like to be sceptical, to doubt – in short, to question the truth or veracity of what someone has claimed. In this respect, when the police question a suspect, or a parent questions a teenager who arrived home late, they 'interrogate' the suspect or teenager. So questioning someone's account, questioning their authority and so on point to the ways speakers can doubt, challenge or accuse through questioning. But so many other actions can be managed or performed through questioning, including suggesting (*why don't*

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*we...*), inviting (*why don't you come over...*), requesting (*would you pass me...*) and complaining (*why don't you ever...*)". (Steensig and Drew 2008: 6)

Therefore, actions other than questioning—such as challenging, accusing, suggesting, inviting, requesting, complaining, etc.—can be achieved by interrogatives. For example: 'Do you know when is the meeting?' can be either a) simply questioning; or b) questioning as well as serving as a pre to something, such as a request. As Atkinson and Drew (1979: 68) talks about cross examination in court:

“...examination may be characterized as involving question and answer sequences only. However, that characterisation is only a minimal description of the turns in examination; other actions may be done in those turns, though they are done in the format of questions or answers.”

Similarly in British political news interviews, the questions are not simply questioning but also challenging, accusing, or doing some other actions.

Thirdly, a variety of research point out special constraining force of questions or interrogatives.

“It is widely acknowledged that there is something compelling about questions – questions require answers (which is perhaps why so many other actions are performed through interrogative constructions). ...the perspective perhaps most closely associated with the constraining force of questions is that of Conversation Analysis, and its account of adjacency pairs, according to which there is a normative expectation that if a speaker's turn is done, and understood, as the first part of an adjacency pair (say, a request), then the recipient should respond with the second part of that pair (a granting or rejection of the request) (eg. Sacks 1992: 521-569).

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Questions are just such ‘first pair parts’; indeed they are the prototypical (perhaps the most fundamental?) initial action in an adjacency pair. There is, once more, a considerable body of research into how the constraining force of expecting/requiring an answer to a question is exploited in the organization of talk in interviews of various kinds, court hearings, talk-in-interaction in the media (eg. radio phone-in programmes etc.) and the like. This includes research into which questioning forms are particularly constraining or ‘oppressive’ (eg. Heritage 2002a)”. (Steensig and Drew 2008: 7)

Due to the ‘constraining force’ of questions, the evasive or equivocal acts of the IE in political news interviews can be rather exposed and the IE may be seen to be accountable for not giving an answer to the question. This is why as the style of interview becomes more direct, challenging and hostile, the IRs now tend to pursue most of the un-answered questions.

Taking into account the pragmatics of questioning and answering in general and their extended application into political news interviews, we now turn to the specifics of questions and answers in British news interviews.

#### **4. Hostility of questioning in news interviews**

As mentioned in Section 2 above, the questions in broadcast interviews were typically *deferential* until 1950s. At the time when the BBC enjoyed a monopoly position in British broadcast, the IR’s job was to discover some very simple facts. ‘It was not thought proper to enquire (even gently) into private lives, or social problems; to ask about money, or industrial relations, or politics’. (Dimpleby, 1975:214, quoted in Heritage 1985:113) Here are some examples of ‘deferential questions’ then:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
 In British Broadcast News Interviews

#2 (From Clayman and Heritage 2002a [simplified and lines adapted])

UK interview with Clement Attlee: 1951 (British Prime Minister 1945-51)

- 01 IR: Good mor:ning Mr. Atlee, = We hope (.) you had a good  
 02 journey,  
 03 (0.2)  
 04 IE: Ye::s, excellent. h  
 05 (0.2)  
 06 IR: Can you:- (.) now you're ba:ck hhh having cut short your:  
 07 election tour:: (.) tell us [something how you- (0.2) vie::w the  
 =  
 08 IE: [° Mm.°  
 09 = election prospects?  
 10 (0.2)  
 11 IE: Oh we shall go in t'give them a good fi:ght, (0.2) very good,  
 12 (0.4) very good cha:nce of >winning, = We shall go in  
 13 confidently, = We always do, <  
 14 (0.7)  
 15 IR: U::h And- (.) on wha:t will Labour take its sta:nd?  
 16 (0.4)  
 17 IE: We:ll that we sh'll be announcing shortly.  
 18 (0.2)  
 19 IR: What are your immediate pla:ns: Mister Attlee:.  
 20 IE: My immediate plans are <t'go do:wn> to a committee t'deci:de  
 21 on just that thing, .hhh (.) >soon's I can get away from here.<  
 22 (0.2)  
 23 IE: °° hheh .hh°°  
 24 IR: Uhm, hh (.) Anything else you would> ca:re t'sa::y about (.) th'  
 25 coming election.  
 26 (.)  
 27 IE: No:.,  
 28 (0.6)  
 29 IR: Uhm, (0.4) Uhm, ((end of interview segment))

In this episode of the interview, the IR firstly greets the IE and gives good wishes. Then he asks a series of questions—‘can you...tell us how you view the election prospects’; ‘and on what will Labour take its stand’; ‘what are your immediate plans’; and ‘anything else you would care to say

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

about the coming election'. A few points worth noticing in these questions give the questioning a 'deferential' flavor: First, most of these are open questions, which are generally less hostile than closed questions (Heritage 2002). Second, in the last question turn ('anything else you would care to say about the coming election' in lines 24-25) the IR explicitly leaves the door open for the IE to add whatever he likes. Third, although the IE has evaded the question 'and on what will Labour take its stand?' (line 15) by delaying responding—'well that we shall be announcing shortly' (line 17), the IR has neither challenged the evasion nor pursued the question. Instead, the IR goes on to a new question. This lack of probing, challenge and pursuit in questions make the questioning style rather 'deferential'.

Example #3 provides another example of 'deferential question':

#3 "Omnibus" (1951)

IE: Mr. Eden

- 01 IR: Well now, Mr. Eden, with your very considerable experience of  
02 foreign affairs, it's quite obvious that I should start by asking  
03 you something about the international situation today ↑, or  
04 perhaps you would prefer to talk about home. What should it  
be.  
05 IE: Well you know, (.) during this election, I found the (verges)  
06 while they are preoccupied nationally (now) (.) with this  
07 international situation.....

where the IR provides alternative topics for the IE to address, which leaves it up to the IE to decide which questions to answer and thereby comes off as 'deferential'.

The advent of Independent Television rapidly undermined this 'deferential' style in British news interviews, and the questioning style

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

became more and more *hostile* as time went by. Below are some examples of such ‘hostile’ questions:

#4 (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:214)

UK BBC Radio Today: June 1993: Bosnia Camps [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys      IE: Ian Smedley

- 1 IR: .hhh People have used the phrase concentration camps: and the
- 2      Bosnians themselves have used that phrase. Do you believe
- 3      there’s any justification for that at all?

#5 (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:203)

UK BBCTV Panorama: 27 Sep 1979: Tony Benn Loss [simplified and lines adapted]

IR: Vincent Hanna      IE: Jon Lansman

- 1 IR: The result seems t’ be very close but (.) on th’ who:le it (0.2)
- 2      doesn’t look very good for: (.) Tony Benn. Who do you bla:me
- 3      for this?

In both #4 and #5, firstly, the IR prefaces the question with some negative background: In #4, both the public and the Bosnians characterize the camps as ‘concentration camps’, which is a very negative description; and in #5, the IR points out the severe electoral situation for the IE’s party, which is threatening for the IE. Secondly, the IR’s question at the end of turn is very challenging and hostile: asking for ‘justification’ in #4 and asking the IE to name someone to take the ‘blame’ in #5. Both the preface and the challenging interrogative make the questioning very hostile throughout the turn.

Below is an example from data that I collected from BBC today program:

#6

[9] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0733 Voluntary

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

euthanasia (05:08.0)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tom Butler, the Bishop of Southwark

- 54 IR But- if (.) the Church's position (.) hasn't changed? and it  
55 is as you have just spelled it out, is it legitimate .hh for  
56 individual priest to say the ki:nd of thi:ng? that Canon Gill  
57 (.) said.
- 58 IE: Well of course it's always legitimate for priests and and  
59 and e:h indeed lay people eh to discuss ethical issues.  
60 And and as he's said e:h this is a very difficult area and a  
61 very painful area. And a strong case can be made out. E:h  
62 e:h to- fo:r eh assisted euthanasia. Bu:t a much stronger  
63 case eh can be made out, for keeping the present eh legal  
64 and moral position intact.
- ... ... (lines omitted)
- 86 IR: Do you regret the fact that Canon Gill said what he said.
- 87 IE: Eh Canon Gill is- is a a rema:rkable theologian...

Again, in lines 54-57, the IR uses both preface and challenge in the interrogative to construct a hostile question turn: a) the IR builds up a contrast between the preface—i.e. the Church's unchanged position, and the content embedded in the interrogative—i.e. that Canon Gill said 'the kind of thing' (which is against the Church's position on voluntary euthanasia); and b) based on the contrast, the IR challenges the IE regarding the 'legitimacy' of Canon Gill's comments. In addition to the *challenge* in this question turn, several lines (or turns) later, the IR pursues the same topic—i.e. 'Canon gill said what he said' (lines 86)—again, asking whether the IE 'regrets' it, which is another challenge (similar to the challenge about 'legitimacy' in previous question turn).

From these examples, we can see that the IR's questions have become more sophisticated, direct, probing, challenging, pursuing, penetrating

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

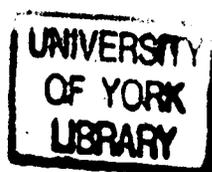
and—‘hostile’ in general in contemporary British (and American) political news interview. This has created a ‘communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict’ (see Bavelas, Black and Chovil 1990: 57 for the definition of ‘communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict’ and its effect on the responses), i.e. a situation where the only available responses for the IE are negative, yet a reply must be made. This conflict leads to the recurrence of evasive, non-committal, equivocal or indirect responses in the IE turn, which we will address in the next section.

### 5. Indirectness in IE response

As we have asserted, hostile questions<sup>2</sup> create ‘communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict’. According to Bavelas et al. (1990: 57),

“A communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict exists when the only available direct messages are negative, yet a reply must be made... a person in this situation will avoid a direct or clear reply of any kind, because all of them are negative...He or she will, if possible, leave the field—‘saying nothing while saying something’—which avoids the negative consequences of the direct replies.”

Bavelas et al. (1990: 58) point out that the most common avoidance-avoidance conflict involves a choice between saying something false but kind and something true but hurtful. For example: A person who has to comment on an unsuitable gift from a well-liked friend has two negative choices of message: a) saying, falsely, that she likes the gift; or b) saying, hurtfully, that she does not. Bavelas et al. (1990: 58-59) propose that, if possible, the person will avoid both of these, using ‘equivocal responses’ such as: ‘I appreciate your thoughtfulness’ (with no mention of



the actual gift); ‘My wife loves it!’ (with no mention of the speaker’s view); or ‘Where did you ever find it?’ (with no mention of like/dislike of the gift).

“Less direct communication is equivocal communication, and it is characterized by what it *avoids saying* as much as by what it does say. Thus, equivocation will occur in a communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict.” (Bavelas, Black and Chovil 1990: 57)

In British political news interviews, the communicative conflict Bavelas et al. (1988) are referring to here results in a variety of ‘evasive response types<sup>3</sup>’, including ‘evasion’, ‘non-committal responses’, ‘equivocal responses’ and ‘indirect responses’ from the IE. By being ‘evasive’, IEs avoid addressing the agenda set in the IR’s question; in a ‘non-committal response’, the IE gives an answer but does not commit to it; and in giving an ‘equivocal response’, the IE says something but does not really provide an answer to the asked question. These three ‘evasive’ response types are explained more fully, and distinguished conceptually and empirically, in greater detail in Chapter 5.

Among ‘indirect responses’, there are ‘indirect uncooperative responses’ and ‘indirect cooperative responses’ (Harris 1991). The ‘indirect uncooperative response’ provides no answer to the question, and the response is indirect; whereas the ‘indirect cooperative response’ provides an answer, in an indirect way. The distinction lies in whether an answer is provided or not, and the common point is that both types of responses are done indirectly. ‘Indirectness’ in the IE’s response is the difference between what is said, literally, and what is conveyed by the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

answer. Most important of all for ‘indirect responses’ is the necessity of ‘inference’ from the listeners’ part, in order to deduce and understand the meaning of the response. In cases where an answer is provided, the listeners have to make ‘inferences’ to deduce and grasp the answer from the IE’s elaborate response turn.

Here is an example of ‘indirect cooperative response’ in everyday communication:

#7

NB II: 2: R: pp11: Nancy & Emma

- 1 Nan: No note no eh I haven’t written a ↓word to im. ↓  
2 (0.3)  
3 Nan: I [jst uh, h for’d iz mai:l stick it in th’onvelope’n  
4 Emm: [ Mm:  
5 (0.4)  
6 Nan: send it all on up to im en .hhh[hhh  
→ 7 Emm: [Yih know wher’e is the:n,  
8 (0.8)  
→ 9 Nan: [I have never had any of it retu:med Emma, h  
10 Emm: Oh::.

In this example, Nancy’s response ‘I have never had any of it returned’ indicates that she most probably knows where her ex-husband is, and indirectly answers the question (in declarative format) by Emma—‘you know where he is then’ – in order to avoid ‘admitting’ that she knows (and therefore has *that* much contact with him). The listeners can infer from the fact that no letters posted to the address that Nancy has have been returned, that the address is correct and therefore Nancy does know where her ex-husband is.

Below are two examples of ‘evasive’ and ‘indirect’ responses to

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

'hostile' questions, with #7 from political interviews and #8 from cross-examination on a politically relevant issue.

#8

('The Independent' Thursday 1 March 2007: 13)

"The Blairites opened a campaign to prevent a 'coronation' for Gordon Brown, the then-Chancellor, when Tony Blair stands down... Charles Clarke and Alan Milburn, both former cabinet ministers, launched a website calling for debate about Labour's future policies..."

Mr. Clarke said:

→ 'We need to reinvigorate and revive what we stand for if we are to avoid sleepwalking to disaster.'

Asked by the London Evening Standard whether the move was a vote of no confidence in Mr. Brown's ability to reinvigorate Labour, he replied:

→ 'You have to create a situation which acknowledges the truth.'

He [Mr. Clarke] expected to support Mr. Brown and that the Chancellor would become Prime Minister but added:

→ 'I don't rule out any possibilities or circumstances as things arise.'

These quotes of Mr. Clarke's responses to interview questions all have an element of 'evasion', 'equivocation' or 'indirectness': 'what we stand for' or 'the truth' are ambiguous and do not specify anything; 'avoid sleepwalking to disaster' uses figurative speech which also does not specify; and 'don't rule out any possibilities or circumstances as things arise' indicates unpredictability and avoids being committed to any position for sure. Mr Clarke is equivocal and indirect in his responses insofar as on one hand, he does not deny their intention to create a situation to pressure David Miliband, the then-Environment Secretary, to challenge Gordon Brown for the Labour leadership; on the other hand, he does not

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

openly acknowledge their position against Gordon Brown taking over the leadership.

Here is another example from cross-examination regarding Princess Diana's death, in which 'indirect response' is used:

#9 (From 'The Guardian', 08 April 2008: 6)

Michael Mansfield: the barrister, with a reputation 'for asking people condescendingly whether they have understood his question when they do not give the answer he wishes'

Kes Wingfield: Diana and Dodi's security guard

Dodi Fayed: Diana's boyfriend, who was in the car with Diana when the car crash took place

Mohamed Al Fayed: Dodi's father

- 01 Mansfield: You didn't get authority or clearance [...] for this  
02 plan, did you?  
→ 03 Wingfield: When we spoke to Dodi, he told us the plan had  
→ 04 been okayed by Mr. Fayed.  
05 Mansfield: I am so sorry, just answer the question and we will  
06 be much quicker.  
→ 07 Coroner: I think the witness is answering the question.  
08 Mansfield: You didn't telephone through?  
09 Wingfield: I personally never telephoned, no.  
10 Coroner: Would there have been any point if it had been  
11 authorized by the boss?  
12 Wingfield: No, sire, because Mr. Fayed is so hands-on with  
13 every aspect of his organization [...] once Dodi  
14 had said to me, "It's been okayed by my father,"  
15 that really closed the door on any further  
16 discussion.

The response in lines 03-04 is seen by Mansfield, the cross-examiner, as 'evasive' to the previous question and pursued in lines 05-06; but treated by the coroner as having been an 'indirect answer'—i.e. the response is done 'indirectly' but an 'answer' has been provided (line 07). Following

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

the coroner's objection that the response has provided satisfactory answer to the question, Mansfield rephrases his original question (lines 01-02) in line 08.

From #9, we can now begin to see one of the differences between 'evasive response types' and 'indirect answer' (i.e. 'indirect cooperative response'). 'Evasive responses' (e.g. how Mansfield in lines 05-06 treats Wingfield's response in lines 03-04) are subject to 'challenge' or 'sanction' by the questioner in next turn, and sometimes also pursuit of the original question; while 'indirect answers' are not subject to sanction, because an answer has been provided, although in an indirect way, and it is up to the questioner to deduce the answer from the literal response.

The focus of this thesis will be the 'indirect responses' to hostile questions in the British political news interview, with a brief look at some other evasive response types at the beginning of analysis. In the next section, I will lay out the structure of the thesis.

## **6. Structure of the thesis**

There will be two parts of this thesis: Part I provides a selective literature review, including Chapter 2—which reviews past CA research literature on British or American news interview, including the question-answer turn-taking system in news interview, the characters of IR questions (such as the syntactic forms, the adversarial-ness, neutralism, agenda setting, footing shift, etc.) and those of IE answers (such as the evasion-answer scale, details regarding different dimensions of answers, e.g. agenda shift and reformulation in evasion); and Chapter 3—which reviews literature on 'indirectness' in the field of linguistics, including

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

major theories of Indirect Speech Acts (ISAs), Politeness, conversational implicature, figurative speech and equivocation. Part I (Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) will lay out the background research relevant to the two major issues in this PhD thesis—the news interview discourse and the phenomenon of ‘indirectness’.

The analytical chapters constitute Part II, with data collected from BBC Radio 4’s morning interview program—‘The Today Program’, between January and April 2005; and using Conversation Analysis as the research methodology. Part II begins with Chapter 4—a very brief overview of the data collected for the thesis and the methodology employed in the analysis. Chapter 5, 6, 7 and 8 present the analyses: Chapter 5 lays out the background of various dimensions in IE answers, (especially those closely connected to ‘indirect responses’), for the later analysis on ‘indirect defensive responses’; it examines the ‘evasive’ response types including ‘evasion’, ‘non-committal responses’ and ‘indirect responses’, and especially some practices or constructions for different types of responses. Chapter 6 introduces the pragmatics of challenges in questions and defenses in answer turns; in particular it examines the two types of challenging questions including ones that directly present criticism of the IE party and the ones that present support for the opponent of IE party. In addition it explores ‘defensive responses’ to these questions, including direct and indirect defenses to challenging questions. Chapter 7 and Chapter 8 examine the specific constructions of ‘indirect defensive responses’ in IE answer turns. Chapter 7 focuses on the more ‘general practices’ (such as referring to history, referring to a third party, citing the IE’s experience, and a common phenomenon of ‘insertion’

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

across these different practices) at a strategic level. Chapter 8 focuses on the ‘linguistic practices’ (such as contrast, lexical selection, raising the question to construct skepticism, change of reference to construct resistance, etc.) at a more tactical or implementing level.

## **Chapter Two**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW: INTERACTIONS IN BRITISH NEWS INTERVIEWS**

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

### 1. Turn-taking in the News Interview

News interview is a distinct institutional talk that has its own characteristics different from ordinary conversation. However, conversation analysis (hereafter referred to as CA) observations about ordinary conversation are the basis for CA analysis of news interview interactions and indeed many other kinds of institutional talk. Therefore, a review of some basic CA observations in ordinary conversation would be useful before we start looking at the literature relating specifically to news interview interactions.

#### Conversation Analysis (CA) observations in ordinary conversation

CA has identified some of the basic rules of interpersonal interaction, one of which is that, in two-party or multi-party conversation, only one speaker should be speaking at a time. More than one speaking at the same time would lead to trouble in managing effective interaction. Furthermore people take turns to speak. Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson (1974: 704) summarized *turn-taking rules* in ordinary conversation as follows:

“(1) For any turn, at the initial transition-relevance place<sup>4</sup> of an initial turn-constructural unit<sup>5</sup>:

(a) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as to involve the use of a ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then the party so selected has the right and is obliged to take next turn to speak; no others have such rights or obligations, and transfer occurs at that place.

(b) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then self-selection for next speaker-ship may, but need not, be instituted; first starter acquires rights to a turn, and transfer occurs at that place.

(c) If the turn-so-far is so constructed as not to involve the use of a ‘current speaker selects next’ technique, then current speaker may, but need not continue, unless another self-selects.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

(2) If, at the initial transition-relevance place of an initial turn-constructive unit, neither 1a nor 1b has operated, and, following the provision of 1c, current speaker has continued, then the rule-set a-c re-applies at the next transition-relevance place, and recursively at each next transition-relevance place, until transfer is effected.”

In one-to-one interaction, the speaker can choose to but needs not select the next speaker because there is only one person he/she is interacting with. For example, the speaker can look at the other person and ask a question, by which the recipient would know that it is him/her who is supposed to take the next answer turn. As this thesis is mainly interested in one to one interaction in news interview, we will focus on one to one interactions in the literature review as well.

Another fundamental aspect of interaction is the *sequence organization* in interactions. People accomplish different actions through verbal interactions such as summons-answer, question-answer, request-acceptance/decline, invitation-acceptance/decline, assessment-acknowledgement/reassessment, etc. Each pair of these actions is called an ‘*adjacency pair*’ in CA terms, and conversation is made up of consecutive sequences of these pairs. The first part of the adjacency pair is called the First Pair Part (FPP), and the second called the Second Pair Part (SPP). There is often, though not always, a minimal post-expansion after the FPP and SPP, which is called a Third Pair Part (TPP). Third pair parts include news-markers like ‘oh’, acknowledgments like ‘okay’, assessments, and others. For example, after a question-answer adjacency pair, the first speaker who has posed the question could receive the second speaker’s answer with an acknowledgement ‘oh okay’. The Third Pair

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Parts are used to close the previous interaction between FPP and SPP.  
(Schegloff 1995)

Therefore in smooth one to one interaction in ordinary conversation, people take turns to speak; they use adjacency pairs and sometimes a third pair part to effect interactions. All sorts of adjacency pairs could take place in ordinary conversation, as those listed in previous paragraph. After each adjacency pair or three pair part is finished, a unit is completed and another unit could resume, as the next speaker self-selects and starts a new first pair part.

CA observations of news interview interactions

In comparison with ordinary conversation, the news interview has its distinct turn-taking system and sequence organization.

“These constraints on the production of types of turns operate with respect to the institutional identities of interviewer (IR)/interviewee (IE) and specify that the incumbents of these roles should confine themselves to asking questions and providing answers, respectively.” (Greatbatch 1988: 404)

In the news interview setting, the IR takes the role of questioner and the IE answerer. Their institutional roles in this particular interaction setting confine them to asking questions and responding to questions. The news interview is made up of *consecutive sequences of question-answer adjacency pairs*. Both the IR and IE orient to their institutional roles and tasks in the interview setting and jointly construct this particular turn-taking system and sequence organization of question-answer-question-answer...-question-answer. First, there is often

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

statement/assertion in the IR's question turn, but these are always put at the beginning of turn and the IR makes sure the turn is finished with a direct or indirect question requiring the IE's response.

#10 (from Clayman and Heritage 2002a:214)

UK BBC Radio Today: June 1993: Bosnia Camps [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Ian Smedley

- 1 IR: .hhh People have used the phrase concentration camps: and the
- 2 Bosnians themselves have used that phrase. Do you believe
- 3 there's any justification for that at all?
- 4 IE: .hh I think in the case of some of the larger camps there are,
- 5 that's certainly accurate .hh ah if you count .h torture and
- 6 execution as hallmarks .h of concentration camps .h then the
- 7 reports we've received ah would seem to suggest that is an
- 8 accurate description for some of them.

In this example, the IR starts with a statement (lines 1-2) and finishes the turn with a direct question (lines 2-3).

Second, the IE also orients to the IR's role as questioner by withholding starting his turn until after a question is completed. This can be seen from this example (#1) as well. In news interview, IEs generally treat the IR's statements as a pre-<sup>6</sup> to a question, rather than standing on their own. The IEs constantly withhold from starting his/her turn in the middle of the IR's statements, treating the IR's turn as unfinished, and therefore the IR's task of asking a question unfulfilled.

Another distinctive feature of news interview interaction is the *absence of response tokens and third pair parts*.

In ordinary conversation, *response tokens* such as "continuers" or

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

“acknowledgment tokens” (such as “yes” and “mm hm”. Schegloff 1982; Jefferson 1984a) and news receipt objects (such as “oh”, “really”, “did you”, etc. Heritage 1984b; Jefferson 1981a, 1981b) treat the prior talk as “informative” or “news” for the producer. These response tokens in ordinary conversation: a) overtly “pass” on the opportunity for the previous speaker to continue with his/her turn of speaking. b) They also identify their producers as the primary addressees of the prior talk. Distinct features of news interview setting lead to absence of these response tokens. Relating to a), in news interview settings, the IE is usually expected to give an *elaborate response* to the IR question and the IR need not to produce these acknowledge tokens to pass next turn over to the IE. Relating to b), when the IR withholds these acknowledgement tokens, he/she in effect declines the role as primary addressee of the IE’s remarks and treats *the audience as the primary addressee*. (Heritage and Greatbatch: 109-110) The *overhearing audience* is an important feature of news interview interactions.

“The news interview essentially constitutes a context in which a broadcast journalist seeks to elicit information from one or more newsmakers, experts, or eyewitnesses for the benefit of a radio or television audience.” (Greatbatch 1988: 404)

*Neutrality* required for the IR’s profession is an important reason for both the *absence of third pair parts such as assessments* and the structure of question turns. In news interview, professional journalists are treated as representatives of their employing news organizations. It is required that the IR should a) avoid the assertion of opinions on their own behalf, and b) refrain from direct or overt affiliation with (or disaffiliation from) the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

expressed statements of the IE. (Lewis 1984:122-4, in Clayman 1992:163)  
Point (a) partially contributes to the structure of the question turn: many assertions in question turn are attributed to a third party; also, assertions within question turn seldom stand on their own. The assertion usually serves as prefatory and followed by/finished with a direct or indirect question or request for the IE's comments. Point (b) contributes to the absence of third pair parts of assessments. The IE refrains from purely assessing the IE's answer in a third pair part which closes the previous question-answer pairs. Assessment is left to the audience. Even if the IR does include an assessment of some kind in the question, it would appear in a direct or indirect question format which requires the IE to further explain on the issue or the IE's views and therefore opens up another question-answer pair. It would appear in the format that expands the question-answer sequences rather than closes the previous adjacency pair.

Summary

In this section we have reviewed turn taking and sequence organization in news interview interactions. The news interview is a distinct kind of institutional talk; its nature and features, the special institutional roles of the IR and IE, and special professional requirement all lead to distinction from ordinary conversation in its turn-taking system and sequence organizations. Unlike ordinary conversation, news interviews are constituted through consecutive sequences of question-answer pairs without third pair parts or response tokens. The overhearing audience is a significant (though inactive) third party and the primary addressee of IE's remarks in news interview setting, and the IR's

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

professional requirement to maintain neutralistic stance (at least at a superficial level) both constrain the IR not to give third pair part assessments or make assertions without posing a question to the IE. Turn taking system and sequence organization are the foundations of any type of interaction. With these foundations laid down, in the following sections we will explore the IR questions and IE answers, which are the two main areas in the news interview interaction, individually.

## 2. IR Questions in News Interview

Although the focus of this thesis is IE answer, as a Second Pair Part of an adjacency pair, how the First Pair Part—i.e. the IR's question—is constructed can impact on the IE answer. Therefore it is important that we also review the literature on IR questions. In this section we will review the different syntactic forms used by IRs to ask questions; the adversarial-ness of IR question; and the issue of agenda setting and footing shift.

### Syntactic forms of IR questions

In ordinary conversation, interrogatives are most commonly used to ask questions. The database of Heritage and Roth (1995) showed that most interrogative types could be found in the news interviews. These major question forms are identified by Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech and Svartvik (1985:810-824) as follows:

#### *Yes/No question*

#11 (NW:30.9.81:John) [simplified]

→ IR: Was it intentional not to call you?

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*Tag question*

#12 (NN:1991:Gould-simplified) [simplified]

→ IR: = She's been no pushover has she.

*Declarative question*

#13 (MacNeil/Leher 2/3/92) [simplified]

→ IR: [But the] administration doesn't approve of that?

*Wh-question (who, what, which, when, where, how, why)*

#14 (MacNeil/Leher 12/4/89:1) [simplified]

→ IR: .hhhh Senator Mitchell, what's your overview of thuh

→ summit form President Bush's point of viw.

*Alternative question*

#15 (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 823-824) [simplified]

1 IR: If the Prime Minister were to drop Mister Benn

2 → would this be a political plus or a political minus

3 in terms of the coming election and votes (hhh)

4 er generally.

Other than interrogatives, *directives* can sometimes be used as question substitutes in the news interview. For example: "Tell us about it" or "Give me an example". (Heritage and Roth, 1995:9-10)

When there are two IEs (usually of opposing political parties or opposing positions on an issue) in the interview, one IE is held responsible to argue against different ideas/opinions/political stance of the other. In this circumstance, the IR quoting the first IE's stance or naming the second IE is sufficient to invite the second IE for comments.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*The IR quoting the first IE's stance*

#16 (MacNeil/Lehrer 7/22/85:7—simplified and line numbers added)  
(Heritage and Roth (1995:27)

- 1 IE1: ... they 'ave been totally unsuccessful. (0.4) An' one has:  
2 to take this into acco:unt. (0.3) when on:e (0.2) speaks  
3 about (0.2) thuh present spate of violence in South Africa.  
4 (0.4)  
5 → IR: Peace 'as not worked he says Mister Ambassador,  
6 IE2: .hhhh Well he's referring to: uh a- a thuh (.) period of time  
7 in: uh f:ar distant h pa:st ....

*The IR naming the second IE*

#17 [40] Monday 11 April 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0653  
Stephen Twigg and Phil Willis (04:58.2)

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Stephen Twigg, the education minister

IE2: Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat's education spokesman

- 37 IE2: Well th- the fact is that when you actually get to the  
38 end of children's li:fe eh school li:fe, the age of  
39 sixteen, .h what we now have is sixty percent of our  
40 young people, .h having had .h sort of eight years of  
41 English, math and science, do not reach the national  
42 standard. I actually call that failure not success.  
→ 43 IR: Eh Mr. Twigg?  
44 IE1: .h mcht What we've DONE over the last years is t- is to  
45 very significantly increase investment in education.  
46 Interestingly, by rather more than the Liberal =

With the basic question forms explained, in the following sections we will explore further some characteristics of IR questions, including adversarialness, agenda setting and footing shift.

Adversarial-ness of IR questions

In the past forty years, there has been a general trend of increasing

adversarialness in journalists' questions put to politician IEs. (Clayman & Heritage 2002; Heritage & Roth 1995) The appearance of hostile questions is very important for generating evasive, equivocal and indirect answers in the IE turn, which will be focus of this thesis. Therefore it is important to review adversarial questions here. Heritage and Roth (1995) found that nearly half of the total question turns have preface statements before the question per se. And in the study of presidential press conferences, Clayman and Heritage (2002c) found that simple questions fell from 40 percent during Eisenhower's first term to 12 percent during Reagan's first term, while "hostile" question prefaces multiplied by 450 percent.

There are various ways for the journalist to be adversarial, including:

First, prefatory statements that often come before the question. Some prefaces have no bearing on the outcome of the question and merely identify an issue, in a fashion that is not particularly damaging to the IE. Others may be hostile in character, tilted against the IE and toward a proposition that is substantially damaging. (Clayman and Heritage 2002c) They may quote an authoritative third party or a tribune of people to indicate preferences for confirmation of these quoted ideas or stance. (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:208-217) Below is an example where the question turn contains preface statement before the question per se.

#18 (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:214)

UK BBC Radio Today: June 1993: Bosnia Camps [lines adapted]

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

IR: John Humphrys      IE: Ian Smedley

- IR: → 1 .hhh People have used the phrase concentration camps:  
→ 2 and the Bosnians themselves have used that phrase.  
3 Do you believe there's any justification for that at all?

Second, presuppositions. Questions often assert propositions and embody presuppositions with varying degrees of explicitness. This is so for both simple and prefaced questions. This is illustrated in the following question.

#19 (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:203)

UK BBCTV Panorama: 27 Sep 1979: Tony Benn Loss [simplified and lines adapted]

IR: Vincent Hanna      IE: Jon Lansman

- 1 IR: The result seems t' be very close but (.) on th' whole it (0.2)  
2 doesn't look very good for: (.) Tony Benn.  
3 Who do you blame for this?

The prefatory statement guardedly asserts two propositions: the likely result of the election is (i) close, and (ii) against Tony Benn. Subsequently, the question 'Who do you blame for this?' builds from this platform to project 'blame' and its allocation as the primary agenda for the IE's response. (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:203).

If respondents wish to contest a question's presuppositions, they must depart from directly 'answering' the question. For example, in "When did you stop beating your wife?," the presupposition is both embedded and substantively very hostile to the recipient. Wh- questions are generally the most hospitable environment for the deeply embedded propositions. (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:203-208)

Third, preferences. Some IR questions are designed to "prefer"

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

(Pomerantz 1984; Sacks 1987; Schegloff 1988; Heritage 1988) particular responses. They treat alternative IE responses as non-equivalent, and thus establish a higher threshold of accountability if the IE chooses to respond with the dispreferred option. Questions can be shaped to prefer particular responses through the following ways: a) The negatively formed interrogatives as “Wont’ you...”, “Isn’t this...” contain very strong preference for a “yes” answer. (Heritage 2002). b) Tag questions (e.g., “Is it?”, “Hasn’t it?,” etc.) prefer confirmation of the prefatory part of the question. c) Negative polarity items (Horn 1989) such as “any” embody a preference for a “no” answer. d) Incorporation of terms like “seriously” or “really” also embodies preferences for negative responses.

Fourth, follow-up questions. Follow-up questions (or pursuing questions) can often be found in American or British political news interview in recent years. (See Clayman and Heritage 2002c: 6-10 for follow-up questions in American presidential press conferences) Sometimes a follow-up question comes immediately after an IE answer thereby contributing to treating it as inadequate in some way; other times it comes later, after more question-answer turns. The following is an example of the latter case.

#20 [9] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0733  
Voluntary euthanasia (05:08.0)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tom Butler, the Bishop of Southwark

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 54 IR But- if (.) the Church's position (.) hasn't changed? and it  
55 is as you have just spelled it out, is it legitimate .hh for  
56 individual priest to say the ki:nd of thi:ng? that Canon Gill  
57 (.) said.
- 58 IE: Well of course it's always legitimate for priests and and  
59 and and e:h indeed lay people eh to discuss ethical issues. And  
60 and as he's said e:h this is a very difficult area and a very  
61 painful area. And a strong case can be made out. E:h e:h  
62 to- fo:r eh assisted euthanasia. Bu:t a much stronger case  
63 eh can be made out, for keeping the present eh legal and  
64 moral position intact.
- ... ... (lines omitted)
- 86 IR: Do you regret the fact that Canon Gill said what he said.
- 87 IE: Eh Canon Gill is- is a rema:rkable theologian. Eh he- he  
88 chairs the Archbishop's Medical Ethics Committee? Eh he  
89 gives: a great deal of- eh insi:ght and advice to the  
90 Church. >And I'd want< him to continue to do that.

Agenda setting in question turn

Both the adversarial-ness of IR question and agenda setting in question turn contribute to generating evasive, equivocal or indirect answers. The IR, or more precisely the news organization, may have his/its own agenda regarding which questions to ask in one piece of news interview. With the IR's institutional role as a questioner and the IE as answerer, and the pre-allocated consecutive question-answer turn-taking system, the IR has the advantage of controlling the agenda of each question-answer pair.

First, the IR uses different question formats to set the *action agenda* for the IE. For example, by posing a 'yes/no' question the IR invites the IE to confirm or disconfirm; whereas by posing a 'wh-' question the IR asks the IE to provide the sought-after information.

Second, IR question sets the *topical agenda*. By identifying a

specific topical domain in the first pair part of an adjacency pair (i.e. question in the question-answer pair), it makes non-response (e.g. silence) or failure to address the question's topical agenda noticeable and accountable. (Schegloff 1972, quoted in Clayman and Heritage 2002a:196)

Notwithstanding the fact that the term 'topic' is loose and difficult to define, it is plain that interviewees are oriented to the fact that there are real boundaries to the topics set by questions. (Clayman and Heritage 2002a)

#21 UK BBCTV Panorama: 28 Jan 1981: Labour Party [adapted with lines] (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:197)

IR: Robin Day    IE: Roy Hattersley

- 1    IR: Roy Hattersley .hhh is it right to interpret this as a move
- 2        back .hh to the right. = This er victory by such a narrow
- 3        marg[in of Denis Healey.]
- 4    IE:        [.hhhh No            ] I don't believe it i:s. in some
- 5        ways I wish I could say that..hhhh But I don't believe it i:s.
- 6        I believe it's a mo:ve back .hhh to the broad based tolerant
- 7        representative Labour Part(h)y, .hhh the Labour Party in
- 8        which Neil Kinnock and I: who disagree on a number of
- 9        policy issue:s .hh can argue about them .hh without
- 10        accusing each other of treachery:, .hhh without suggesting
- 11        that one or the other of us is playing into the Tories'
- 12        ha:nds. .hhh And let me say something about the next year
- 13        because that was your original question. .hhh I think Tony
- 14        Benn would be personally extremely foo:lish to sta:nd for
- 15        the deputy leadership again...

The IE explicitly marks his additional comment as distinct and as a departure from the question's agenda, and he goes out of his way to justify this departure by reference to an earlier question asked by the IR. He thus orients to the question's topical boundary, even as he moves beyond it.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

(Clayman and Heritage 2002a:197)

The IR sets and controls the agenda in every question-answer adjacency pair. If the IE does not follow the agenda set in the question turn, i.e. the IE evades or equivocates in the answer turn, the IR may pursue the same agenda in subsequent question turn(s).

#22 (Clayman and Heritage 2002a:198)

UK BBC Omnibus: Date Unknown: Harold Wilson

IR: David Frost IE: Edward Heath

- 1 IR: Do you quite li:ke him?  
2 (0.1)  
3 IE: .hhh .h .h We:ll I th- I think in politics you see: i- it's not a  
4 question of going about (.) li:king people or not, hh It's a  
5 question of dealing with people, °°h .h°° a:n::d u::h (.) I've  
6 always been able to deal perfectly well with Mister  
7 Wilson, = as indeed: uh- he has with me,  
8 (0.4)  
→ 9 IR: <But do you like> him?  
10 (0.1)  
11 IE: .hhhh Well agai:n it's not a question of uh (.) li:kes or  
12 disli:kes. I::t's a question of wor:king together:: with other  
13 people who are in politics,  
14 (0.6)  
→ 15 IR: But do y'like him.  
16 (0.4)  
17 IE: .hhh (.) That'll have to remain t'be see:n won't it.

The question is whether the IE likes 'him'—Harold Wilson, who is the IE's main political rival at that time. The IE *evades* the question by saying that 'in politics...it's not a question of going about liking people or not. It's a question of dealing with people'. He also gives an *equivocal response* that 'I've always been able to deal perfectly well with Mister Wilson, as indeed he has with me', which is not exactly addressing the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

issue of ‘liking’ as asked in question turn.

By setting an agenda in the question turn, the IR makes the IE’s non-response, evasion, or equivocation noticeable.

Neutralism: footing shifts in question turns

Another important issue in the IR question turn is ‘footing shift’, i.e. referring to a third party in any assertion/statement made in question turn. Referring to a third party (or footing shift) is also redundantly used in IE answers, which will be explored in later analysis chapters.

“As representatives of the media profession and any specific media agency, the IRs ‘should not allow their personal opinions to enter into the interviewing process; to the best of their ability, they are supposed to remain *neutral* as they interact with public figures’.” (Lewis 1984: 122-4, quoted in Clayman, 1992:163)

One of the most significant practices in news interview to achieve *neutralism* involves what Goffman (1981b) has referred to as a speaker’s interactional “footing”<sup>7</sup>. In news interviews, IRs are confined to asking questions and restricted when making assertions. When assertions/statements do occur in the question turn, the IR often *attributes them to a third party, as a form of footing shift*. The cited third party can be:

- a) a definite ‘someone’, with the IR clearly identifies the person’s name or status; or
- b) a group, including:
  - A category of persons, such as “Democrats”, “Tories”, or “critics”;
  - A generic and anonymous collectivity, such as “people”;

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- A responsible third party evoked without actually being named, by using phrases like “it is said that...” or “it has been reported that...”. (Clayman and Heritage 2002:153)

By attributing to a third-party, the IR often *enhances the credibility of their assertions*. Sometimes the IR comments on the source’s authoritativeness, see example below:

#23 (Nightline 10/6/86: CT5) [lines adapted] (Clayman 1992:188)

- 1 FG: ...WE don't like hh (.) uh (.) having:: arguments made which  
2 we feel are ·hh uh (.) not only not (0.9) contributing to:: (0.3)  
3 positive and effective arms control. ·hhh uh but we of course  
4 don't like having people (0.3) e- misrepresenting: our view of  
5 what would constitute (.) effective arms control.
- 6 IR: We:ll now when a former President of the United States, and  
7 a man who knows a little something about nuclear weapons,  
8 having served on a nuclear submarine and was himself an  
9 engineer, when Jimmy Carter calls it an embarrassment. ·hhh  
10 tuh have thee United States not (.) match the ba:n, uh: not  
11 exactly a lightweight.
- 12 FG: ·hhh Thuh President of the United States today:, is Ronald  
13 Reagan, and the President (0.3) has seen our problem very  
14 clearly, ·hh as one of ensuring:, (0.4) as long as we have to  
15 rely upon nuclear weapons for deterrence, ·hh that we: (.) can  
16 do so with confidence. and that requires testing them

In this example, ‘a former President of the United States’ pointing out the high social status of the quoted third party; ‘a man who knows a little something about nuclear weapons’ pointing out the knowledge of the quoted person; ‘having served on a nuclear submarine’ and ‘was himself an engineer’ highlighting the quoted person’s experience; and ‘not exactly a lightweight’ all contribute to building up the third party’s

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

authoritativeness and credibility in the issue.

Sometimes the IR comments on the range of persons endorsing a position, as in example below:

#24 (MacNeil/Lehrer 7/25/85a:6) (SD is advocating economic sanctions against South Africa) [lines adapted] (Clayman 1992:191)

- 1 SD: ...and we've got to try: tuh remaining steps that are open.  
2 (0.2)  
3 IR: ·hhhh Mister Chettle what d'you say duh those who: people  
4 who've said this on our program several times now:: uh in  
5 thuh last uh few weeks, that ·hh TIME is running out in South  
6 Africa. >that something must b- must be done: (.) or tuh  
7 whole thing is gonna go up  
8 JC: Well- eh that's been said fuh tuh last twenty five years:. and  
9 I've heard it pretty continuously ever since then:. uh: I don't  
10 (.) uh think thet that's true....  
11 ((lines omitted))  
12 ...Freedom House issued (.) a statement uh:: the annual (.)  
13 survey of freedom around thuh worl:d ·h which showed that  
14 South Africa ·h >had only got< on:e country in thuh whole of  
15 Africa that=had more freedom in it....

The generality of this view is subtly highlighted by several devices. The IR appends a numerical formulation (the phrase 'several times now::') to characterize the 'people who've said this on our program'... Moreover, it is followed by a temporal formulation ('in thuh last uh few weeks') indicating that these convergent assessments have emerged recently. Considered as a whole, the resulting attribution proposes that the animated viewpoint is becoming increasingly popular, and may represent an emerging consensus. (Clayman 1992:191)

Alternatively the IR can *legitimize a question* by presenting the issue as being of particular interest to the public. The IR can ask a question on

behalf of the general public, taking the stance of ‘*tribune of the people*’ (Clayman and Heritage 2002b). This practice increases the pressure on the IE to be forthcoming in response. “It is more difficult for an IE to sidestep or evade a question that has been packaged in this way, because that could be taken as an offense not merely to the IR but to the broader public that he or she claims to represent.” (Clayman & Heritage 2002b:172) For example:

#25 (Clayman & Heritage 2002b:171) [lines adapted]

US ABC Nightline: 4 Apr 1986: Ferdinand Marcos

IR: Ted Koppel IE: Ferdinand Marcos

- 1 IR: → Whe:n people heard I was coming out (.) to do an interview
- 2 → with you (1.0) you know what most people are interested in?
- 3 IE: Mm mm.
- 4 (0.4)
- 5 IR: Your wife’s:: three thousand pairs of shoes.
- 6 IE: How many shoes
- 7 IR: How many sh[oes
- 8 IE: [can you wear: (0.2) on (.) twenty years.
- 9 IR: Exactly (.) how many can you?

Koppel thus presents this issue, not as his own personal concern or of concern to political elites, but as a matter of general interest to the public at large. Correspondingly, he presents himself as a ‘*tribune of the people*’ who relays their concerns and interests to those in public life. (Clayman & Heritage 2002b:171)

Therefore, by attributing either an assertion or a question to a third party (be it a person, a group of people, or the general public), the IR can achieve neutralism, enhance credibility of an assertion, or enhance the legitimacy of a question. Similar functions of referring to a third party such as enhancing credibility or avoiding taking personal responsibility

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

(just as the IR maintaining naturalistic stance) are to be found in IE answers, which we will explore in later analysis chapters.

Summary

IR question is the first pair part of each question-answer pair in news interview. Its structure and character may impact upon the second pair part, i.e. the IE answer turn. Therefore it is important to review IR question turns even if the focus of this thesis is IE answers. In this section we have reviewed the different question formats in IR question turn, the adversarialness of IR question in American or British news interview since last fifty years, and the issue of agenda setting and footing shift in question turn. The appearance of adversarial questions contributes to the redundancy of evasive, equivocal or indirect answers. Agenda setting or control in question turn makes evasion or equivocation in answer turns noticeable. Footing shift (by attributing to a third party) contributes to maintaining the IR's neutralistic stance, enhancing credibility of assertions in question turn, or enhancing legitimacy of a question. Similar functions of attributing to a third party take place in IE answer turns, as we will explore more in later analysis chapters.

**3. IE Answers in News Interview**

In response to the development of adversarial IR questions, the IE's answer has become less straightforward and more multi-dimensional. As Clayman (2001) said, these questions are "unflattering, incriminating, or otherwise hostile in character. If answered straightforwardly, these can

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

inflict damage on a politician's policy objectives, career prospects, and personal reputation". In the following section, we will examine different dimensions of IE response including refusing to answer, challenges, evasion, equivocation, indirect answer, and direct answer. Most of these responses are defenses against the IR's adversarial questions; and from refusing to answer to direct answer all these dimensions serve as *a continuum from the most resistant against the IR question to the least resistant*. At the end of this section on IE answer we will also briefly examine ways of constructing the answer turn.

Dimensions of IE responses: from the most resistant to the least against the IR's adversarial questions

An IE answer turn does not always contain a direct answer to the IR question, especially when the questions become more adversarial in nature. The IE may refuse to answer a hostile or difficult question, evade the question, give an equivocal response, and so on. There are all sorts of ways to *resist* adversarial questions, directly (through refusing to answer, or challenging the question) or indirectly (through evasion or equivocation). There are also different ways to *answer* questions, i.e. giving an indirect answer or direct answer. In the first part of this section on IE answers we will examine the multi-dimensions of IE responses.

*A) Refuse to answer*

A direct way to resist adversarial or difficult questions consists of the IE overtly refusing to answer. If the IE refuses to answer without providing any justification for the refusal, it can come across as an

extremely hostile gesture. However, generally the IE will provide some sort of rationale to account for the refusal. 1) One common rationale is to claim that the information necessary to answer the question is unavailable, such as “unable to provide it under current circumstances”, or “to do so would be somehow inappropriate” (by invoking the delicacies of official negotiations). The IE may further explain the lack of information after providing the accounts. 2) Another rationale for refusing to answer is it is ‘a matter of general policy’—as a matter of general policy, the IE cannot provide the information that the IR has been seeking. This type of account also implies that any further efforts to elicit an answer will prove fruitless, therefore it preempts further pursuit and finalizes the question. These accounts are non-hostile in character and inflict minimal damage to the interpersonal relationship between IR and IE. All rational/accounts for a refusal to answer tend to have one element in common: They deflect responsibility away from the IE and onto some circumstantial factor.

### *B) Challenges*

Occasionally, the IE not only refuses to answer but also challenges the question—challenge the illocutionary force of a question, or challenge one or more presuppositions of a question; or even attacks the IR personally. For example:

#26 (Harris 1991:86 ‘B. responses which challenge the illocutionary force of a question. Example 1) [line numbers added]

- 1 I. and what proportion of them [the unemployed] supposing they
- 2 all did [get on their bikes and look for work]—what proportion
- 3 of them would find work
- 4 Pol. I cannot tell you—and you know that in asking the question

In this case, the IE *challenges the illocutionary force of a question*, i.e. the IE asserts that when the IR asks the question the IR already knows that the IE will not be able to answer it.

#27 (Harris 1991:85 ‘A. Responses which challenge one or more of the presuppositions of a question. Example 1) [line numbers added]

- 1 I. what’s the future if uneconomic pits continue to be  
2 around—won’t that in the end undermine the mining industry  
3 TUL. well—as you know Miss Chalmers it must be that you’re  
4 listening to your own propaganda because for the last 40  
5 minutes I’ve been explaining to you that the NCB in Britain is  
6 the most efficient and technologically advanced industry in the  
7 world

In this example, the IE not only *challenges the presupposition of a question* but also *attacks the IR*: a) the IE challenges the presupposition in the IR’s question turn, i.e. the existence of ‘uneconomic pits’. The IE asserts in the answer turn that he has been ‘explaining to [the IR] that the NCB in Britain is the most efficient and technologically advanced industry in the world’, which directly contradicts the presupposition in question turn. b) The IE also attacks the IR as not listening in the last 40 minutes to the IE but listening to her own organization (i.e. the interview organization)’s propaganda.

By challenging the question, the IE asserts that the question is improper or unworthy of an answer, and thereby giving rational for no answer. Challenges are more hostile ways of refusing to answer.

### C) Evasion

After refusing to answer and challenges to the question, we come to more indirect ways of resisting an adversarial or difficult question,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

through evasion or equivocation. Evasion is a frequently employed strategy when public figures deal with the contemporary IRs' hard questions. Different techniques could be used, among which *agenda shift* and *reformulation* are the most popular two.

(i) Evasion by agenda shift

As reviewed in the previous section, in every question turn the IR sets an agenda for the IE's answer turn. In resisting this agenda control, the IE may try to introduce other agenda(s) that he/she wants to talk about into the answer turn. Sometimes a new agenda is introduced into the answer turn *in addition to* the IE's response to the IR's agenda: The new agenda may be added before the IE's response to IR agenda (see 'pre-answer agenda shift' in Greatbatch 1986: 442-444); or after (see 'post-answer agenda shift' in Greatbatch 1986: 444-447). At other times the IE completely evades the IR's agenda and addresses the IE's own agenda in the answer turn. The first case is '*adding agenda*', and the second is '*evasion by agenda shift*'. What is of particular interest to this thesis is 'evasion by agenda shift', i.e. when the IE evades the IR's agenda and introduces his/her own.

Here is an example where the IE simply ignores the agenda set by a prior question and proceeds to direct his talk along a new track:

#28 (Greatbatch 1986:445—WAO: 12.2.79) [simplified and line numbers added]

- 01 Int: Well is it a ·h strongly socialist economic approach,  
→ 02 JU: ·hhh You see we ca:n sa:y that (0.2) as I was submitting  
03 earlie:r that we: are: religion and I'm sure Christian  
04 Christianity (.) and all other religions ·hhh they preach

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 05 contentment, ·hh here: what is this capitalist system says  
06 let us have a race for becoming millionaires. ·hhh No:w ·h  
07 you say the rich ma:n and the upper middle class has a  
08 right to aspire to be greedy and millionaire, ·hh the poor  
09 member of the TUC is not entitled to be greedy and ask  
10 for more money, ·hh how can yo:u say ·hh that er rich  
11 people or the: petty bourgeoisie the: upper middle class  
12 has a right to be greedy, ·hhh and the poor man and the  
13 lower middle class and the proletariat ·hh has no right to  
14 be greedy.  
15 Int: Well can [I ask you again wo]uld you compare the =  
16 JU: [(In- our religion) ]  
17 Int: = economic approach with a strongly socialist (.)  
18 e[cono ]mic approach.  
19 JU: [(Well)-]  
20 JU: We would like to sa:y...(continues)

In this example, the IE completely ignores the IR's question about 'socialist economic approach' and addresses a totally different topic—whether poor man, the lower middle class and the proletariat as well as the rich men have the right to be greedy and ask for more money. From the IR's pursuit (in lines 14 and 16-17) of the question (in line 01) we see that the IR treats the IE's response as evading to the previous question and therefore re-asserts the agenda—asking the IE to compare the economic approach with a strongly socialist economic approach.

Alternatively the IE may *deny the relevance of the topical agenda* established by the IR's *question*, introduce an alternative and proposed relevant agenda, and then go on to talk to that agenda. For example:

#29 (Greatbatch 1986:445-446 'O: 21.4.81') [simplified]

- 1 Int: D'you quite like him?  
→ 2 EH: ·hhhh Well er I- think in politics you see: i- it's not a  
3 question of going about liking people or no:t,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 4           it's a question of dealing with people.  
→ 5           ·hh And e:r I've always been able to deal perfectly well  
6           with Mister Wilson and er- indeed he has with me.

Firstly the IE attacks the question by denying its relevance—the IE ‘think in politics...it's not a question of going about liking people or not’ which directly denies the IR's question of whether the IE likes Mister Wilson. Then the IE introduces a new agenda—‘it's a question of dealing with people’. With this *reformulation* of topical agenda, the IE goes on to answer to this new agenda—‘I've always been able to deal perfectly well with Mister Wilson and...indeed he has with me’. This answer is an *equivocal* version of response to the IR's question—‘deal well with Mr. Wilson’ is topically related to the IR's question of ‘liking him or not’ but not exactly a direct response to it. This equivocal response is still addressing the IE's relation with Mr. Wilson (which can be seen as the bigger or general *topic agenda* of the IR question) but it is not addressing the *action agenda* of ‘liking’. In this example, the IE has progressed his answer turn through a few steps—from a) *challenging/attacking* the relevance/validity of the IR's question, to b) *reformulation* of the question, to c) answering to the reformulated question which is in effect an *equivocal response* to the IR's original question. From this example we can see that agenda shift, reformulation and equivocation (which we will examine soon in this section on IE answers) can sometimes be entangled in one answer turn.

(ii) Evasion by reformulating the question

Reformulation can be used in both situations where an answer is

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

provided or where an evasion occurs. In situations where an answer is going to be provided: a) When the question is complex, involving extensive background information, reformulation can be used to clarify the question. b) When the question turn contains multiple interrogative components such that there is a range of possible response trajectories available to the IE, reformulation can be used to indicate how the question components are to be dealt with, thereby managing a response trajectory. Reformulations of this sort appear most commonly when a public figure chooses to begin the response by ‘reaching back’ to address something other than the most recent issue in question turn. Sacks (1987) noticed the preference for contiguity in interaction, i.e. speakers usually begin by addressing the most recent item produced. Reformulations in the form of ‘reaching back’ provide advance warning that something other than a standard response trajectory will be followed.

Evasion by reformulation is of more interest to this thesis. Reformulation can be used to *shift the topical agenda* and thereby evade the question. This is a more subtle and ‘covert’ way of shifting agenda—less apt to be noticed as evasive, and less vulnerable to interception. There are several different ways of question reformulation in service of ‘covert topical agenda shift’:

First, agenda shift (evasion) under the guise of ‘summarizing’: this is a stepwise transition to a news topic. “Whether a reformulation will be recognized as ‘evasive’ depends in part on the perceived distance between the topical agenda as framed by the original question and the agenda established by the reformulation.” (Clayman 1993:177) Some IR questions are very complicated and make it reasonable for the IE to ‘summarize’

before attempting to answer. Some of these reformulations appear to be ‘summarizing’ the questions, but actually with a little bit more incremental moves made in each step when the IE is ‘summarizing’, in a gradual way the actual topic has been slightly changed. And the IE will answer to this changed topic rather than the ones that the IR has intended to enquire about. Below is an example where the IE summarizes the IR’s turn first (lines 19-21) and continues to address the agenda of the IE’s rather than answering the IR’s question.

#30 (Clayman 1993:178 [Bentsen-Quayle Debate 10/5/88:0:30:28])  
[simplified and lines adapted]

- 01 JRN: Senator Quayle (.) in recent years thuh Reagan  
02 administration has scaled back thee activities: of thee  
03 Occupational Safety and Health Administration .hhh  
04 prompted in part by Vice Present Bush’s task force on  
05 regulatory relief. .hhhh Thee uh budget for thee agency has  
06 been cut by twenty percent, (0.2) and thuh number of  
07 inspections at manufacturing plants .hhh has been reduced by  
08 thirty three percent. .hhhh This’s had a special effect in this  
09 area where many people work in thuh meat packing  
10 industry, .hh which (.) has a far: higher rate of serious  
11 injuries than almost any other injury, .hh a rate which appears  
12 to’ve been rising: although we’re not really su::re .hh bec =  
13 some- some o’thuh lar:gest companies have allegedly been  
14 falsifying thuh reports. .hhhh Would you:: uh (0.5)  
15 acknowledge to thuh hundreds of injured and maimed  
16 people, (.) in Nebraska (.) Iowa: and elsewhere in thuh  
17 midwest .hhh that in this case deregulation may have gone  
18 too far:, and thuh government should reassert itself in  
19 protecting workers rights  
20 (0.8)  
21 DQ: .hhh Thuh premise of your question John: .hh is that  
22 somehow this administration has been la::x. .hh in  
23 enforcement .h of thee OSHA regulations. .hh  
24 And I disagree with that. (0.3) And I’ll I’ll tell ya why:. .hh If

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

25       you wanna: ask some business people. (1.2) that I talk to  
26       periodically (0.8) they complain:. (1.2) about th' tough  
27       enforcement (0.7) of this administration, .hhh and  
28       furthermore, (0.6) lemme tellya this for thuh record. (1.1)  
29       When we: have foun:d violations in this administration. (1.0)  
30       there has not only been (0.5) tough enforcement. (1.2) but  
31       there have been: thuh most severe: penalties .hh thuh lar::gest  
32       penalties in thuh history. .hh (0.9) of thuh Department of  
33       Labour (0.2) have been le::vied (0.2) when we- these eh  
34       violations have been found. ...

(See Clayman 1993:177-180 for analysis of 'reformulation' in this example.)

Second, evasion under the guise of 'reaching back': avoiding the second part of a two-part question. Reformulations in the form of 'reaching back' can be used to project that an atypical answer trajectory (i.e. not dealing with the most recent item first) will be forthcoming. However, it is also possible that the IE may never get around to answer the more recent part of the questions, and therefore evade it. In the following example, the IE reaches back (line 07) to the first part of the question turn (lines 01-02) and avoids addressing the second part of the question turn, i.e. the question per se (lines 03-04).

#31 (Clayman 1993:180-181 [Nixon Press Conference 8/29/72:276-277])  
[simplified, lines adapted and line numbers added]

01 → JRN: Mr. President, are you personally investigating the  
02                    mishandling of some of your campaign funds,  
03 →                    and do you agree with Secretary Connolly that these

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

04 charges are harmful to your re-election?  
05 → RN: Well, I commented upon this on other occasions, and I  
06 will repeat my position now.  
07 With regard to the matter of the handling of campaign  
08 funds, we have anew law here in which technical  
09 violations have occurred and are occurring, apparently,  
10 on both sides. As far as we are concerned, we have in  
11 charge, in Secretary Stans, a man who is an honest man  
12 and one who is very meticulous—as I have learned from  
13 having him as my treasurer and finance chairman in two  
14 previous campaigns—in the handling of matters of this  
15 sort. Whatever technical violations have occurred,  
16 certainly he will correct them and will thoroughly  
17 comply with the law. He is conducting any investigation  
18 on this matter, and conducting it very, very thoroughly,  
19 because he doesn't want any evidence at all to be  
20 outstanding, indicating that we have not complied with  
the law.

(See Clayman 1993:180-181 for analysis of 'reformulation' in this example.)

Third, evasion under the guise of 'agreement/disagreement': as embedded question reformulation. While the IE asserts agreement with some statements in question turn, he/she may have reformulated the agreed part and thereby covertly changed the topic. In the example below, the IR's question concerns military use in dealing with drug problems; whilst when the IE appears to agree (lines 14-15 'you're absolutely right...') he actually constraints the topic to 'drug problem' (line 15) without mentioning of military use.

#32 (Clayman 1993:182 [Bentsen-Quayle Debate 10/5/88:0:41:53])  
[simplified, lines adapted and line numbers added]

01 JRN: Senator Quayle as you:: uh (0.3) mentioned here  
02 tonight you actively supported thee invasion of

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

03 Granada which was thuh military operation to  
04 rescue some American medical students an:d to  
05 rescue and island from a k- Marxist takeover. .hhhhh  
06 If military force was necessary:. i:n that endeavor  
07 (0.2) why not use thuh military to go after thuh  
08 South America drug car:tel:s and after General  
09 Noriega for that matter in a surgical stri:ke, .hhhh  
10 since dru:gs in thuh minds of most Americans po:se  
11 a far greater danger: to many more people.  
12 (0.8)

13 AUD: x x [ x - x - x - x - x - x - x - x - (2.0)  
14 → DQ: [You're- you're absolutely ri:ght (1.2) you're  
15 absolutely right that thuh drug problem. (0.7) is:  
16 (0.4) thuh number one issue. ...

(See Clayman 1993:181-182 for analysis of 'reformulation' in this example.)

To summarize, evasion is a commonly used strategy to deal with adversarial or difficult questions, and agenda shift and reformulating the question are two important means to achieve evasion. In this section we have been examining these two evasive practices. In the next section we will move to another dimension of IE response—the indirect uncooperative answer, which includes equivocation.

#### *D) Indirect uncooperative answer & 'equivocation'*

Harris (1991) defines 'indirect uncooperative answer' as "an answer from which neither 'yes' nor 'no' can be inferred *or* a value for a missing variable but which maintains cohesion, presuppositional framework and illocutionary coherence". (Harris 1991:187) This is similar to the concept of 'equivocation' raised by other scholars (Bavelas, Beavin, Black and Bryson 1988)

"Equivocation is non-straightforward communication and includes

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

such speech acts as: ‘self-contradictions, inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentialisations, incomplete sentences, misunderstandings, obscure style or mannerisms of speech, ...etc.’” (Watzlawick, Beavin Bavelas & Jackson, 1967:76) Basically, equivocation avoids essential elements of direct communication. Bavelas et al. (1988) proposed that equivocal speech occurs when a speaker has a choice between two unattractive (negative) communicative alternatives, but must still say something. These communicative avoidance-avoidance conflicts often happen in political news interviews. Under these circumstances, the IE resorts to ‘the gentle art of saying nothing by saying something’. (Bavelas, Beavin, Black and Bryson: 1988) Equivocation is a more subtle way of avoiding the question. In a previous example where reformulation and agenda shift is used, equivocation is also present:

#33 (Greatbatch 1986:445-446 ‘O: 21.4.81’) [simplified]

- 1       Int: D’you quite like him?  
2     →   EH: ·hhhh Well er I- think in politics you see: i- it’s not a  
3         question of going about liking people or no:t,  
4     →         it’s a question of dealing with people.  
5     →         ·hh And e:r I’ve always been able to deal perfectly well  
6         with Mister Wilson and er- indeed he has with me.

In this example, the IE seems to have provided an answer in lines 5-6, but in fact the question has been changed through reformulation. The IE is answering the question in terms of ‘dealing with people’ rather than ‘liking him or not’ in the IR’s original question. The IE refers to matters of ‘liking’, but without answering whether, specifically, he likes Mr Wilson. It is the gentle art of equivocation—‘saying nothing by saying something’.

Bavelas, Black, Bryson, et al. (1998) identified four questions by

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

which the degree of equivocation in a message can be assessed:

Sender: To what extent is the message the speaker's own opinion?

Content: How clear is the message, in terms of what is being said?

Receiver: To what extent is the message addressed to the other person?

Context: To what extent is this a direct answer to the question?

(Bavelas & Smith, 1982)

The question about 'sender' concerns referring to a third party—which is sometimes used in IR question to achieve neutralism (see previous section on IR question) as well as used in IE answers (which will be explored more in later analysis chapters). The 'content' and 'context' about 'how clear or direct the answer is' connect to the directness/indirectness of answers, which is the focus of the thesis. Equivocal responses are often entangled with evasion and indirect answers. These three dimensions of IE responses are next to each other along the continuum of how much resistance against the IR question as well as the continuum of evasive-direct answer scale (Harris 1991:187)—with evasive responses being the most resistant against the IR question, then the equivocal responses, then indirect answers; and they approach closer to direct answers along the IE answer dimensions.

*E) Indirect cooperative answer: focus of the thesis*

Along the continuum of resistance against the IR's adversarial question, what comes after equivocal response would be indirect answers, answering to the IR's question, but in an indirect or elaborate way.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

According to Harris (1991, pp187), indirect cooperative answer involves inference: either selection of an intermediate position between ‘yes’ and ‘no’ or either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ can be inferred from the answer [to a ‘yes/no’ question], *or* a value for a missing variable [as answer to a ‘wh-’ question] can be inferred. These indirect cooperative answers (for which ‘indirect answers’ is the term generally used in other parts of the thesis) in news interview are the research focus of this project and the topic to explore in later analysis chapters. *Inference* is necessary for understanding an indirect answer; and constructing the answer in the way that the listeners can make the right inference is important for the IE.

*F) Direct answer*

With the least resistance against the IR’s questions are direct answers, which “contain explicit ‘yes’ or ‘no’, ‘of course’, ‘right’, etc. [to a ‘yes/no’ question] or ‘copy’ type answer involving deletion in response to question requesting polarity choice *or* the selection of a disjunct [to a polar question]”; or “which supplies a value for a missing variable in response to a ‘wh-’ question”. (Harris 1991:187) Direct answers are relatively straightforward and not the focus of this thesis.

*Summary*

So far we have examined different dimensions or techniques through which IEs respond to IRs’ adversarial questions including refusing to answer, challenges, evasion (by agenda shift or reformulating the question), indirect uncooperative answer (or ‘equivocation’), indirect (cooperative) answer, and direct answer—all of them as a continuum

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

containing from the most to the least resistance against the IR's question. (See also Harris 1991:187 for the 'evasion-answer scale', and Bull 1994 for answers to multi-barreled IR questions) Among these multiple dimensions of IE answers, indirect answers are the focus of the research reported here; evasive and equivocal response are of interest to the thesis as well because sometimes these three—indirect answer, evasive response and equivocal response—are entangled together in the answer turn.

Ways of constructing the answer turn

There are not only multiple dimensions of IE answers but also different ways of constructing the answer turn. The IE employs different techniques in 'doing answering', i.e. to mark question-relevance and show that the IE is responding to the question rather than evading it. There are ways of marking question-relevance: One is to incorporate some of the wording of the question into the initial response—the repetition may involve a single key word, a larger phrase, or the entire framework of the question into the initial response. (Roth 1996, Schegloff 1998) Another is certain 'indexical expressions' or deictic terms such as 'anaphoric reference', which have meanings that are inextricably linked to the prior question; including: a) a pronoun such as "that"; b) certain verbs which have similar back-referencing character as a pronoun, such as "was"; c) units of talk that are shorter than a sentence (e.g. a phrase) which tend to depend on the question for the completeness of the meaning. For example, a noun phrase can be the answer to a 'what' or 'which' question; d) certain turn-initial discourse markers which refer to the previous question, e.g. 'because' at the beginning of answer turn as response to a 'why' question.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Despite these techniques of marking question relevance and showing that the IE is responding to the question, whether the response is indeed answering to the question cannot be decided. The IE may genuinely give a full answer to the question, or he/she may pretend to respond while in fact evading the question. (Clayman 2001:409-412)

On the contrary, some roundabout answers that are indeed responding to the question may initially be heard as evasive and are subject to countermeasures from the IR. For example:

#34 (Clayman 2001:408-409 US, 3June 1985, Nightline: Patrick Buchanan) [simplified and lines adapted]

- 01 IR: Continuing our: conversation now with Pat Buchanan, Pat-  
02 uh:- (0.2) to put it as gently as I ca:n there're some people:  
03 fairly high up in this administration who seem to be able to  
04 contain their enthusiasm for you, .hhh And every once in a  
05 while stories crop up in thuh press that one can only  
06 assume come from some o' those folk. (0.2) How does that  
07 sort of thing happen. in an administration.  
08 (.)  
09 PB: tlk .hhh Well I think 'ere was a lotta that in the first ter:m  
10 Ted, an' = uh: > I think one o'thuh reasons < was you had-  
11 =  
12 → IR: Well you weren't in in the first [term.  
13 PB: [Right, but you had three  
14 chiefs of- (.) eh sta:ff virtually, you had Baker (.) Deaver  
15 and Meese .hhhh An' there was it seemed to me from the  
16 outsi:de an awful lot of leaking on one er against one er  
17 another, from secondary an' tertiary personnel .hhhhh A:n'  
18 since Don Regan came in we've been goin' through a bit  
19 of a transition, there was some o'that I think back in  
20 April, .hhhh but since thuh transition's been complete I  
21 haven't seen any of it an' we don't expect to see as much  
22 in the:: uh .hhh in the second term ...

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

The IR rather delicately makes the point that other administration officials do not seem to like Buchanan very much and have leaked that view to the press, and he goes on to ask Buchanan how that can happen. Buchanan responds by noting that ‘there was a lotta that in the first term’, and he begins to explain why. This could be the first component of a roundabout answer that will eventually deal with the current situation, but it could also be an effort by Buchanan to deflect the discussion away from himself. The IR takes the skeptical view, analyzing it as an incipient evasion; he interjects...pointing out that ‘you weren’t in in the first term’, thereby treating Buchanan’s turn-thus-far as irrelevant and unresponsive. (Clayman 2001:408)

From this example we can see that roundabout answers are not particularly successful in constructing the impression of answering. By contrast, techniques of ‘doing answering’ can be quite helpful in pre-empting the IR’s early intervention.

A common way of answering relatively directly is ‘minimal answer plus elaboration’, which establishes the ‘answering’ character of the talk early in the turn. For instance, a ‘yes/no’ question can prompt an initial one-sentence expression of affirmation or negation before that answer is elaborated. A ‘wh-’ question can prompt an initial one-sentence provision of the requested information prior to further elaboration.

### Summary

This section has been reviewing the IE answers in news interview. As we have shown, there are a number of techniques through which IEs respond to adversarial questions. These include refusing to answer,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

challenges, evasion (by agenda shift or reformulation), indirect un-cooperative answer (and equivocation), indirect (cooperative) answers, and direct answers. All these answer dimensions construct a continuum of different degrees of resistance against the IR question, and continuum of evasion-direct answer scale, with refusing to answer being the most resistant and direct answers (as the name suggests) being the least resistant. Among these dimensions or techniques, the evasive, equivocal and indirect answers are next to each other along the continuum, often entangled with each other, and are of particular interest to this thesis. We will explore these further in later chapters. Near to the end of this section we have also examined ways of constructing the answer turn; such as ways to build lexical links with the IR question thereby appearing to answer—even though in fact it is not, and ways to construct complex answers.

#### **4. Conclusion**

In this chapter we have reviewed the literature on contemporary American and British news interview interactions. The distinctive turn-taking system of consecutive question-answer sequences is a feature of news interview interaction, leaving IR question and IE answer as two main areas of interest for research on news interview. As shown by Clayman and Heritage (2002a), IR questions have become increasingly adversarial over the last 40 years, which contributes significantly to multi-dimensions in IE answers, from refusal to answer, through challenges, evasion, indirect un-cooperative answer (and equivocation), indirect (cooperative) answer, to direct answer—all of these as a

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

continuum of different degrees of resistance against adversarial question. IE answers, and more specifically ‘indirect IE answers’ is the focus of this thesis. Before moving to analyzing data in British news interview, it is necessary to review literature related to ‘indirectness’. We will devote the next chapter (Chapter 3) for reviewing ‘indirectness’, building up the foundation for my later analysis of ‘indirectness in British political news interview’.

## **Chapter Three**

# **LITERATURE REVIEW: LINGUISTIC THEORIES RELATED TO INDIRECTNESS**

## 1. Introduction

The broad research area of this thesis is interactions in British political news interview. More specifically, this thesis focuses on the ‘indirect answers’ of the interviewee (IE) in these interviews. An example of an indirect answer in British political news interview is the following:

#35

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh **Mr. Bradley** is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that **ba:ck in May of two**  
51 **thousand**, the IRA made a **promise** to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And **h**. we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that’s the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think **people** quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

In this example, the IR’s question is whether the IE thinks the IRA’s words

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

could be a sign of progress towards a peaceful resolution of conflict. The IE *indirectly* presents a skeptical view through referring to a third party ('Mr. Bradley' in line 48; 'people' in line 56); as well as by referring to the failing promises by IRA in the past (lines 50-54).

Focus on 'indirect answers' in this research makes it relevant to review the 'indirectness' literature. 'Indirectness' is a recurrent phenomenon in all sorts of social interactions, from everyday conversation, through professional-layperson interaction, to politician's response to question. The following are three examples of 'indirect' communication in three different interactional environments:

#36 Everyday conversation: NB II: 2: R: pp11: Nancy & Emma

- 1 Nan: No note no eh I haven't written a ↓word to im. ↓  
2 (0.3)  
3 Nan: I [jst uh, h for'd iz mai:l stick it in th'onvelope'n  
4 Emm: [ Mm:  
5 (0.4)  
6 Nan: send it all on up to im en .hhh[hhh  
→ 7 Emm: [Yih know wher'e is the:n,  
8 (0.8)  
→ 9 Nan: I have never had any of it retu:med Emma, h  
10 Emm: Oh:.

Nancy's response 'I have never had any of it returned' is an *indirect* answer that she knows where he [her ex-husband] is. We can divide this response into two analytical points: a) Nancy had an address to post things to for her ex-husband; b) Because the posts are not returned, it is proved that her ex-husband does live at the address that Nancy uses. Responding to Emma's question 'you know where he is then', these two points illustrate that Nancy probably knows his whereabouts.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#37 Police call: an indirect request

Emergency police call: 29

- 1 Com: Hello police  
2 Ca: Yeah hello (becca) uh I live at (address)  
3 (.)  
4 Com: Y[eah  
5 [Right and I'm (not home) my daughter was there (who is  
6 thirteen) and she's home and somebody has broken the house  
7 (.)  
8 Com: (oh=one=seven) (.) what's the address you want police to go to

In this example the first speaker, the caller to an emergency line, 'merely' reports something—'...somebody has broken the house' (lines 5-6); in response, the recipient, the police call-taker, *treats* that report as a request ('you want' in line 8). Hence the report has *served as* an indirect request. In CA, we cannot make any assumptions about the psychology or intention of the caller, though of course one might guess that she is calling because she wants the police to go round and check things out; and the recipient does make and display this analysis of the caller's indirect request with 'you want'.

#38 Doctor-patient interaction: patient's indirectness

GP consultation 02-08

- 1 PT: I've got a rash (.) which um (2) is getting worse  
2 GP: ok yep  
3 ((lines omitted))  
4 PT: It's in it's (.) big phase at the moment it's active phase (but) its  
5 spreading round inside my leg so (.) its time to (.) do something  
6 about that  
7 GP: Its been there over a year hasn't it  
8 PT: yep  
9 GP: yep

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 10 PT: [It- it actually started after um (.) I think you (.) I came- the first  
11 time I saw you I had that problem with the um (.) rash on my  
12 toes and stuff and you gave me a prescription for er (2) the er  
13 foot stuff (.) couple of big horse pills  
14 GP: Yep lamisil  
15 PT: Lamisil that's [ right ] =  
16 GP: [yep yep]  
17 PT: = so (.) I finished that and it started up round about the same  
18 sort of time  
19 GP: Was June oh three that's interesting (.) if it was a (.) reaction to  
20 the (.) tablets which I mean you can get a reaction to any of  
21 them it- it- you wouldn't expect it to carry on [( ) um ]  
22 PT: [no so it's] it seems to be  
23 a permanent feature now

In this example, the patient mentions a temporal contiguity between being given some medication (lamisil) and the appearance of some side effect/reaction (the rash which he mentions in line 1 and 3-4 re 'spreading'). Through this description of temporal contiguity—'it actually started after...you gave me a prescription' (lines 8-10) and '...it started up round about the same sort of time' (line 14), the patient *indirectly* indicates his suspected causal connection between the medication and rash. And seeing the patient's indication the doctor responds that 'if it was a reaction to the tablets...you wouldn't expect it to carry on', thereby denying the suspected causal connection.

Because of its recurrence in different social interactions, 'indirectness' is an interesting topic to research on. This chapter will review some relevant literature related to 'indirectness' in linguistics. In the linguistic field, there is a considerable body of research which address the phenomenon of 'indirectness': for example research on Speech Acts, Politeness, Conversation Implicature, figurative speech, and equivocation,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

etc. The following sections review some key issues in these areas.

## 2. Indirect Speech Act (First Pair Part of conversation)

Indirect Speech Acts (ISAs) are an important area for indirectness. Most of the theories which deal with such things have concern with initiating actions—the First Pair Part of sequences, e.g. directives, requests, commissives, invitations, etc. Relevant theoretical constructs include illocutionary acts and indirect speech acts.

### Illocutionary act and indirect/direct speech act

An illocutionary act is ‘the making of a statement, offer, promise, etc. in uttering a sentence, by virtue of the conventional force associated with it (or with its explicit performative paraphrase). (Levinson, 1983, 236) In connection with indirect speech acts, Searle (1975a: 178) introduces the notions of ‘primary’ and ‘secondary’ illocutionary acts. The *primary illocutionary act* is the indirect one, which is not literally performed. The *secondary illocutionary act* is the direct one, performed in the literal utterance of the sentence (Searle 1975a: 178). In the example:

# 39

X: We should leave for the show or else we’ll be late.

Y: I am not ready yet.

Here the primary illocutionary act is Y's rejection of X's suggestion, and the secondary illocutionary act is Y's statement that she is not ready to leave. By dividing the illocutionary act into two subparts, Searle is able to explain that we can understand two meanings from the same utterance all

the while knowing which is the correct meaning to respond to. In Cooren's (2005) paper, 'indirect speech act' and 'the primary illocutionary act' are used interchangeably, so are 'direct speech act' and 'the secondary illocutionary act' (Cooren 2005: 28)

As an example to illustrate Indirect Speech Act, we can use Searle's (1975b: 65-66) summary of various structures of 'indirect directives', including:

"A) Sentences concerning H's ability to perform A, e.g. 'Can you reach the salt?'; B) Sentences concerning S's wish or want that H will do Action (below abbreviated as A), e.g. 'I would like you to go now'; C) Sentences concerning H's doing A, e.g. 'Officers will henceforth wear ties at dinner'; D) Sentences concerning H's desire or willingness to do A, e.g. 'Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?'; E) Sentences concerning reasons for doing A, e.g. 'You ought to be more polite to your mother'; F) Sentences embedding one of these elements inside another; also, sentences embedding an explicit directive illocutionary verb inside one of these contexts, e.g. 'Would you mind awfully if I asked you if you could write me a letter of recommendation?'"

Group A is checking the 'preparatory condition'; Group B is checking the 'sincerity condition'; and Group C is checking the 'propositional content condition'. Group A, B, C are all checking the 'felicity condition' of a speech act, while Group D and E gives reasons for doing A. Group F is embedding one structure inside another. In the following small section, we will explain the Four Felicity Conditions in Speech Act Theory including the Preparatory Condition, the Sincerity Condition, the Propositional Condition and the Essential Condition.

The Four Felicity Conditions

The Four Felicity Conditions are necessary for the success of a speech act. They are conditions needed for success or achievement of a performative. Only certain people are qualified to declare war, baptize people or sentence convicted felons. In some cases, the speaker must be sincere (as in apologizing or vowing). And external circumstances must be suitable: “Can you give me a lift?” requires that the hearer has a motor vehicle, is able to drive it somewhere and that the speaker has a reason for the request. Felicity conditions may include preparatory condition, sincerity condition, propositional condition, and essential condition. Searle (1975b: 71) illustrated these Four Conditions in ‘directives’ (‘requests’) and ‘commissives’ (‘promises’) as follows:

Table 1. The Four Felicity Conditions in Speech Act:

	Directive (Request)	Commissive (Promise)
Preparatory condition	H is able to perform A.	S is able to perform A. H wants S to perform A.
Sincerity condition	S wants H to do A.	S intends to do A.
Propositional condition	S predicates a future act A of H.	S predicates a future act A of S.
Essential condition	Counts as an attempt by S to get H to do A.	Counts as the undertaking by S of an obligation to do A.

(\* In this table, A is the abbreviation of Action.)

‘Preparatory conditions’ are conditions that ensure it is possible for the Speaker to perform the speech act; it may include the status or authority of the Speaker to perform the speech act or the situation of other parties to grant the speech act. ‘Sincerity conditions’ at a simple level show that

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Speaker must REALLY intend what he or she says.

We have introduced the concepts of primary/secondary illocutionary act and their relation with indirect speech acts; examined the syntactic forms of some indirect speech acts; and introduced the Four Felicity Conditions necessary for speech act. In the following part we will review the three main theories to explain *how it is possible for the Speaker to construct an Indirect Speech Act and for the Hearer to understand it*.

Three Theories to explain how Indirect Speech Act is possible for the Speaker and the Hearer

Three main theories have been provided to explain or understand Indirect Speech Acts: the idiom theory, the inference theory, and the entirely pragmatic theory, among which the inference theory is the most widely accepted. According to the *Idiom Theory*, forms like ‘Can you VP?’ are idioms for ‘I request you to VP’ in just the same way that ‘kick the bucket’ is an idiom for ‘die’. (Levinson 1983: 268) Forms like ‘I want you to close the door’, ‘I’d be much obliged if you’d close the door’, ‘Can you close the door?’ ‘Are you able by any chance to close the door?’ ‘Would you close the door?’ ‘Won’t you close the door?’ are in fact all idioms for, and semantically equivalent to ‘I hereby request you to close the door’. (Levinson 1983: 264) Idiom theory has some serious deficits (Levinson 1983: 269), which lead to the need of an inference theory.

There are a number of distinct *inference theories*, but they share the following essential properties: a) the literal meaning and the literal force of an utterance is computed by, and available to, participants; b) for an

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

utterance to be an indirect speech act, there must be an inference-trigger, i.e. some indication that the literal meaning and/or literal force is conversationally inadequate in the context and must be ‘repaired’ by some inference; c) there must be specific principles or rules of inference that will derive, from the literal meaning and force and the context, the relevant indirect force; d) there must be pragmatically sensitive linguistic rules or constraints, which will govern the occurrence of, for example, pre-verbal ‘please’ in both direct and indirect requests. (Levinson 1983: 270) A version of inference theory is suggested by Searle (1975b): property a) is handled by his version of speech act theory; property b), the trigger requirement, is provided by Grice’s theory of conversational cooperation (Grice, 1975); and property c), the inference principles, is provided by Grice’s general theory of conversational implicature. Searle (1975b: 61) provided the theoretical apparatus (an ‘inference mechanism’) to explain the indirect part of indirect speech acts as including a) a theory of speech acts; b) certain general principles of cooperative conversation; c) mutually shared factual background information of the speaker and the hearer; and d) an ability on the part of the hearer to make inferences. In his paper, he used a sample case to explain in detail how the ‘inference mechanism’ works. (Searle 1975b: 61-64) Searle also provided arguments against the ‘idiom theory’:

“The most powerful evidence I know that these sentences are not idioms is that in their use as indirect directives they admit of literal responses that presuppose that they are uttered literally. Thus, an utterance of ‘why don’t you be quiet, Henry?’ admits as a response an utterance of ‘Well, Sally, there are several reasons for not being quiet. First,...’” (Cooren 2005: 23)

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

A third and more radical way to explain indirect speech act is to reject the fundamental assumption that sentences have literal forces at all. It follows that there are no ISAs, and thus no ISA problem, but merely a general problem of mapping speech act force onto sentences in context. Illocutionary force is *entirely pragmatic* and has no direct and simple correlation with sentence-form or sentence-meaning. (Levinson 1983: 274) Both idiom theory and pragmatic theory have some serious deficits (Levinson 1983: 269-274) and are therefore less widely used than the inference theory.

Speech Acts are not always used to constitute ‘indirectness’; they can also be used to constitute pre-sequences. We will examine the three—speech act, ‘indirectness’ and pre-sequence—in the next section.

Speech Act, indirectness and pre-sequence

Speech Act can go beyond ‘indirectness’ and be used to explain pre-sequence. For example, in the following two excerpts:

# 40

- 1 X: I don't know how to find articles on this topic.
- 2 Y: Do you have access to COM Abstracts?
- 3 X: Yes.
- 4 Y: This is a good source for articles in communication. You should consult it.

In this case, ‘Do you have access to COM Abstracts’ serves as a pre- for directive in line 4. While in the following except, the same sentence serves as an indirect speech act:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

# 41

- 1 X: I don't know how to find articles on this topic.
- 2 Y: Do you have access to COM Abstracts?
- 3 X: Yes, that's a good suggestion. Thanks!

The same Speech Act can function as either a request or a pre-, depending on the specific communication.

Relationship between 'the speech act theory', 'the inference mechanism', and the 'indirectness and pre-sequence' can be summarized as—'Speech Act Theory' offers a way:

- to explain the 'inferential mechanisms'
- involved in conversational phenomena like 'indirectness' and 'pre-sequence'

Cooren (2005: 33-36) provides detailed analysis for understanding the same sentence—'Do you know who's going to that meeting?'—as an 'indirect request', a 'pre-announcement', or a 'pre-request' in different situations.

#42 As an 'indirect request': (Cooren 2005: 34)

- 1 X: Do you know who's going to that meeting?
- 2 Y: Yes, Bob, Anita and Teri
- 3 X: Oh, okay. Thanks.

#43 As a 'pre-announcement': (Cooren 2005: 36)

- 1 X: Do you know who's going to that meeting?
- 2 Y: No. Who?
- 3 X: The president!

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#44 As a 'pre-request': (Cooren 2005: 36)

- 1 X: Do you know who's going to that meeting?
- 2 Y: Yes, why?
- 3 X: Because I'd like you to tell them it's cancelled.

Cooren (2005: 38) also provides a model for (Speaker) using/(Recipient) understanding "Do you know + embedded question" as indirect request, pre-announcement, or pre-request in the following table:

Table 2. “Do you know + embedded question” as indirect request, pre-announcement or pre-request

	Indirect Request	Pre-announcement	Pre-request
Speaker	Does not know the answer to the embedded question	Knows the answer to the embedded question	May or may not know the answer to the embedded question (not consequential)
	Wants to know the answer to the embedded question	Wants to announce the answer to the embedded question	Wants to ask the recipient to undertake a specific course of action whose successful completion is conditional on the recipient knowing the answer to the embedded question
	Does not know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question	Does not know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question	Does not know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question
	Wants to know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question	Wants to know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question	Wants to know whether or not the recipient knows the answer to the embedded question
Recipient	Knows what specific course of action is expected from her		Does not know what specific course of action is expected of her

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

From this we can see that different felicity conditions of the speaker or recipient contributes to using/understanding a Speech Act as an ‘indirect speech act’ or a ‘pre-’.

### Summary

Indirect Speech Act theories provide a framework to show how indirect speech acts (especially the First Pair Parts such as directives, commissives, requests, etc.) look like, as well as try to explain the working mechanisms for using/understanding indirect speech acts, including the idiom theory, the inference theory and the entirely pragmatic theory. However, none of them can “attend to the *motivation* for ISAs—*why* do speakers so often prefer the contortions of, for example, a) ‘I don’t suppose that you would by any chance be able to lend me some cash, would you?’ to b) ‘Please lend me some cash’. Attempts to explain the rational behind the ‘interactional pessimism’ in a) and elsewhere, appeal to the systematic pressures of *strategies of ‘politeness’*.” (Levinson 1983: 274) Searle (1975b: 64) also points out that ‘In directives, politeness is the chief motivation for indirectness’. This makes a review of ‘politeness’ important and we will do this in the next section.

### **3. Politeness (‘Why’)**

Indirect Speech Act Theory offers: a) a summary of syntactic forms for different kinds of indirect speech acts; b) different explanations for how indirect speech act works in application/understanding, including idiom theory, inference theory, and entirely pragmatic theory; while

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘Politeness’ tells *why* indirectness, i.e. the motivations behind certain indirectness.

Key concepts

Key concepts in ‘Politeness’ theories include: Face Wants, Positive/Negative Politeness, and Face Threatening Act; as explained below:

A) “Face Wants”

The notion of ‘face’ is derived from Goffman’s (1955, 1967) social solidarity principle and English folk terminology, which ‘ties face up with notions of being embarrassed or humiliated, or “losing face”. Thus face is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained, or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction.’ (Brown and Levinson 1987:61)

“Face” as the public self-image that every member wants to claim for himself, consists in two related aspects: a) Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction—i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition. b) Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or ‘personality’ (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants. (Brown and Levinson 1987:61) In alignment with the two aspects of ‘face’, there are two basic *Face Wants*: Negative Face Want and Positive Face Want. Negative face want refers to ‘the want of every “competent adult member” that his actions be unimpeded by others. Positive face want refers to ‘the want of every member that his wants be desirable to at least

some others. (Brown and Levinson 1987:62)

“Normally everyone’s face depends on everyone else’s being maintained, and since people can be expected to defend their faces if threatened, and in defending their own to threaten others’ faces, it is in general in every participant’s best interest to maintain each others’ face.” (Brown and Levinson 1987:61)

#### B) “Positive/Negative Politeness”

*Positive Face Wants* engender people’s desire to be ratified, understood, approved of, liked or admired. The enhancement of people’s positive face wants requires the speaker to employ ‘*Positive Politeness*’, i.e. to show interest, empathy, likeness, affection, admiration, etc. to the hearer. ‘Positive Politeness’ is rather wide and wild—any situation could be the time and place for the interactant to show this kind of positive enhancement. For example, a few compliments to a friend’s clothes, or an agreement to the first speaker’s comment is sufficient to show positive politeness.

On the other hand, the satisfaction of people’s *Negative Face Wants* is more focused. As the negative face wants indicate there should be no imposition on the interactants, it conjures up the notion of ‘negative politeness’, i.e. to show deference to the hearer, to impose no pressure on the hearer’s action, freedom, response, etc. It is the ‘negative face wants’ and the ‘negative politeness’ that will be treated in detail in this section on ‘Politeness’.

#### C) “Face Threatening Act (FTA)”

There are certain kinds of acts that intrinsically threaten face, namely

those acts that by their nature run contrary to the face want of the addressee and/or of the speaker. There is a distinction between acts that threaten negative face and those that threaten positive face. Those acts that primarily threaten the hearer's negative-face want include: orders and requests; suggestions and advice; reminding; threats and warnings; offers and promises; compliments, expressions of envy or admiration; etc. (Brown and Levinson 1987:65-66) Those acts that threaten the Hearer's positive-face want include: expressions of disapproval, criticism, contempt or ridicule, complaints and reprimands, accusations, insults; contradictions or disagreements, challenges; expressions of violent emotions; mention of taboo or inappropriate topics; bringing of bad news about H or good news (boasting) about S; raising of divisive topics, e.g. politics, race, religion, women's liberation, etc. (Brown and Levinson 1987:66-67)

Having examined the key concepts in 'Politeness' theories, we will focus on 'Negative Politeness', which is more closely related to 'indirectness', in this section. And the following part will examine the 'indirect strategies in negative politeness'.

#### Indirect strategies in negative politeness

Various strategies can be used to achieve negative politeness, among which there are some indirect ones.

First, there are some *conventionally indirect directives*, as summarized by Searle (1975b: 65-67) as 'indirect speech acts'. For example:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- #45 ‘Can you reach the salt?’—asking about the H’s ability to do A
- #46 ‘Will you quit making that awful racket?’—asking about the H’s willingness to do A
- #47 ‘Would you be willing to write a letter of recommendation for me?’—asking about the H’s willingness to do A
- #48 ‘Would you mind awfully if I asked you if you could write me a letter of recommendation?’—asking about the H’s willingness to do A

In all these conventionally indirect directives, by asking about H’s *ability* or *willingness* to do A, the speaker is *indirectly requesting* the H to do A. These strategies assume a ‘polite pessimism’ (Brown and Levinson 1987: pp172) stance, explicitly express doubt that the conditions for H to do A obtain, shows deference to the H, avoid coercing the H to do A, give the H the option to say ‘no’ and not to do A, and thereby addressing the H’s negative face want.

A second indirect strategy for negative politeness is ‘*Impersonalising Speaker and Hearer*’, i.e. to phrase the FTA (Face Threatening Act) as if the agent was not S (Speaker) or not S alone, and the addressee was not H (Hearer) or not H alone, by avoiding the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’. (Brown and Levinson 1987:190) For example: (Brown and Levinson 1987:190)

- #49 Impersonal verbs: ‘It is necessary that...’
- #50 Replacement of the pronouns ‘I’ and ‘you’ by indefinites: One might think... (Instead of ‘You/I might think...’)
- #51 Pluralization of the ‘you’ and ‘I’ pronouns: ‘We regret to inform you...’
- #52 Reference terms as ‘I’ avoidance: ‘But the President should not become involved in any part of this case.’ (by Nixon, see New York Times 1973:87)

Through these impersonalising strategies, the Speaker indicates that he/she

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

does not want to impinge on H and thereby showing negative politeness towards the H's negative face want.

A third indirect strategy of negative politeness is '*Point-of-view distancing*', i.e. to use certain strategies to distance the S from H or from the particular FTA. a) One way of doing so is to manipulate the expression of tense to provide *distance in time*. For instance, the Speaker can switch the tense from present into past and distance himself from the here and now. For example:

#53 'I have been/was wondering whether you could do me a little favor.'  
(Brown and Levinson 1987: 204)

b) Another set of distancing involves '*citing a third party*' or citing a source as identified by Pomerantz (1984). An example would be:

#54 Pomerantz (1984: 611)

- 1 Desk: What is the problem.
- 2 → Caller: I don't know. The desk called me and asked me, would
- 3 you like to talk to the desk. They called and asked me to
- 4 call an ambulance. We have one guest here that is ill.

By citing 'the desk', the Caller distances herself from making the request for ambulance, thereby avoiding impinging on the recipient's negative face on her own behalf. This is another indirect way of making request as well as accomplishing negative politeness.

A fourth indirect strategy of negative politeness is to '*state the FTA as a general rule*'. This is to indicate that S doesn't want to impinge but is

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

merely forced to by circumstances, to state the FTA as an instance of some general social rule, regulation, or obligation. For example: (Brown and Levinson 1987: 206)

#55 'Passengers will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train.'  
(Rather than 'You will please refrain from flushing toilets on the train.')

This strategy also helps the Speaker to avoid responsibility for the impinging act or the Face Threatening Act.

A fifth indirect strategy of negative politeness is to '*nominalize*'. In English, degrees of negative politeness (or at least formality) run hand in hand with degrees of nouniness (see Ross 1973). For example, in the following three sentences (Brown and Levinson 1987:207), the last one, with nominalization of the subject, seems to be the most formal and most polite one.

#56 'You performed well on the examinations and we were favorably impressed.'

#57 'Your performing well on the examinations impressed us favorably.'

#58 'Your good performance on the examinations impressed us favorably.'

By nominalization of the praised act and subject, the Speaker avoids taking a superior role to the Hearer thereby avoids impinging on the H's negative face.

Now that we have examined different indirect strategies used to achieve negative politeness, we need to see HOW these indirect strategies

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

work, in the next part.

How these indirect strategies work: Violation of the Four Gricean Maxims

As asserted in section 1, what is involved in indirect strategies is essentially a two-stage process: a) A *trigger* serves notice to the addressee that some inference must be made; b) Some mode of *inference* derives what is meant (intended) from what is actually said, this last providing a sufficient *clue* for the inference. (Brown and Levinson 1987:211) A very plausible candidate for the ‘trigger’ is some violation of a Gricean Maxim. If a speaker wants to do an FTA, and chooses to do it indirectly, he must give H some hints and hope that H picks up on them and thereby interprets what S really means (intends) to say. The basic way to do this is to *invite conversational implicatures* by violating, in some way, the Gricean Maxims of efficient communication. H is left to ask himself ‘Why did S say that that way?’ and to hit upon an interpretation that makes the violation understandable. (Brown and Levinson 1987:213) Violation of any of the Four Gricean Maxims can trigger the Hearer’s ‘inference mechanisms’ and thereby making it possible for an indirect communication to work.

A) Violate Relevance Maxim

There are different ways to violate Relevance Maxim. For example: a) Give hints: ‘It’s cold in here.’ (Meaning ‘Shut the window’). b) Give association clues: ‘Oh God, I’ve got a headache again.’ may be used to convey a request to borrow H’s swimming suit, if S and H mutually know that they both have an association between S having a headache and S

wanting to borrow H's swimsuit in order to swim off his headache. (Brown and Levinson 1987:215) c) Presuppose: If S says 'I washed the car again today', he presupposes that he has done it before (e.g. last week) and therefore may implicate criticism. The use of *again* forces H to search for the relevance of the presupposed prior event; if it is relevant only on the assumption that S and H are counting the times each does the task, and this in turn is relevant because S and H have agreed to share the task, then a criticism is implicated. (Brown and Levinson 1987:217)

B) Violate Quantity Maxim

Ways of violating Quantity Maxim include: (Brown and Levinson 1987:217-221)

a) Understate:

#59

A: What do you think of Harry?

B: Nothing wrong with him. (meaning 'I don't think he is very good.')

b) Overstate:

#60

'I tried to call a hundred times, but there was never any answer.' (could convey an apology for not getting in touch)

c) Use tautologies. By uttering a tautology, S encourages H to look for an informative interpretation of the non-informative utterance. It may be:

*An excuse:*

#61 'War is war.'

#62 'Boys will be boys.'; or

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*A refusal of a request:*

#63 'If I won't give it, I won't. ('I mean it!'); or

*A complaint:*

#64 'If it's a road, it's a road!' ('What a terrible road!'); etc.

C) Violate Quality Maxim.

And ways of violating the Quality Maxim include: (Brown and Levinson 1987: pp221-222)

a) Use contradictions.

#65

A: Are you upset about that?

B: Well, yes and no. / Well, I am and I'm not."

(may convey a complaint or a criticism)

b) Be ironic:

#66 "John is a real genius." (after John has just done twenty stupid things in a row)

c) Use metaphors:

#67 "Harry's a real fish." (meaning Harry is sly/cunning like a fish.)

d) Use rhetorical questions:

#68 *Excuse*: "How was I to know...?" ('I wasn't'); or

#69 *Criticism*: "How many time do I have to tell you...?" ('too many')

D) Violate Manner Maxim: be vague or ambiguous

Rather than inviting a particular implicature, S may choose to go 'off record' by being vague or ambiguous (that is, violating the Manner Maxim) in such a way that his communicated intent remains ill-defined. (Brown

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

and Levinson 1987:225) Specific strategies include being ambiguous, being vague, over-generalizing, displacing H, being incomplete, etc. (Brown and Levinson 1987: 225-227) This is more to do with ‘evasive, non-committal or equivocal’ communication (Chapter 3 will examine these different sorts of responses in British political news interview) rather than ‘indirectness’.

All these violation of Gricean Maxims trigger inference from the Hearer, forcing the Hearer to bridge the gap between what is said and what is meant and eventually understanding the indirect communication from the Speaker.

Summary of Section 2 and 3

Section 2 and Section 3 have focused mainly on the First Pair Part of the interaction. Because of the ‘Politeness’ motivation (the “*why*”), people use ‘indirect’ strategies in constructing directives, commissives, requests, etc. As reviewed in Section 2, there are three main theories that *explain how* successful ‘communication in indirect ways’ (from the Speaker’s perspective) and ‘understanding of the indirect communication’ (from the Hearer’s perspective) are possible; i.e. the idiom theory, the inference theory and the entirely pragmatic theory. We have examined the ‘inference mechanism’ in both section 2 and section 3; in the following section we will focus on the pragmatic side of ‘indirectness’. Indeed, even successful application of ‘inference theory’ requires the S and H to have a good mastery of mutual background information and certain general principles of conversation, which are very important in the ‘pragmatic theory’.

#### **4. Conversational Implicature: Pragmatics—A theory explaining successful ‘indirect communication’**

As mentioned in section 2, there are three ways to explain or understand indirect speech acts, i.e. through idiom theory, inference theory or purely pragmatic theory. In this section, we will examine ‘indirectness’ from the pragmatic perspective.

##### Discrepancy between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’

In *indirect* communication, there is a distinction/discrepancy between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’. When a speaker makes an utterance, *what is said* is what is directly or literally conveyed; *what is implicated* is what is suggested, hinted or implied. (Hawley 2002: 970) “The traditional view in pragmatic theory...posits that characterization of what speakers say is part of *semantics*, while only what speakers mean or communicate is part of *pragmatics*.” (Gibbs 1999: 467) What we need to examine in indirect communication is the pragmatic side of the utterance. The exchange between two college students (Gibbs 1999: 466) is a good example of indirect response to a question:

#70

Steve: Are you going to the big party this weekend?

Sally: Didn’t you hear that Bob is going to be there?

Steve has asked a ‘yes/no’ question, in response to which Sally’s direct answer would be a ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Instead of giving a direct answer, Sally responds with another question. What is Sally trying to convey in relation to Steve’s question? How should (or does) Steve interpret Sally’s response

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

in relation to his question? With different background information shared by the two conversation participants, Sally's response would convey different meanings: a) with the shared background information that Sally likes Bob, the implied answer would be a 'yes'; b) with the shared background information that Sally wants to avoid Bob for some reason, the implied answer would be a 'no'.

The user of an indirect communication (e.g. Sally in the given example) conveys something more than the literal meaning of her utterance; the recipient of an indirect communication, in order to understand the indirectly conveyed meaning, has to activate other mechanisms or knowledge such as the shared background information regarding the current issue, the inference mechanism in understanding communication, the assumption of cooperative principle in conversation, the significance of violating any of the four conversation maxims, etc. Both the user and the recipient of an indirect communication go beyond the literal meaning—i.e. 'what is implicated' is more than or other than 'what is said'.

Gibbs' (2002: 472) reading-time study shows that people take longer to comprehend an utterance intending to convey more than/other than the literal meaning (e.g. 'Jane has three children' intending 'Jane is married'<sup>8</sup>, Gibbs 2002: 472) than an utterance intending only the literal meaning (e.g. 'Jane has three children' intending 'Jane has exactly three children', Gibbs 2002: 472) This result shows there is a difference between direct communication and indirect communication, even in the length of time people take in interpreting/understanding the utterance. Gibbs (2002: 472) also suggests that there may be two kinds of pragmatic knowledge

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

involved—the primary pragmatic knowledge and the secondary pragmatic knowledge. Secondary pragmatic knowledge (Gibbs 2002) is connected to interpretation of indirect speech acts (Searle 1975)

Indeed, ‘What is implicated’ depends on more than ‘what is said’. The act of simply saying something, a silence (i.e. what is not said), how something is said (e.g. the prosody, enthusiasm of conversing, non-verbal expressions such as gesture and facial expression, etc.) can all contribute to the indicating the implicature of an utterance. For example:

#71 Implicature through the act of simply saying something (Hawley 2002: 978)

A: Do you speak English?

B: It’s nice weather we’re having today, isn’t it?

B’s act of responding in English indicates that he speaks English, which is indirectly responding to A’s question—‘Do you speak English?’

#72 Implicature through silence (i.e. what is not said) (Hawley 2002: 978)

1 Sally: What did you end up doing last night?

2 Jack: Oh, we went to that new movie. Why didn’t you come? Did  
3 you have a fight with your husband again?

4 (Pause)

5 Jack: Well, I hope you work things out somehow.

In this case, by remaining silent, Sally conversationally implicates that she does not want to talk about what happened before, and probably implying that she indeed had a fight with her husband. What Sally implies does not depend on what is said, as nothing has been said. The conversational implicature here depends on what is not said, i.e. the silence. Therefore, silence can also be a source of conversational implicature.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

How can conversational implicature exist: Co-operative Principle & Four Maxims

Conversational implicatures are present, according to Grice (1975; 1989), because hearers presume that speakers are observing *the Cooperative Principle* and some *Conversational Maxims*— including the expectation that speakers are to be informative, truthful, relevant, and clear in what they say (i.e. the speakers adhere to the Four Conversation Maxims—Quantity, Quality, Relevance and Manner)

A) Co-operative Principle

In social science generally and linguistics specifically, the cooperative principle describes how people interact with one another. As phrased by Paul Grice, who introduced it, it states, “Make your contribution such as it 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, quoted in Levinson 1983: 101) Though phrased as a prescriptive command, the principle is intended as a description of how people normally behave in conversation. Put more simply, people who obey the cooperative principle in their language use will make sure that what they say in a conversation furthers the purpose of that conversation.

The cooperative principle goes both ways: speakers (generally) observe the cooperative principle, and listeners (generally) assume that speakers are observing it. This allows for the possibility of ‘implicatures’, which are meanings that are not explicitly conveyed in what is said, but that can nonetheless be inferred. For example, if Alice points out that Bill

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

is not present, and Carol replies that Bill has a cold, then there is an implicature that the cold is the reason, or at least a possible reason, for Bill's absence; this is because Carol's comment is not cooperative — does not contribute to the conversation — unless her point is that Bill's cold is or might be the reason for his absence. (This is covered specifically by the Maxim of Relation; see below for the Four Gricean Maxims.)

The cooperative principle can be divided into four maxims, describing specific rational principles observed by people who obey the cooperative principle. These principles (i.e. the Four Maxims) enable effective communication and are explained below.

B) Grice's Four Conversational Maxims (Levinson 1983:101-102) include:

Maxim of Quality: Truth

- Do not say what you believe to be false.
- Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence.

Maxim of Quantity: Information

- Make your contribution as informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange.
- Do not make your contribution more informative than is required.

Maxim of Relation: Relevance

- Be relevant.

Maxim of Manner: Clarity

- Avoid obscurity of expression. ("Eschew obfuscation")
- Avoid ambiguity.
- Be brief ("avoid unnecessary prolixity").

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

➤ Be orderly.

When an utterance appears to *violate any of these maxims*, listeners are expected to derive an appropriate *conversational implicature* as to what the speaker has intended to communicate in context given the assumption that he or she was trying to be *cooperative*. (Gibbs 1999: 467)

Summary of Section 2, 3 and 4

In the last three sections, we have examined some indirect communication such as indirect speech acts including the syntactic forms of some indirect speech acts; different ways of understanding/explaining the indirect communication (including idiom theory, inference theory, pragmatic theory; ‘why’ indirectness is used in certain communications (i.e. ‘Politeness’ as the main motive for indirect directives); and what makes it possible to have *successful indirect communication*—how can the speaker successfully convey her message through ‘indirect communication’, and how can the recipient successfully interpret/understand the speaker’s ‘indirect communication’ and get the conveyed message—i.e. with the working of Cooperative Principle and the Conversational Maxims (especially the Four Maxims and what the violation of any of them indicates).

These are the main areas closely related to ‘indirectness’ in linguistic theories. Another area that is related to ‘indirectness’ is *figurative speech*, which we will briefly examine in Section 5. In section 6, we will briefly discuss the topic of *equivocation*, which is different from ‘indirectness’ but has resonance with it in certain cases.

### **5. Other literature: Figurative Speech—an area of ‘indirectness’**

Figurative speech is a rich area of discrepancy between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’. In figurative language, the literal meaning is different from what the figurative expression tries to convey. In other words, listeners or readers of a figurative expression can not successfully understand the expression by simply adding up the meaning of every single word in it.

#### Examples of different types of figurative speech

Below are examples of different types of figurative speech. We can see the discrepancy between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’ in all of them.

#### #73 Metaphor: ‘Cigarettes are time bombs’

‘Cigarettes are time bombs’, it does not literally mean ‘Cigarettes are something that will explode at some time’; instead, it means ‘Cigarettes have chronic effects on the smokers and may cause disastrous effect some time in the future’. ‘Bombs’ here is just a metaphor for the damaging health effects of ‘cigarettes’. Instead of deriving the equation of the two things—bombs and cigarettes—from this sentence, another equation should be derived—the effect of cigarettes and the effect of bombs. Understanding the literal meaning of the two words—‘bombs’ and ‘cigarettes’ is not sufficient to understand the meaning of the whole sentence. To understand what is said in this sentence is not enough to understand what is meant or implicated in it.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#74 Proverb: ‘Rome was not built in a day’

When people use a proverb such as ‘Rome was not built in a day’, most of the time they are not literally talking about Rome but some other things that need to be achieved. They are not talking about the process of building up Rome takes more than one day, but that to achieve something else (i.e. the issue under discussion in current conversation) takes a period of time rather than with immediate effect. Proverbs are created by ancestors and passed on to subsequent generations. They are accumulations of human wisdom in a long human history. To successfully grasp the meaning of proverbs requires something more than gathering the meanings of singles words in the proverbial expressions.

#75 Idiom: ‘turn over a new leaf’

‘Turn over a new leaf’ does not literally refer to the action—‘turning over’ of the object—‘a new leaf’. The implicature has nothing to do with ‘leaf’; it is actually commenting on a person’s life, meaning ‘starting a new life’. Idioms are in a sense similar to proverbs: they are used by people from the same particular cultural background since some time ago; they are widely accepted by a certain group or groups of people; their conveyed meanings are somewhat fixed and readily recognized by those people. The meanings of idiomatic expressions are not dependant on the combination of the literal meanings of the words there within.

#76 Irony: ‘You are a fine friend’

Ironic expressions have meaning contrary to the literal meaning. When ‘You are a fine friend’ is literally said, ‘You are a bad friend’ is

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

actually what is implicated. The understanding of an ironic expression requires gathering *contextual information*, so as to infer from the contextual background that instead of conveying the literal meaning of words the speaker is actually making an ironic or sarcastic comment.

From all these examples of different types of figurative speech, we can see that in figurative expressions, what is literally said is often not what is implicated. How do people understand the implicature of a figurative expression? This is what we will examine next.

Understanding figurative speech: standard pragmatic model & direct access model

Two models have been suggested for the process of understanding figurative speech: the Standard Pragmatic Model and the Direct Access Model. a) The Standard Pragmatic Model is a theory that assumes listeners must first analyze the literal meaning of an utterance *before* applying pragmatic information to derive what the speaker implicates. This relates to the ‘inference theory’ and ‘pragmatic theory’ that we examined in previous sections. b) The Direct Access Model supposes that recipient of a figurative speech often directly understands what the speaker intends to communicate (i.e. the implicature of the figurative expression), without having to process the literal meaning of the figurative speech first. (Gibbs 2002: 458) This is closely related to the ‘idiom theory’, as one way to explain/understand indirect speech acts.

Some reading-time tests (Gibbs 2002) have been conducted to test the two models, with the assumption that if the Standard Pragmatic Model is

the right model for processing a communication using figurative speech, then it would take longer for the recipient to get the implicature of a figurative speech than a direct communication without implicature: For example, it would take longer understanding the ironic expression of ‘He is a fine friend’ (meaning ‘He is a bad friend’) than understanding the statement as a straightforward/direct expression (meaning ‘He is indeed a good friend’); while if the Direct Access Model is the right model for processing communication with figurative speech, it will not take longer to understand a figurative expression with implicature than a direct communication. The results from these tests are inconsistent. Some suggest that understanding a metaphor, a proverb, an irony, etc. do not take longer than understanding a non-figurative expression (Gibbs 1986, 1999) (supporting the Direct Access Model); others suggest that understanding certain ironic expressions in certain contexts take longer (Gibbs 2002: 462) (supporting the Standard Pragmatic Model) or shorter (Gibbs 1986) (supporting the Direct Access Model) than understanding non-ironic expressions. These inconsistencies suggest an uncertainty of choosing one from the two models, which is further supported by the case of understanding idioms. (Gibbs 1999) Indeed, Cacciari and Tabossi (1998, quoted in Gibbs 1999: 466) proposed a model combining these two, suggesting that ‘people process an idiom literally until a key word has been heard. After that, the idiom is processed according to its conventional, figurative meaning’ (Gibbs 1999: 466) which suggests a Standard Pragmatic Model before certain point in communication (i.e. a key word appears) and a Direct Access Model afterwards. Therefore, similar to the choice between the ‘idiom theory’, ‘inference theory’ and ‘purely

pragmatic theory’ for understanding/interpreting indirect speech acts, it is difficult to make a choice between the Standard Pragmatic Model and the Direct Access Model for understanding figurative speech.

### Summary

Now that we have examined figurative speech as a rich area of discrepancy between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is implicated’ and the suggested models for processing/understanding figurative expressions, in the next section we will move on to ‘equivocation’—an area that is different but to some extent related to ‘indirectness’.

### **6. Other literature: Equivocation**

Equivocal communication is the kind of communication ‘having two or more significations equally appropriate; capable of double interpretation; ... of uncertain nature; undecided.’ (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.: 628, quoted in Bavelas et. al. 1990:13) Equivocation sits somewhere in between ‘evasion’ and ‘indirectness’. We will discuss ‘evasive response’, ‘equivocal response’ (in the format of ‘non-committal response’) and ‘indirect response’ in relation to each other in Chapter 5 in detail, in the context of political news interview. Here is an example of equivocal communication (Bavelas 1990: 15)

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#77

After you give a class presentation, you meet a fellow student and ask her how you did. Here is her answer:

Female: [.66 sec.] (Looking at the other person, with head very tilted.) (Raises and lowers head in patronizing way while answering in a pleasant but brittle, 'teacher' tone): Well HOW do you THINK you DID?

This is an equivocal response subject to interpretations. According to the way she responded to the question—the silence at the beginning of answer turn, her non-verbal expressions, her tone of voice, the evasion of a direct response, the question that she threw back to the questioner, and the emphasis she put in the question—it appears that had she given a direct answer it would probably be 'you did not do well'. Using equivocal communication a participant can avoid difficult situations such as the one above—directly saying 'no you did not do well' would be threatening the questioner's face, impolite and possibly damaging the personal relationship between the two people; while saying 'yes you did well' would be lying according to the Female's judgment. Throwing another question back is a way of 'evasion'; while the Female's non-verbal expressions 'indirectly' suggest a negative response. Therefore, in the scale of 'evasion', 'equivocation' and 'indirectness', the equivocal communication in this example sits between 'evasion' and 'indirectness', which is also true in most other cases.

Strategic ambiguity

The term 'equivocation' was first used in a study of communication by Goss and Williams (1973; Williams & Goss 1975) (quoted in Bavelas 1990: 21). They questioned Aristotle's credo that 'style to be good must be

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

clear'. They pointed out that in *political communication*,

“a politician sometimes ‘must address an audience which openly and perhaps vehemently disagrees with him on certain issues (Williams & Goss 1975: 166), in which case there are three possible alternatives: ... or ‘to use deliberate vagueness, i.e. ... to equivocate those issues with which [the audience] disagrees (Williams & Goss 1975: 266). In their experimental studies of persuasive messages, Goss and Williams showed that the effect of ‘equivocation’ on an audience was surprisingly positive, in that equivocal messages ... were more likely than clear messages to elicit agreement and to result in better character ratings for their putative authors.” (Bavelas 1990: 21-22)

Eisenberg (1984) found similar phenomenon in organizational communication—people use ‘communicative strategies which do not always minimize ambiguity, but may nonetheless be effective’. Political communication is what we will focus on later in the analysis chapters.

According to Bavelas et. al. (1990: 57):

“A communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict exists when the only available direct messages are negative, yet a reply must be made... a person in this situation will avoid a direct or clear reply of any kind, because all of them are negative. He or she will, if possible, leave the field—‘saying nothing while saying something’—which avoids the negative consequences of the direct replies. Less direct communication is equivocal communication, and it is characterized by what it *avoids saying* as much as by what it does say. Thus, equivocation will occur in a communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict.”

Bavelas et. al. (1990: 58) point out that the most common avoidance-avoidance conflict involves a choice between saying something

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

false but kind and something true but hurtful. For example: A person who has to comment on an unsuitable gift from a well-liked friend has two negative choices of message: a) saying, falsely, that she likes the gift; or b) saying, hurtfully, that she does not. Bavelas et. al. (1990: 58-59) propose that, if possible, the person will avoid both of these, using 'equivocal responses' such as:

- #78 'I appreciate your thoughtfulness' (with no mention of the actual gift),
- #79 'My wife loves it!' (with no mention of the speaker's view),
- #80 'Where did you ever find it?' (with no mention of like/dislike of the gift).

There are several other plausible explanations for equivocal communication (Bavelas 1990: 61-62):

First, the cause of some equivocation could be simply *error*. In other words, sometimes people make mistakes and speak inaccurately; this can happen to anyone, so such errors would reveal nothing.

Second, a more substantial and traditional class of explanations places the cause within the *equivocator*, that is, the person who generates the message. In this view, equivocation is attributable to the individual, hence not random (as error would be). This view believes that there are consistent traits or attributes that make individuals behave differently from each other: some individuals are inarticulate and have difficulty making themselves understood; others are unscrupulous and avoid the truth; still others are very skillful at handling delicate issues diplomatically; politicians always waffle, never answering directly; and so on.

A third kind of explanation focuses on the general process rather than individual difference, e.g. the rules inferred by theorists such as Brown

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

and Levinson (1978) and others. These theories focus on ‘how’ equivocation might be generated rather than ‘why’ it happens. The focus is on the internal processing that generates the message rather than on the situation that causes it.

Different from Bavelas et al. (1988)’s definition of ‘equivocation’ as ‘saying something while saying nothing’, which can be vague for readers; I have found from this PhD research that ‘equivocation’ can be achieved in two formats: a) one is when the politician responds with something vague—i.e. something that subjects to more than one interpretation; b) the other is when the politician provides an answer but is not fully committed to the answer—i.e. providing a ‘non-committal response’ (see Chapter 5 for detailed analysis of various practices of ‘non-committal response’). With a ‘non-committal response’, the politician can get away from being quoted later on by the IR, or indeed any other listeners, for taking a certain stance, because he or she has not fully committed themselves to this stance.

Political equivocation

As asserted before, political communication is a rich field for equivocation. Politicians are often caught in an avoidance-avoidance conflict situation where an ambiguous response would serve better than a direct and clear answer. An example of this:

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

#81 (Bavelas 1990: 246)

- 1 Rather: Do you favor or oppose federal gun control?  
2 Mondale: I favor control of the so-called Saturday night Special,  
3 snud-nosed— ... snub-nosed guns that are used only to kill  
4 police and each other for concealment. There is no excuse  
5 for their use.

As explained by Bavelas (1990: 246), this response does not answer the question asked, but answers instead a much easier question, ‘Do you favor the control of guns that are used only to kill policemen, and do you think there is any excuse for their use?’ Such an answer is unlikely to offend either side of the gun-control issue.

According to Bavelas (1990: 246-250), there are *various sources of conflict* that could lead to equivocation in political communication: a) there are many controversial issues on which there is a *divided electorate*; b) the candidate may be caught in any number of *policy contradictions*; c) the pressure of *time limits* of the interview; d) the candidate may have to protect *confidential information*; e) the candidate may *lack knowledge* of the issue being addressed; and f) there are rare instances of *interpersonal conflict* between politician and reporter. All these conflicts could lead to equivocal communication by politicians.

#### Summary

Equivocation is a phenomenon that sits between ‘evasion’ and ‘indirectness’. Some equivocal communication contains features similar to ‘evasion’, while others contain features similar to ‘indirectness’—i.e. the uncertain nature and subject to interpretations. It can be difficult to clearly define the territories of the three. Because of this close connection, it has

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

been necessary to review relevant literature about ‘equivocation’. Also, ‘equivocation’ is especially recurrent in political communication, due to the existence of many avoidance-avoidance conflicts in such interactional environment. We will examine some ‘equivocal responses’ (i.e. the ‘non-committal responses’) in political news interviews in the Chapter 5.

## 7. Conclusion

In this chapter we have reviewed literature related to ‘indirectness’ including: (a) Indirect Speech Acts (ISAs), which are usually initiating First Pair Parts of a sequence—its *syntactic forms* and the *three theories for understanding/explaining* it (i.e. the idiom theory, inference theory and purely pragmatic theory); (b) Politeness, which tells *WHY* indirectness is used, i.e. the *motivation* for using ‘indirectness’ in some communication. This also mainly focuses on First Pair Part; (c) Conversational Implicature, which further explores *the pragmatic theory* for ‘indirectness’, as well as explaining *how indirectness is possible* in communication—which is due to the existence of *Cooperative Principle and the Conversational Maxims* especially the Four Maxims (i.e. the Quantity, Quality, Relevance and Manner). In addition to these three main areas that are closely relevant to understanding indirectness in general, (d) figurative speech, which is a rich area of indirectness (or discrepancy between what is said and what is implicated) and (e) equivocation, which sits in between ‘evasion’ and ‘indirectness’; resembles some features in ‘indirectness’ such as the uncertain nature and ambiguity; and is widely used in political communication—were also briefly examined.

The research reported in this thesis differs in a number of ways from

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

that reviewed in this chapter. In particular:

- It will focus on the Second Pair Part of interaction—more specifically, the answer turn of a Question-Answer pair in British political news interview; rather than the First Pair Part of interaction in literature on Indirect Speech Act;
- It will focus on *how 'indirectness' is constructed*, i.e. the '*structure*' of indirect responses (See Raymond (2000, 2003) which also examine the '*structure*' of responses—in Raymond's papers, he examined responses to 'yes/no' interrogatives.) rather than answering 'why indirectness' as in Politeness literature or 'how to understand/explain indirectness' as in the three theories (i.e. idiom theory, inference theory and purely pragmatic theory);
- It will focus on these 'structures' as the focus of this thesis will be '*structures*' of the whole answer turn, rather than focusing on syntactic forms of one sentence, as reviewed in Section 2 for Indirect Speech Acts;
- It will explore how equivocation can be seen intertwined with these 'indirectness structures' as there can be close connection between 'evasion', 'equivocation' and 'indirectness' and sometimes it is difficult to put clear boundary between the three.

Having reviewed some of the literature on the interactions in British/American political news interviews and on 'indirectness', we have identified some issues and gaps in past research. We now move to Part II of this thesis—the empirical analysis chapters.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

**PART II**

## **Chapter Four**

# **DATA & METHODOLOGY**

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

This is a short chapter about the data collection (section 1 of the chapter) and research methodology (section 2 of the chapter) for this PhD. Because CA has become such a well-established research method over the last decade or more, I will give only a brief account of the basic concepts of CA in this methodology section. This chapter also serves as an introduction to later empirical analysis chapters.

### **1. Data Collection**

I collected data from the ‘Today Program’, a prominent political news interview program on BBC Radio 4, for the period of January 2005 to April 2005. The ‘Today Program’ is currently perhaps the most renowned political interview program on radio in Britain, “reaching an average of just over six million listeners every week” ([http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/about\\_today/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/about_today/default.stm) on 14th September 2008). It runs on weekdays from 6-9am and on Saturdays from 7-9am. It is a program to which politicians and public figures are invited to discuss current political or social issues. Brian Redhead, a famous ‘Today’ presenter in the 1980s, was quoted as saying: “If you want to drop a word in the ear of the nation, then this is the programme in which to do it.”

“Launched on the BBC's Home Service on 28 October 1957, ‘Today’ presenters have included Jack de Manio, who became its principal voice in 1958. During the late 1970s, the team of John Timpson and Brian Redhead became an established—and influential—partnership... The two presented the show until Timpson's retirement in 1986, when John Humphrys and Sue MacGregor joined the regular team of presenters... Other illustrious names to have presented the programme include Barry Norman,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Desmond Lynam, Jenni Murray, Anna Ford and many others. Today [i.e. September 2008], the team is made up of John Humphrys, Jim Naughtie, Ed Stourton, Sarah Montague and the latest recruit—Evan Davis.”

([http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/about\\_today/default.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/today/hi/about_today/default.stm), 14th September 2008).

A large range of IEs, from serving Prime Ministers to lower officials, through the victims of crimes, the news reporters, to foreign officials—as long as they are related to a current, popular or controversial political issue, have all been invited to ‘Today Program’ to answer to the IR’s probing on behalf of the general public.

I downloaded 150 episodes of interviews from the website of ‘Today Program’, with most of them lasting 3-5 minutes on average and some exceptional 10-to-15-minute episodes; and transcribed 61 of them in full. Further shorter episodes illustrating particular phenomena were then transcribed, as my analysis progressed and I began to focus on certain phenomena (in line with the general approach taken in CA studies of extensive data corpora). I also transcribed 2 video interviews from ‘Newsnight’ program on BBC Two. (For the 63 full transcriptions of interviews, see Appendix B in Vol. 2 of the thesis.) All these are ‘live’, unscripted and un-edited interviews. There are a few points that I need to explain about the data collection.

The period when I was collecting these data happened to lead up to a British general election in 2005. Therefore most of the interviews that I transcribed concern British domestic affairs relating to that election (rather than foreign affairs, which as it happened seemed less salient to the election). Generally speaking, there are a few categories of IEs in live

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

broadcast news interviews concerning domestic affairs, including: a) politicians; b) public figures; c) news reporters; and d) victims of tragedies or their families. It is the first two categories of IEs that I focus upon in the analytical chapters (Chapter 5,6,7 and 8). (Interviews with other BBC staff reporters are not treated as the basis for ‘cross-questioning’ – they provide expert reports, on which the reporter is not really closely questioned. Victims of tragedies and the like are also not ‘cross-questioned’; that is, their stories are not subject to critical or sceptical scrutiny – certainly questioning of such IEs is not hostile.).

The analyses in later chapters are drawn from all these collected data, not just from the transcribed interviews. The ‘indirect practices’ explored later in Chapter 7 and 8 are employed by a wide range of IEs across these data. In fact, these ‘indirect practices’ could also be used whenever someone wants to provide an indirect response, even in situations other than news interview.

## **2. Research Methodology: Conversation Analysis**

Owing to the lack of a coherent analytic framework, the in-situ creation of live news interview, i.e. the immediate interactions during the news interview, had attracted little systematic research before the 1970s. With the development of CA as a distinct research method from 1970s, research on the interactions in news interviews has been made possible.

Conversation Analysis looks at the patterns, structures, and practices that are to be found in conversation, between two people or among a group of people. There are a few basic concepts that ‘underpin CA’s explorations of these patterns, structures, and practices’ (Drew 2005: 79). These are:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Turns at talk and turn taking

The most basic form of organization for conversation is that participants take turns to speak. It is fundamental to conversation that one speaker takes a turn and is followed by another speaker. The turns each speaker takes consist of identifiable components or units—called Turn Construction Units (TCUs), including lexis, clauses and sentences. Speakers construct their turns at talk out of units, including single words, single clauses or phrases, single sentences, or any combination of these. (Drew 2005: 80) For example:

#82 [NB:II:2:9] (From Drew 2005: 80)

- 3 Emm: ='n then: ° yuh thin:k we:ll d'you wanna be °  
4 (0.7)  
5 Nan: hhhhhh[hh  
6 Emm: [ ↑ PA:R:T of ut. w:Wuddiyuh ↑ Doin.  
7 (0.9)  
8 Nan: What'm I do[in?  
9 Emm: [Cleani:ng?=  
10 Nan: =hh.hh I'm ironing wouldju belie:ve ↑ tha:t.  
11 Emm: Oh: bless it[s ↓ hea:rt.]  
12 Nan: [In fa:c]t I: ire I star'd ironing en I:d-  
13 I: (.) Somehow er another ahrning js kind of lea:ve me:  
14 co:ld

Nancy's turn in Line 8 consists of a single brief sentence, whilst Emma's turn in line 9 consists of a single word. Emma's turn in lines 3 and 6 consists of two sentential units ("part of it" and "what are you doing"). Nancy's turns in line 8 and lines 10 and 12 consist of multiple units, i.e. three sentences—'What'm I doing', 'I'm ironing' and 'wouldju believe that'. Similarly Nancy's turn in lines 12-14 also consist of multiple units.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

In ordinary conversation, there are no pre-set rules that tell the participants at talk when a turn should end or when the next speaker should take up the floor of speaking thereby starting a new turn.

“The matter of when a turn might be complete is...a real issue for participants in interaction, at every moment during their own turns and the turns of their co-participants, because they need to know when to speak and what it would be relevant to do and say next.” (Drew 2005: 81)

Take storytelling as an example: Telling stories is a special circumstance where the speaker needs to ensure a long turn composed of multiple TCUs, and make sure that others do not begin speaking until the story finishes. To manage this, the storyteller often introduces the story with a preface, such as ‘something very very: cute happened las’night et the Warehouse’, indicating that the narrative will last through however many units it takes for a story about ‘something cute’ happening to be complete. The prefatory work in setting up the story works to suspend the transition to a next speaker until the story is complete. (Drew 2005: 81)

Turn design

When a speaker takes a turn at talk, he or she designs that turn in two distinct respects: First, a speaker selects what *action* the turn will be designed to perform. In the following excerpt Emma responds differently to Nancy’s two different versions of ‘what she was doing’:

#83 [NB:II:2:9] (From Drew 2005: 83)

6 Emm: ...w:Wuddiyuh ↑ Doin.

7 (0.9)

8 Nan: What’m I do[in?

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 9 Emm: [Cleani:ng?=  
10 Nan: =hh.hh I'm ironing wouldju belie:ve ↑ tha:t.  
11 Emm: Oh: bless it[s ↓ hea:rt.]  
12 Nan: [In fa:c]t I: ire I star'd ironing en I:d-  
13 I: (.) Somehow er another ahrning js kind of lea:ve me:  
14 co:[ld]  
15 Emm: [Ye]eh,  
16 (.)  
17 Nan: [Yihknow, ]  
18 Emm: [Wanna c'm] do:wn 'av a bah:ta lu:nch with me?=

a) In line 10, Nancy initially reports that she is ironing, her use of the present progressive tense indicating that this is an ongoing chore. Emma's response to this first version ('Oh: bless its ↓ hea:rt in line 11) is some kind of admiring sympathy—a sympathetic acknowledgement of Nancy's report. b) In line 12-14, Nancy gives a second version—'I started ironing', which gives a rather different impression, suggesting at least the possibility that she may have left off ironing, and the rest of her turn indicates that this is something she'd rather not be doing. Emma's response to this second version is making her invitation (line 18). Line 11 was an opportunity for Emma to make her invitation, but it was not a 'conducive' environment to do so, because she might have treated Nancy's report in line 10 as indicating that she was busy with her chore. It's pretty clear that Emma passes this first opportunity and makes her invitation to Nancy's subsequent and more encouraging report in lines 12-14. From this excerpt, we see Emma selecting which action to do in which turn or position. (Drew 2005: 83)

Second, a speaker selects the details of the verbal constructions through which that action is to be accomplished. For example:

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

#84 [NB:II:2:9] (From Drew 2005: pp85)

18 Emm: Wanna c'm do:wn 'av [a bah:ta] lu:nch w]ith me?=  
19 Nan: [°It's js] ( ) °]  
20 Emm: =Ah gut s'm beer'n stu:ff,

Emma's invitation is not an formal invitation, which can be seen from both the timing of the invitation (just before lunch), and the spontaneous character of the invitation—it is given as an offer for Nancy to take a break from chore when in lines 13-14 Nancy clearly indicates that she'd rather do something else. (For more detail, see Drew 2005: 85)

The casualness of the invitation is reflected in the way the invitation itself is designed: a) “Wanna” is markedly casual, in comparison with “Would you like to...”; b) inviting her, not to come for lunch, but to “come down”, suggesting the closeness of their homes and therefore ease of coming; c) “a bite of lunch”, suggesting something for which no particular preparations have been made, nothing fancy has been fixed; and d) it is further enhanced by the inducement “I got some beer and stuff”, which further indicates something thrown together, nothing special, only whatever Emma happens to have in the house. Each of these elements is selected to convey the impromptu character of the invitation. (Drew 2005: 85-86)

#### Social action

Drew (2005: 86) 'gave as one of the reasons for studying conversation' that:

“...it is a primary site, perhaps the primary site, for social action. When people converse, they are not merely talking, not

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

merely describing...not filling time, or any of the other characterizations of conversation as a form of language idling. They do things in their turns at talk.”

Different actions such as inviting, rejecting, agreeing, offering, requesting, complaining, and the like can be achieved by turns in talk. For example in #84: The action achieved by this turn of Emma in lines 18 and 20 is making an invitation. Other less easily recognizable and less easily labeled actions achieved in the world of ordinary conversation include: the change of topic managed through a more stepwise progression (Jefferson 1984, in Drew 2005: 88); the different actions done with the token “Mm” such as acknowledging, acting as a continuer, or assessing, each associated with different intonation contours (Gardner 1997, in Drew 2005: 88); or different actions achieved by the token “Oh” according to its sequential position and whether or not it is freestanding (Heritage 1984b, 1998, 2002, in Drew 2005: 88); and many others (on which see Schegloff 1996).

### Intersubjectivity

CA investigates social action in a particular way that is distinctive from other approaches to speech acts (see Cooren, in Drew 2005: 86)

“CA focuses specifically on participants’ understandings of one another’s conduct. Schegloff recommended some conditions for an appropriately ‘empirically grounded account of action’, one of which is that it should demonstrate that the action in question was understood and experienced as such by the participants (Schegloff 1996c, p.172, in Drew 2005: pp86)...Central to CA’s investigations and findings is the focus on how a speaker comes to an understanding about the prior speaker’s conduct.” (Drew 2005: 86)

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Here is an example:

#85 [NB:II:2:9] (From Drew 2005: pp87)

18 Emm: Wanna c'm do:wn 'av [a bah:ta] lu:nch w]ith me?=  
19 Nan: [°It's js] ( ) ° ]

20 Emm: =Ah gut s'm beer'n stu:ff,  
21 (0.3)

22 Nan: ↑ Wul yer ril sweet hon: uh:m  
23 (.)

24 Emm: [Or d'y] ou'av] sup'n else °( ) °  
25 Nan: [L e t- ] I: ] hu.

Having invited Nancy down for lunch, Emma is listening for whether Nancy will accept her invitation. It is clear in line 24 that Emma anticipates that Nancy might have some difficulty in coming, and therefore that she might be going to decline the invitation. Emma comes to this understanding, or analysis of Nancy's conduct, on the basis of Nancy's delayed response (line 21); and her *Well*-prefaced appreciation (for an analysis, see Drew 2005: 87). When Emma asks "Or do you have something else", she is offering on Nancy's behalf the kind of standard account for declining an invitation, a prior engagement or commitment.

### Sequence organization

Turns are connected with one another in systematically organized patterns or sequences of turns. 'Sequence organization' concerns the shape or pattern of turns. As I outlined in the previous chapter, the most basic sequence organization is 'adjacency pairs': 'Adjacency pairs' are pairs of actions in which if one speaker does an initial action of a certain type, the other (i.e. the recipient) is expected to respond with an action paired with

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

that first action. For example, if a first speaker's action is to ask a question, the recipient's action in turn should be to answer; similarly, the recipient's greeting as response to the first speaker's greeting; or the recipient accepting or declining the invitation if the first speaker gives an invitation. (Drew 2005: 89)

“The expectation that the recipient should respond with an appropriate action—the *Conditional Relevance* of a second pair part, on the production of a first pair part—is a constraint of sorts, insofar as, if the recipient does not construct a next turn as an appropriate response, this absence is noticeable.” (Drew 2005: 89)

Hence the sense of the accountable character of the 0.3-second pause before Nancy's response to Emma's invitation in the last excerpt: the lack of response from Nancy after Emma's invitation. (See Davidson 1984, in Drew 2005: 89)

Another important aspect of sequence organization is the *pre-sequence*. As in #83, Emma firstly enquires what Nancy was doing before giving the invitation. This is a good example of a pre-invitation. The enquiries before the main invitation turn are the pre-invitation enquiries, which construct a pre-invitation sequence. Similarly, there can be pre-request sequences, firstly checking the possibility of the recipient granting the request before the speaker actually making the request. The shape of such pre-sequence enquiries depend on whether the response to the enquiry encourages the action that the speaker intends. (Drew 2005: 91) For example, a pre-request sequence, it can take either of the two routes such as: a) pre-request enquiry, checking the possibility of the recipient granting the request—the recipient's response encourages the speaker to

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions In British Broadcast News Interviews

go ahead with the request—the speaker goes ahead with the request—the recipient responds to the actual request; or b) pre-request enquiry, checking the possibility of the recipient granting the request—the recipient's response discourages the speaker to proceed with the request—the speaker aborts the request.

### Implications for News Interviews

These basic CA concepts were mainly drawn from studies of ordinary conversation; however, they can also be applied to 'institutional talk' (Drew 2005; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991; Heritage 1997) such as news interviews (Bavelas & Smith 1982; Bavelas, Black et al. 1988; Bull 1993; Bull 1994; Clayman 1992; Clayman 1993; Clayman 2001; Clayman & Heritage 2002a; Clayman & Heritage 2002b; Clayman & Heritage 2002c; Greatbatch 1986; Harris 1991; Heritage and Roth 1995; Quirk et al. 1985; Roth 1996; Schegloff 1972; Schegloff 1998), courtroom interactions (Atkinson & Drew 1979; Halldorsdottir 2006), police interrogations (Benneworth 2006; Benneworth 2008), doctor-patient interactions (Heritage and Maynard 2006), and so on, where the structure of interaction is pre-determined by the specific circumstances such as the roles of the two interactants, the task and goal of the interaction, or the requirement of the institution. Indeed, using CA, a lot of research on British or American news interview has been conducted, including studies concerning general issues in news interview, such as the special 'question-answer-question-answer turn-taking system' (Greatbatch 1988; Heritage and Greatbatch 1991); those regarding IR questions, such as the formats of questions, the 'neutralistic stance' of the IR demonstrated in

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

question, and the ‘adversarialness’ in questions (Bull 1994; Clayman 1992; Clayman & Heritage 2002a; Clayman & Heritage 2002b; Clayman & Heritage 2002c; Heritage and Roth 1995; Quirk et al. 1985; Schegloff 1972); and those regarding IE answer turns, including the ‘answer-evasion’ scale, different dimensions of answers, different ways of ‘evasion’ such as ‘agenda-shift’ and ‘reformulation’, etc (Bavelas & Smith 1982; Bavelas, Black et al. 1988; Bull 1993; Clayman 1993; Clayman 2001; Greatbatch 1986; Harris 1991; Roth 1996; Schegloff 1998).

The research reported here builds upon previous research, using Conversation Analysis to examine specifically the ‘indirect defensive responses’ by the IE in British political news interviews.

## **Chapter Five**

# **‘EVASIVE’ RESPONSE TYPES TO HOSTILE QUESTIONS: EVASION, EQUIVOCATION AND INDIRECTNESS**

## 1. Introduction

This chapter aims to set out the scene that there are different dimensions of IE responses, before we move on to focus on ‘indirectness’ practices in later chapters. More specifically, this chapter will explore the delicate dimensions of ‘evasion’ and ‘equivocation’. From my data, I found out a few practices of ‘agenda shift’ (which is a way of ‘evasion’) and ‘non-committal responses’ (which in my opinion is a format of ‘equivocation’). The main part of this chapter will focus on examining these different practices.

First of all, we will review the different dimensions of IE responses examined in past research. It is known that IE answers in political news interviews can take many forms, the principal ones being:

- Direct answer (Clayman 2001: 408-412; Clayman and Heritage 2002: pp245-250; Harris 1991: pp83-84); through
- Partial/incomplete answer (Clayman and Heritage 2002: pp251-253; Bull 1994: 126-128);
- Indirect answer (Clayman 2001: 408-409, and Clayman and Heritage 2002: 243-244 for ‘roundabout answer’; Harris 1991: 84-85);
- Appearing to answer but not actually providing the answer (see Clayman 2001: 424-428 and Clayman and Heritage 2002: 275-280 for ‘doing answering’);
- Equivocation (see Bavelas et. al. 1990 and 1988 for ‘equivocation’ in general and ‘equivocation in political interactions’), (Bull 2003 has summarized some ‘equivocation typology’ in political interviews which are more similar to

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘evasion’, ‘challenge’ or ‘refusing to answer’ in other researchers’ [such as Clayman 2001, Clayman and Heritage 2002, Greatbatch 1986, and Harris 1991] terms than ‘equivocation’ in Bavelas et. al. [1990, 1988]’s terms.);

➤ Evasion including:

- Agenda shift (see Clayman 2001: 416-421 for ‘how “agenda shift” is constructed’; Clayman and Heritage 2002: 258-264, 269-275; Greatbatch 1986 ‘agenda shifting procedures’ and subsequent questioning); and
- Reformulation (Clayman 2001: 428-432; Clayman 1993, especially see Clayman 1993: 177-183 and Clayman and Heritage 2002: 280-286 for ‘reformulations’ in service of ‘covert agenda shift’);

➤ Challenges (Harris 1991: 85-86); to

➤ Refusing to answer (Clayman 2001: 421-424; Clayman and Heritage 2002: 250-251, 264-269).

Among all these different dimensions of IE responses, ‘evasion’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘indirect answer’ are the three delicate ones, often intertwining with each other and it is difficult to set a clear boundary between them. All three of them have an element of ‘evasiveness’, although each to a different degree. In this chapter, I will use a loose term ‘evasive response types’ to cover all three of them.

It is worth distinguishing, at the beginning of this chapter, the different indications of the term ‘evasive response types’ and the term ‘evasion’ (in Clayman 1993, Clayman 2001, Clayman and Heritage 2002a,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

and in this thesis). I use ‘evasive response types’ in this chapter to indicate a common feature of ‘evasiveness’ in different dimensions of responses (despite the different degree of ‘evasiveness’ in different dimensions of response); and use ‘evasion’ on its own to indicate one specific dimension of IE response, where the IE avoids answering the question asked by IR.

The three subtle ‘evasive response types’

Whilst ‘indirectness’ is an analytically distinguishable practice in IE answers, nonetheless it is closely connected to ‘equivocation’ or ‘evasion’. To start with, the three of them are subtle forms of not quite directly answering the question. There are distinct practices for ‘indirectness’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘evasion’—they are identifiable for each dimension, different and independent from each other—despite the fact that they can be closely connected in some cases. It is important to acknowledge both aspects, i.e. a) the individuality and independence of each dimension, and b) their close connection, before we move to introduce the structure of this chapter and the next few analytical chapters.

This chapter will map the field of ‘evasive’ responses and examine these three ‘evasive’ response types. We will first look at the connection between the three forms of ‘evasive’ response types (i.e. the co-existence and intertwining of ‘equivocation’, ‘evasion’ and ‘indirectness’); then devote most of the chapter to examining practices of each dimension individually (especially ‘evasion’ and ‘equivocation’). Chapter 6, 7 and 8 will examine ‘indirectness’ and its practices.

## **2. Co-existence & intertwining between ‘evasion’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘indirectness’**

One subtle dimension of IE response is ‘evasion’: it happens when the IE avoids answering to the question. A second subtle dimension is ‘equivocation’: it happens when the IE response is subject to more than one interpretation, or when the response is designed to avoid the IE’s full commitment to an indicated stance. A third subtle dimension is ‘indirectness’: this happens when the IE does not provide a straightforward ‘yes/no’ answer to a polar question or a straightforward answer to a ‘wh’ question right at the beginning of answer turn—it might be that the IE comes to a more direct answer later on in his turn (near to the end of turn or in the middle of turn), but the first part of turn looks rather indirect. (If this could be useful: another way to illustrate and compare an ‘indirect answer’ and a ‘direct answer’ is comparing them with a ‘trajectory line’ and a ‘straight line’ in physics terms. Illustration of an ‘indirect answer’ in a physics chart would be in the shape of a ‘trajectory line’; while a ‘direct answer’ would appear in the shape of a ‘straight line’.)

In terms of the relation between the three ‘evasive’ response types—‘evasion’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘indirectness’, they can and often co-exist and intertwine with each other, which gives the whole answer turn a feature of multi-dimensionality. We can see the features of multi-dimensionality, co-existence and intertwining from the following example:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#86

[4] Friday 14 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0719 Succession to the Crown [00:00-01:06]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Sunder Katwala, General Secretary of the Fabian society

01 IR: The time is twenty three minutes .h pa:st seven. Heirs to  
02 the throne or at least one in particular are making a lot of  
03 news at the moment↑. Coincidentally some members of  
04 Parliament are making a big push↑ trying to cha:nge the  
05 rules that govern the succession to the crown. There’s a  
06 Private Members’ bill in the Commons and another bill in  
07 the Lords. The main effect would be to stop giving  
08 preference to male heirs over females. Primogeniture and  
09 abolish the ban on an heir to the throne marrying a Roman  
10 Catholic. °Is it likely to happen?° Well Sunder Katwala is  
11 the General Secretary of the Fabian society, the answer to  
12 that is probably not, isn’t it?

13 IE: Well I think (.) it’s probably bound to happen at some  
14 point in the near future. This- this particular bill, .h ah  
15 which in (.) the House of Lords today having a second  
16 reading has been adopted in the .h House of Commons by  
17 Anne Taylor the former leader of the House, wo:n’t pass if  
18 there’s a general election when we all .h expect one. But  
19 we hope this will be a gentle nudge, .h so the government  
20 perhaps after the election to do something that’s very long  
21 over-due.

This IE response is indirect because: a) The IE has not provided a ‘yes/no’ answer to the ‘yes/no’ question—‘the answer to that is probably not, isn’t it’ (lines 11-12) right at the beginning of answer turn. Indeed she never does so in the answer turn. b) When the IE indicates her prediction of a ‘yes’ answer to the question in future, she mitigates it with non-committal phrases such as ‘probably’, ‘at some point’, ‘perhaps’, ‘we hope’ and so on.

Different dimensions of answering co-exist in the answer turn,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

including evasion, equivocation and indirectness. I may be noticed that by repeating the exact words used in the question—‘to happen’ (line 07 ‘is it likely to happen’ in question turn and line 10 ‘to happen’ in answer turn) and ‘probably’ (line 09 in Q turn and line 10 in A turn), the IE creates an impression, from the beginning of turn, of answering directly (for literature on appearing to answer, see Clayman 2001: 408-412; 424-428).

A) Equivocation: being non-committal

Many ‘non-committal’ expressions are used when the IE responds to the question, including a) expressions of uncertainty: ‘probably’ (line 10) and ‘perhaps’ (line 15); and b) expressions of subjective wishes: ‘we hope’ (line 14). With expressions of uncertainty, the IE communicates a sense of a ‘guess’ rather than a ‘definite fact’. With expressions of subjective wishes, the IE conveys her ‘hope’ (line 19) rather than addressing the ‘reality’. Both are effective ways of escaping from being taken fully committed to a position. If quoted later on by others, the IE could easily deny her position by arguing that ‘I said it is probably/perhaps going to happen, I did not say it is definitely going to happen’, or ‘it was just our hope/wish, I did not say it is going to happen’.

B) Evasion: temporal shift

A sense of evasiveness is constructed through a temporal shift in the answer turn: ‘at some point in the near future’ (line 10) and ‘after the election’ (line 15). When the IE shifts the time scale to the future (or past in other cases), she avoids addressing the present, thereby responding evasively.

In this example, the evasion is closely connected with the equivocation: the equivocal expressions of uncertainty and subjective wishes, and the shift to future are all part and parcel of being ‘evasive’ or ‘shaky’. It is particularly clear when they are compared with the middle part of the answer turn—where the IE admits that during this general election this bill (ending gender discrimination in the succession to the crown) probably will not pass — during which no expressions of uncertainty or subjective wishes are used (lines 15-18): the IE uses a definite ‘won’t pass’ rather than ‘probably/perhaps won’t pass’ (line 17). Notice that when the IE talks about the current situation (i.e. the temporary failure of the bill during the general election) the expressions are definite and committal (lines 17-18); while when she addresses her party’s wish for the success of the bill her expressions are non-committal and shifting to the future (lines 13-14 and 19-20), which gives a sense of ‘shakiness’ rather than ‘substantiality’.

C) Indirectness: via ‘sandwich structure’ of the answer turn

Despite the ‘evasiveness’ and ‘shakiness’ of expressions when the IE communicates the ‘hope’ and ‘possibility’ that change will happen ‘in the future’, the IE does successfully convey her party’s position on this issue, indirectly. The ‘sandwich structure’ of the answer turn contributes to the indirect presentation of the IE party’s position: the IE starts with the ‘possibility’ of ‘future’ change; then ‘sandwich in’ the present failing of the bill during general election; and ends the turn, again, with the ‘possibility’ and ‘wish’ of change ‘after the election’. Through the ‘sandwich structure’, a) the IE reiterates (at the beginning of turn and end

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

of turn) the ‘wish’ and ‘possibility’ of change ‘in the future’; b) the beginning and end of a turn are, generally speaking, the most important and efficient places to attract listeners’ attention, and the IE uses both places to articulate the same position—the ‘wish’ and ‘possibility’ of change ‘in the future’—thereby successfully emphasizing this position on the issue; c) somehow the middle part of the turn—where the current failing of the bill during general election is admitted—has lost its power while it is embedded between ‘future wishes and possibilities’ at the beginning and end of turn; d) both a) the reiteration and b) occupying the strategically most important places of a turn (i.e. the beginning and end of turn) emphasize the IE party’s position. Therefore, by emphasizing one position (at both the beginning and end of turn) and minimizing the power of another (in the middle of turn), the IE indirectly presents her party’s position on ending gender discrimination in succession to the crown.

Multi-dimensions of answering such as appearing to give a direct answer, equivocation (through being non-committal), evasion and indirectness *co-exist* and *intertwine* with each other in this example. This demonstrates a close connection between these three ‘evasive’ response types. The close connection (i.e. co-existence and intertwining) is a recurrent phenomenon and can be observed in many news interviews. Here is another example where the ‘indirectness’ and ‘equivocation (being non-committal)’ co-exist and intertwine:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

#87

[30] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0650 nuclear power (06:54.0)

IR: Sarah Montague

IE2: Tim Yeo, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment

89 IR: .hhh Roger Halbin, thank you. We are listening to that as  
90 the Shadow Secretary of the State for Environment and  
91 Transport, Tim Yeo, good mo:ning.

92 IE2: Good morning. =

93 IR: = .hh Eh we are trying to e- work out what the Labor  
94 policy e- is on thi↑s. We don’t know what the To:ry  
95 policy is on this. Would you::: m- .h introduce mo:re  
96 nuclear power plants.

97 IE2: Any responsible government must have two aims for  
98 energy policy. The first is the security of supply:, because  
99 life comes to a ho:ld if the oxygen is switched off. .h And  
100 se:cond, i:s to meet our environmental commitments in  
101 cutting .h carbon emission, .h so we address .h climate  
102 change. >Now< .h Labor has failed on both accounts. It’s  
103 made Britain h. eh dependent on i- gas impo:rts from  
104 Russia and Nigeria, >(and in the instance of) Russian gas  
105 gets to us, .h through a pipe plant across Germany which  
106 is Russia’s biggest customer. So you know .hh they’ll be  
107 looked after if there’s any employment in that industry.  
108 An- and it’s o:nly hope of meeting our environmental  
109 commitments to cover the countrysi:de .h with thousands  
110 and thousands of winter (binds), .h against the wishes of  
111 (Labor) communities. So we’ve had eight years of  
112 (dither), [and delay, and duck in the position.]

113 IR: °Right, so what work° can Tories do.

114 IE2: Well, we: believe that nuclear power ca:n play a role, an  
115 important ro:le in addressing this problem, provi:ded, this  
116 is very important, that it is cost competitive, and  
117 provided that it can satisfy people’s concerns about waste  
118 disposal. ...

... ... (lines omitted)

158 IR: And given that that is unlikely to cha:nge within a year,  
159 is it your argument at the moment as the costs stand now:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

160                   that they are.

(Note: Lines 89-112 are the background lines for analysis here. Lines 113-160 are the part for analysis.)

The IR's question is 'what work can Tories do' (line 113), which asks about the Tories' *actions*. The IE, instead of talking about Tories' actions, goes on to talk about the importance of nuclear power (lines 114-115), which in a way *possibly indicates* the IE's bias towards supporting building nuclear power station. This seeming change of topic from 'actions' into 'significance of nuclear power' gives the IE's response an element of 'evasiveness'; at the same time, the connection between the 'significance of nuclear power' and the Tories 'actions' indicates a possible *inference* that the Tories are somehow supportive of building up power stations. This connection and the element of 'evasiveness' together contribute to the 'indirectness' in the IE's response.

Immediately afterwards, the IE adds conditions (lines 100-102)—'provided that' it is cost competitive, and 'provided that' it can satisfy the environmental concerns. By adding these conditions without addressing them, the IE leaves his answer indefinite (or non-committal). Actually later on in lines 135-136 the IR pushes the IE for a more committed answer to the question whether the costs are competitive, thereby indirectly pushing the IE for a more committed position as to whether they will build power stations.

Now that we have seen close connection between the three dimensions, we now set out to examine practices for each individual dimension—'evasion', 'equivocation' and 'indirectness'.

### 3. A Practice of Evasion: agenda shifting

Clayman (2001: 416-421) examined some of the ways in which IE were evasive in answering hostile questions. One of the principal practices that he identified is '*shifting the agenda*' proposed in the question, to an agenda which was more in keeping with (more 'congenial' to) what the IE was prepared to discuss. Greatbatch (1986) examined some agenda shifting procedures (Greatbatch 1986: 442-447) including pre-answer agenda shift, post-answer agenda shift, simply ignoring the topical agenda (i.e. non-production of answer), initiating a topical shift by firstly indicating that an answer will not be coming, in single-IE news interviews; as well as various subsequent questioning (Greatbatch 1986: 447-454) following these agenda shifting procedures. Clayman (1993: 177-183) identified 'agenda shift' via different ways of 'reformulations', including agenda shift under guise of 'summarizing', 'reaching back' or 'agreement/disagreement'.

Within the category of evasive responses that Clayman and Greatbatch have each identified as agenda shifts, we can discern analytically distinctive micro-practices for answering to a different agenda than that proposed by the IR in the prior question. I have identified the following practices for managing agenda shifts.

- Focus shift,
- Temporal shift,
- Changing some topical elements

I should make it clear that this represents a 'de-construction' of Clayman's

concept of agenda shifting; so that I'm identifying focus shift, temporal shift and changing topical elements as analytically separate aspects of agenda shifting.

Focus shift: from failure to achievement, from result to investment  
(negative to positive)

'Focus shift' happens when the IR question raises the issue of failure in the IE party's policy, while the IE defends his party by talking about achievement, improvement or investment that they have made. The IR question focuses on the negative perspective while the IE shifts the focus to positive perspective. Below are examples of 'focus shift':

#88

[40] Monday 11 April 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0653 Stephen Twigg and Phil Willis (04:58.2)

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Stephen Twigg, the Labour's education minister

IE2: Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat's education spokesman

- 01 IR: And you will remember Tony Blair's three bi:g issues  
02 when he first came to power, education, edu:ca:tion,  
03 e:du:ca:tion. Is still that the case? And have they deli:vered  
04 on those big promises? Well education is the big issue on  
05 the campaign trail today↑, and the education mi:nister  
06 Stephen Twigg is on the li:ne↑, so is the Liberal  
07 Democrat's education spokesman Phil Willis. .h Eh Mr.  
08 Twigg, eight year↑s of education, education, education  
09 and we've got one in five el[even-year-olds who can't =  
10 IE1: [mcht  
11 IR: = read and write properly. It doesn't work, does it.  
12 (0.2)  
13 IE1: Mcht, education remains the absolute number one priority  
14 for Labour. [We've seen a ] big advance: i:n =  
15 IR: [So what's going wrong.]

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 16 IE1: = terms of the literacy and numeracy achievements of  
17 children in primary schools? But of course we need to do  
18 more, .h not only in primary schools but in secondary  
19 schools as well. And that's partly what we'll be setting out  
20 today in our education manifest[to.  
21 IR: [Big adva:nce], when one  
22 in five can't read and write properly?

The focus of the IR question is the failing of current education system—'it doesn't work' (supported with evidence—'one in five eleven-year-olds can't read and write properly'), which indirectly criticizes the IE party (i.e. the government)'s education policy. The IE shifts the focus from failure (negative side) to achievement (positive side)—pointing out 'big advance' in terms of literacy and numeracy achievements of children.

In the subsequent question turn, the IR accomplishes two aspects: a) follows the IE's focus change and challenges it—questioning 'big advance'; b) reiterates the evidence of failure—'one in five can't read and write properly' thereby re-establishes the initial topic of failure in previous question turn. (see Greatbatch 1986: 447-454 for 'subsequent questioning after the IE's agenda shift')

Greatbatch (1986: 447-454) examined four types of 'subsequent questioning after the IE's agenda shift', including: a) to preserve a topic or topic line which the IE has brought into play or re-established through agenda shift; b) to re-establish the initial topical focus in previous question turn; c) to sanction the conduct of the IE in failing to answer; d) to introduce a new topical agenda. In cases where the IR uses d) as subsequent questioning, he chooses to ignore the agenda shift and not topicalize it as a problematic response. From type a) to type c), the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

subsequent questioning goes from the most cooperative to least cooperative responding to the agenda shift.

Relating to these four types, in this example the IR's subsequent question has: a) re-established the initial topical focus in previous question turn; b) challenged the new focus thereby preserved the agenda shift in a non-cooperative way. 'Challenging' and 're-establishment of previous question' are two main features of this subsequent questioning after agenda shift.

#89

[40] Monday 11 April 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0653 Stephen Twigg and Phil Willis (04:58.2)

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Stephen Twigg, the Labour's education minister

IE2: Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat's education spokesman

- 21 IR: [Big adva:nce, when one  
22 in five can't read and write properly?]  
23 IE1: Well thee- the number of children who left school eh not  
24 achieving their level fours at the age of eleven in primary  
25 when we came into POW:er .h was around fo:rt  
26 percent↑, .h that has fallen into twenty two percent.  
27 Twenty two percent is too hi:gh, but I think teachers and  
28 pupil should get the credit, for the very real improvement  
29 there ha:s been, in primary schoo↑ls. We want to build  
30 upon that.  
31 IR: Big improvement, then eh Mr. Willis.

#89 presents a follow up of question-answer turns in the previous example. After the IR re-establishes the previous topical focus on failure—'one in five can't read and write properly', the IE again shifts the topical focus into 'very real improvement'—supported by the contrast between numbers of failing students before (i.e. 'forty percent') and after

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

(i.e. ‘twenty percent’) Labour came into power. This is again shifting focus from negative perspective to a positive perspective.

In the subsequent questioning, the IR follows the IE’s focus shift, picks up ‘big improvement’ and invites co-IE to comment.

#90

[40] Monday 11 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0653 Stephen Twigg and Phil Willis (04:58.2)

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Stephen Twigg, the Labour’s education minister

IE2: Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat’s education spokesman

- 37 IR: [Ah but do  
38 you agree with that point that Mr. Twigg just made  
39 specifically tha- e- th- e- TWice as many CAN read and  
40 write properly (years) years (could) before.  
41 IE2: Well I- I- I think I dispute that:: totally. [Well you-  
42 IR: [Have you got the  
43 fa:cts.  
44 IE2: Well th- the fact is that when you actually get to the end  
45 of children’s li:fe eh school li:fe, the age of sixteen, .h  
46 what we now have is sixty percent of our young people, .h  
47 having had .h sort of eight years of English, math and  
48 science, do not reach the national standard. I actually call  
49 that failure not success.  
50 IR: Eh Mr. Twigg?  
51 IE1: .h mcht What we’ve DONE over the last years is t- is to  
52 very significantly increase investment in education.  
53 Interesti  
54 [ngly, by rather more than the Li]beral =  
55 IR: [Well indeed. But let’s not talk about what you-]  
56 IE1: = Democ(h)rats’ called first to do.  
57 IR: Ah sorry, but let’s not talk about what you’ve put in. Let’s  
58 look at what has come out of it all. That’s what matters to  
59 people, isn’t it, not how much has been spent, (£)but, huh  
60 thee- thee achievements that have-(£) been: .hh eh  
61 gai:ned. So: we-re- was Mr. e- v- Willis right, in his  
62 criticism that he’s just made, that at the end of the school



Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

preserves the new focus but challenges it at the same time. It is worth noticing a ‘challenging’ element even whilst the IR preserves the shifted focus (although there was an instance of this challenging element in one of Greatbatch’s examples, he did not identify this feature; Greatbatch 1986: 447).

Temporal shift

There are two types of ‘temporal shift’: A) One is when the IR points out the government’s current lack of interest or belief in practicing an ideology or a policy (i.e. negative perspective at present) and the IE responds with shift to past enthusiasm (i.e. positive perspective in the past). In this practice, the IE manipulates the temporal aspect of the issue in order to evade the question.

#91

[21] Wednesday 9 Mar 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: Lord Strathclyde (03:39:0)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Lord Strathclyde, the Tory leader in the Upper House

- 73 IR: = But you would have heard him say in this program a  
74 short while ago that he doesn’t believe that it would  
75 wo:rk, that the- the eh Belmash detainees will have the  
76 right to: eh appeal to the European Court of Human  
77 Rights↑ and get out of eh detention.  
78 IE: Well the government clearly did think it would work. (.)  
79 eh only a few [(weeks) ago].  
80 IR: [But] they are not now. And we are- now where we are.  
81 An- (0.2) you prepare to take that ri:sk.  
82 (0.3)  
83 IE: .hhhhh well equally I’m co:nvinced that the: eh that th-  
84 the British law courts, the Law Lords h. (.) would  
85 understand the situation that has happened within the  
86 Parliament↑ .hh would understand that ...

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

In #91, the IR and IE are discussing whether a policy on anti-terrorism would work. The IR cites a third party's (i.e. Charles Clark, a government member) current disbelief that it would work (line 78). Responding to this, the IE shifts to the past—the government 'did think it would work only a few weeks ago'. The IR quotes present prediction—disbelief in the policy, while the IE resorts to past optimism as a defense.

The IR's subsequent questioning sanctions the IE's 'shift to past' by pointing out that the past is irrelevant—'but they are not now. And we are now where we are'; and sanctions the IE for failing to address the current situation.

#92

[4] Friday 14 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0719 Succession to the Crown

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Sunder Katwala, General Secretary of the Fabian Society

- 01 IR: The time is twenty three minutes .h pa:st seven. Heirs to  
02 the throne or at least one in particular are making a lot of  
03 news at the moment<sup>↑</sup>. Coincidentally some members of  
04 Parliament are making a big push<sup>↑</sup> trying to cha:nge the  
05 rules that govern the succession to the crown. There's a  
06 Private Members' bill in the Commons and another bill in  
07 the Lords. The main effect would be to stop giving  
08 preference to male heirs over females. Primogeniture and  
09 abolish the ban on an heir to the throne marrying a Roman  
10 Catholic. °Is it likely to happen?° Well Sunder Katwala is  
11 the General Secretary of the Fabian society, the answer to  
12 that is probably not, isn't it?
- 13 IE: Well I think (.) it's probably bound to happen at some  
14 point in the near future. This- this particular bill, .h ah  
15 which in (.) the House of Lords today having a second  
16 reading has been adopted in the .h House of Commons by  
17 Anne Taylor the former leader of the House, wo:n't pass if

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 18           there's a general election when we all .h expect one. But  
19           we hope this will be a gentle nudge, .h so the government  
20           perhaps after the election to do something that's very long  
21           over-due.
- 22    IR:    Do we think the government's keen on the idea?
- 23    IE:    Well actually in nineteen ninety eight, the government  
24           said in principle it supported the idea of: .h eh ending  
25           gender discrimination and would consult on how to come  
26           forward with its own measures. Nothing's been heard .h of  
27           that since so this this by eh raising the issue again will-  
28           will demand a response, we expect them to be warm  
29           towards it .hh and we hope they don't say it's not the right  
30           time because (.) on that grounds it will never be the right  
          time
- 31    IR:    But aren't there ( ) aren'- aren't there a:ll sorts of  
32           sensitivities when we('re) discussing the royal family or  
33           the House °or that sort of thing°?

In #92, the IR's question is whether the government IS keen on the idea of ending gender discrimination regarding succession to the Crown. According to later descriptions in the IE's answer turn about the government's lack of action, a direct answer to this would be 'no', which is countering the IE party's position—therefore it is difficult for the IE to answer directly and admit failure. In order to avoid a direct answer, the IE starts her answer turn with a shift to the past—'in nineteen ninety-eight', 'the government said in principle it supported the idea of ending gender discrimination'. The support that the IE is citing comes from the past rather than present, thereby evading the IR's question.

In addition to the temporal shift, the IE continues to talk about the government's lack of action after 1998 and equivocates about the IE party's subjective wishes—i.e. what 'we expect' and 'we hope' (lines 28-29), both of which come to address the current situation. Therefore, the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

question afterwards is not directly subsequent to the ‘agenda shift’ (more specifically, temporal shift). In the next question (lines 31-33) the IR starts a new topic.

B) There is a particular sub-type of this practice (or technique) of temporal shifting – one that involves something like *answer deferrals*. The IE promises to examine an issue ‘soon’ (but at any rate in the future), and thereby avoids providing an answer to the question here and now in the interview. Here are two examples:

#93

[30] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: nuclear power (06:54.0)

IR: Sarah Montague

IE2: Tim Yeo, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment

135 IR: [Right. So let’s tr- let’s try being clear on this.  
136 Now I’m gonna do to you: what John did to Margaret  
137 Becket, which is that the Tories are saying we wi:ll bui:ld  
138 nuclear power stations.

139 IE2: .hhh Provided that we can show that it is cost  
140 competitive. We don’t want to have a hu::ge  
141 [°subsequent (aspect)°.

142 IR: [But- but a:ll the arguments you’ve just put to me would  
143 suggest that they a:re.

144 IE2: Mcht well we will- we will examine this urgently. We  
145 believe this decision must be taken within twelve months  
146 of the general election. .h Eh I haven’t [I-

147 IR: [But why not  
148 befo:re. I mean people are vo:ting in a couple of weeks.  
149 Surely they have a ri:::ght to know what the Tories will  
150 do [on this issue.=

151 IE2: [.hh

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

The IR has been pressing the IE to commit to a direct and definite ‘yes/no’ answer to ‘building nuclear power station or not’; and the IE evades by ‘putting it off’—saying that ‘we will examine this urgently (which is, ironically, within ‘twelve months’ of the general election—‘twelve months’ is not called ‘urgently’ considering the public need of an answer before voting for election)’. The IE’s evasion is apparent through his delaying an answer to the current question until after twelve months.

The IR’s subsequent question turn sanctions the evasion—challenging the IE’s delay with ‘why not before’, asking for justification of the delay and citing the public need of an answer sooner.

#94

[46] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: Stephen Twigg (03:26.2)

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Stephen Twigg, school minister

- 10 IR: Ehm, e:::- no one is denying even: the- the Conservative  
11 spokesman who:: i- is not happy with ehm .hh what is  
12 revealed by these figures, no one is denying there have  
13 been improvements. The question i:s eh why:: not  
14 mo:re, given what’s been done, given thee: ehm::  
15 emphasis on the literac- eh literacy strategy? sti:ll  
16 twenty percent of eleven-year-olds not reaching the  
17 expected standard. Why.  
18 IE: Well let me say first of all that we welcome the report  
19 that has been published today and we’ll consider it i:n  
20 detail. The position now compared to when we came  
21 into power, is that one in six children are leaving  
22 primary school .h not achieving the expected level.  
23 When we came into power, it was one in three. That’s a  
24 very significant improvement. But I absolutely agree  
25 with the select committee that we need to do mo:re. We



Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘temporal shift’ (thereby evasion) in subsequent question turn. In #92 the IE goes on to talk about current situation, therefore the next question turn is not directly dealing with the ‘temporal shift’.

We have further identified a particular sub-set of temporal shifts, in which the IE evades the question by putting off an answer, promising that they will examine the issue in the future. In #93 where there is apparent contradiction between examining the issue ‘urgently’ and ‘within twelve months’ when the IE tries to put off an answer, the IR subsequently sanctions the delay—supporting the sanctioning with the immediate need of the public for a quick answer before voting in the election. In #94 the IE justifies the delay—they ‘need all the time to examine the evidence’; in the subsequent question turn the IR lets go the evasion and goes on to a new topic suggesting the model of Clackmannanshire. From these two examples we can see that sometimes the practice of ‘putting of answering’ is sanctioned and at other times it is let go.

Changing some topical elements: topical shift with some topical relevance

There is usually more than one element within one topic, including the topical person, topical issue, topical action, and so on. ‘Topical shift with some topical relevance’ happens when some topical elements in the question turn are maintained in the answer turn while others are changed. For example, the IE can talk about the same person in the answer turn as in the question turn; while changing the topical issue—the IE comments on something else that the person did. (See Clayman and Heritage 2002: 254 example 17—‘performing a task or action other than what was specifically requested by the question’.) By keeping some elements the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

same, a certain degree of ‘topical connection or relevance’ is maintained; and by changing other elements, ‘topical shifts’ are mobilized. #95 and #96 present two examples of ‘changing some topical elements’:

#95

[9] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: Voluntary euthanasia (05:08.0)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tom Butler, the Bishop of Southwark

86 IR: Do you regret the fact that Canon Gill said what he said.

87 IE: Eh Canon Gill is- is a remarkable theologian. Eh he- he

88 chairs the Archbishop’s Medical Ethics Committee? Eh he

89 gives a great deal of- eh insight and advice to the Church.

90 >And I’d want him to continue to do that.

91 IR: Yeah, but he’s- he’s got you in here on a Monday morning,

92 trying to sort of pouring water on the fire, hasn’t he?

The ‘topical issue’ of the question turn is ‘that Canon Gill said what he said’; the ‘topical action’ is whether the IE ‘regrets’ or not; and the ‘topical person’ is Canon Gill. The IE’s answer turn maintains the ‘topical person’ but changes both the ‘topical issue’ and the ‘topical action’: by listing Canon Gill’s general contributions—‘a remarkable theologian’, ‘chairs the Archbishop’s medical Ethics Committee’ and ‘gives a great deal of insight and advice to Church’, the IE changes the ‘topical issue’ from Canon Gill’s specific behaviour of ‘said what he said’; and by saying he ‘wants him [Canon Gill] to do that [‘that’ referring to the three-part list of general contributions that the IE has brought up in topical shift]’ the IE changes the topical action from ‘regret or not’. By changing these two topical elements the IE shifts the topic and evades the question.

In the subsequent question turn the IR firstly receipts the IE’s

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

response with a minimal ‘Yeah’; then quickly goes back to the original topic about Canon Gill’s past comments. With ‘but...’(line 91) the IR not only re-establishes the original topic but also challenges the IE’s support for Canon Gill which he expressed in the answer turn.

#96

[30] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0650 nuclear power (06:54.0)

IR1: Sarah Montague

IE2: Tim Yeo, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment

93 IR: = .hh Eh we are trying to e- work out what the Labour  
94 policy e- is on thi↑s. We don’t know what the To:ry policy  
95 is on this. Would you::: m- .h introduce mo:re nuclear  
96 power plants.

97 IE2: Any responsible government must have two aims for  
98 energy policy. The first is the security of supply:, because  
99 life comes to a ho:ld if the oxygen is switched off. .h And  
100 se:cond, i:s to meet our environmental commitments in  
101 cutting .h carbon emission, .h so we address .h climate  
102 change. >Now< .h Labour has failed on both accounts. It’s  
103 made Britain h. eh dependent on i- gas impo:rts from  
104 Russia and Nigeria, >(and in the instance of) Russian gas  
105 gets to us, .h through a pipe plant across Germany which is  
106 Russia’s biggest customer. So you know .hh they’ll be  
107 looked after if there’s any employment in that industry. An-  
108 and it’s o:nly hope of meeting our environmental  
109 commitments to cover the countrysi:de .h with thousands  
110 and thousands of winter (binds), .h against the wishes of  
111 (Labour) communities. So we’ve had eight years of  
112 (dither), [and delay, and duck in the position.]

113 IR: [Right, so what work° can Tories do.]

The ‘topical person’ in the question turn is the Tory party, the ‘topical issue’ is ‘nuclear power plants’ and the ‘topical action’ is whether they are going to ‘introduce’ (or in another word ‘build’) nuclear power plants. In

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

the answer turn the IE changes the ‘topical person’ from Tory into ‘any responsible government’, the ‘topical issue’ from ‘nuclear power plants’ to ‘energy policy’, and the ‘topical action’ from ‘whether to introduce [nuclear plants] or not’ into ‘have two aims for [energy policy]’. The IE avoids directly answering the question by changing all these three elements. On the other hand, there is some connection between ‘nuclear power’ and ‘energy’, and parallel between ‘Tory’ and ‘government’, through which a vague topical relevance is maintained.

Again in the subsequent question turn the IR firstly receipts the IE’s response—with a minimal ‘right’. With ‘so...’ the IR reiterates the original question ‘what will the Tories do’—re-establishing the ‘topical person’ as ‘Tories’ and the ‘topical action’ as ‘what will the Tories do [with nuclear power plants]’.

Discussion:

In both examples of ‘changing topical elements’, where some topical shift is mobilized and some topical connection or relevance is maintained, the IR does not sanction the evasion; instead the IR firstly receipts the IE’s response with a minimal phrase (‘yeah’ in #95 and ‘right’ in #96) and then re-establishes the original question—with ‘but...’ in #95 and ‘so...’ in #96. In #95 where ‘but’ is used there is an element of ‘challenging’ in the subsequent questioning—challenging the IE’s support of Canon Gill when he shifts the topic issue and action thereby avoiding commenting on Canon Gill’s inappropriate comments.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Summary

In this section we have examined some different types of agenda shift including focus shift, temporal shift, changing some topical elements, and putting off answering. ‘Focus shift’ and ‘temporal shift’ are both designed to shift from negative perspective in the question turn into a positive one in the answer turn—via shifting the ‘focus’ on failure into focus on improvement or investment, or shifting from ‘current lack of interest’ into ‘past enthusiasm’. Through these two practices the IE defends against the hostility in the question turn. Both ‘changing some topical elements’ and ‘putting off answering’ are evasive to the question at hand—‘changing topical elements’ avoids addressing the specific issue in the question turn while maintaining a degree of topical relevance; ‘putting off answering’ delays the answer until some point in the future thereby avoiding the duty of answering here and now in the interview.

All these different types of agenda shift (and evasion) attract different subsequent questioning turns. Greatbatch’s (1986: 447-454) have also found various ‘subsequent questioning following agenda shifting procedures’ and I have found instances of all of them in my data. In addition to these, the IR may challenge the new agenda brought up by the IE at the same time as using these different practices in subsequent questioning (see #88). In the examples where the IE shifts the focus, the subsequent questioning can follow the new focus as well as challenge/question it, and re-establish the original focus (#88); or follow the new focus and invite a co-IE to challenge (#89); or sanction the shift (#90). In the examples where the IE shifts the time, the subsequent question turn immediately following the temporal shift sanctions the shift

(#91). When the IE changes some topical elements, responding to both the topical relevance and topical shift in one answer turn, the IR firstly receipts the answer and then re-establishes the original topical elements (#93 and #94)—sometimes the re-establishment of original topic goes hand in hand with challenge (as in #93). When the IE puts off answering the IR can sanction the delay (#93) or let it go (#94) in subsequent question turn. Summarizing the patterns of ‘subsequent questioning’ in these examples, we have not found that after a particular type of agenda shift, one (or more than one) particular type(s) of ‘subsequent questioning’ always follow. All these types of subsequent questioning (the four types examined by Greatbatch 1986, and the one ‘challenge’ that I have added in the earlier part of this paragraph) seem to have the capacity to follow any type of the agenda shift examined in this section.

#### **4. Practices of Equivocation: saying something without being fully committed to it**

In the last section we examined some practices of evasion, including those where the IE shifts the focus of topic, shifts the time, changes some elements of the topic while maintaining some others and keeping topical relevance, and puts off answering. This section will examine a few ‘practices of equivocation’.

According to Bavelas et. al. (1990), ‘equivocation’ happens when the speaker ‘says something without really saying it’ or ‘says nothing while saying something’. ‘Self-contradictions, inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentializations, incomplete sentences, misunderstandings, obscure style or mannerisms of speech, the literal interpretations of metaphor and the

metaphorical interpretation of literal remarks, etc' (Bavelas et. al. 1990: 21) are all indications of equivocation. Bavelas et. al. (1990) stated that 'avoidance-avoidance situation' is the main cause of equivocation; and due to the abundance of 'conflict' issues in political interview, it is a rich place for equivocation. They summarized (Bavelas et. al. 1990: 246-259) various sources of conflict in political interview including: those coming from the questions put to the IE—divided electorate, differences between the party and the constituency, policy contradictions (246-248); and those coming from the interview process—time limits, confidential information, lack of knowledge, interpersonal conflict; and so on. Therefore, equivocation is recurrent in political news interviews and so deserves attention when doing research on political news interviews.

Different researchers seem to use the term 'equivocation' for different phenomena: for example, the 'equivocation typology' in political interviews in Bull 2003: 114-122 can easily be counted as 'evasion', 'challenge' or 'refusing to answer' by Clayman (2001), Clayman and Heritage (2002), Greatbatch (1986) and Harris (1991). To clarify the matter, in this thesis, I will use the term 'equivocation' according to Bavelas et. al. (1990, 1988)'s definition that 'equivocation' includes practices of 'saying something without really saying it' or 'saying nothing while saying something' – although I would prefer to define this as saying something in an ambiguous way, or saying something in terms of not committing fully to a position; in short, being non-committal. This section will focus on practices where the IE is being non-committal with his/her responses, i.e. 'saying something without being fully committed to it'. Here is an example:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#97

[30] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0650 nuclear power (06:54.0)

IR0: John Humphrys

IE0: Margaret Becket, the Environment Secretary

04 IR0: We aren't gonna [have any new nuclear power stations, =

05 IE0: [( ) top of that.

06 IR0: = are we can we be clear about that then.

07 IE0: What we're saying is that we ca:n't close down that

08 option. It's possible that in the e::nd, for climate change

09 reasons, .h we would need to reconsider tha[t. But-

10 IR0: [Right. So there is a review, or there isn't a review. I'm

11 still puzzled, I'm afraid?

12

In #97, the IE starts his answer turn with a rephrasing that ‘we can't close down that option’, which leaves the option of building nuclear power station open but at the same time not committing to it. Following this the IE firstly uses ‘possibility phrases’—‘it's possible that’, to avoid being committed to a position; then raises the ‘climate change’ which is an unpredictable element in the future therefore does not commit the IE to any position here and now. With all these non-committal phrases, the IE says something (lines 07-09) but at the same time avoids being fully committed (to the position that they will build new nuclear power stations).

The IR's subsequent question turn treats the response as having been evasive: the question turn firstly briefly receipts the IE's response (‘Right’); then re-establishes the question (by rephrasing ‘there is a review, or there isn't a review’); and finally sanctions the ‘evasiveness’ of previous response (‘I'm still puzzled I'm afraid’).

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

There are different ways to avoid being fully committed to what the IE is saying while saying something—one way of being equivocal. The following section will examine these different practices of ‘saying something while avoiding being fully committed to one position’, including :

- Using non-committal phrases,
- Attributing position(s) to a third party, and
- Raising two sides.

Using non-committal phrases: avoid being fully committed

Non-committal phrases include a) possibility phrases such as ‘it is possible that...’ or ‘probably’; b) subjective wishes such as ‘we hope’ or ‘we wish’; c) rough time scale such as ‘at some point in the future’; d) raising unpredictable elements such as ‘climate change’; e) conditioning via clauses such as ‘if...’ or ‘provided that...’ Using these phrases, the IE can avoid being fully committed to the position indicated in what he/she is saying.

In example #97 examined previously, three non-committal phrases are used: ‘we can’t close down that option’ (leaving option open thereby generally avoiding being committed), ‘it is possible that...’ (a possibility phrase) and ‘for climate change reasons’ (raising unpredictable element which can not be decided here and now). And the IR’s subsequent question turn treats the IE’s response as ‘evasive’.

Below are another two examples of using non-committal phrases:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#98

[4] Friday 14 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0719 Succession to the Crown

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Sunder Katwala, General Secretary of the Fabian society

01 IR: The time is twenty three minutes .h pa:st seven. Heirs to  
02 the throne or at least one in particular are making a lot of  
03 news at the moment↑. Coincidentally some members of  
04 Parliament are making a big push↑ trying to cha:nge the  
05 rules that govern the succession to the crown. There’s a  
06 Private Members’ bill in the Commons and another bill in  
07 the Lords. The main effect would be to stop giving  
08 preference to male heirs over females. Primogeniture and  
09 abolish the ban on an heir to the throne marrying a Roman  
10 Catholic. °Is it likely to happen?° Well Sunder Katwala is  
11 the General Secretary of the Fabian society, the answer to  
12 that is probably not, isn’t it?

13 IE: Well I think (.) it’s probably bound to happen at some  
14 point in the near future. This- this particular bill, .h ah  
15 which in (.) the House of Lords today having a second  
16 reading has been adopted in the .h House of Commons by  
17 Anne Taylor the former leader of the House, wo:n’t pass if  
18 there’s a general election when we all .h expect one. But  
19 we hope this will be a gentle nudge, .h so the government  
20 perhaps after the election to do something that’s very long  
21 over-due.

22 IR: Do we think the government’s keen on the idea?

In #98 the IE has used a) possibility phrases—‘probably’ and ‘perhaps’; b) rough time scale—‘at some point in the near future’; and c) subjective wishes—‘we hope’, to avoid being fully committed to the position that ‘the government will make some changes’, i.e. ‘it is likely to happen’ if directly responding to the IR’s question. By using ‘possibility phrases’, the IE avoids taking full responsibility for her prediction; by

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

using ‘rough time scale’ the IE avoids pinning down her prediction time-wise; and by saying what ‘we hope’ the IE sticks to ‘subjective wishes’ and avoids addressing the reality—subjective wishes do not necessarily bear direct connection to the reality therefore the IE does not convey any commitment to what would really happen.

The IR’s subsequent question turn does not follow the IE’s response into the ‘possibility’, ‘future’ or the ‘subjective wishes’; instead, it re-establishes the original question about the government’s position on this issue, thereby treating the IE’s response as having been ‘evasive’.

In #99, the IE is saying “we are happy to see nuclear power stations built” but at the same time conditioning it with “if...” and “provided...” clauses. Within these two conditioning, the IE avoids being fully committed to this position—“happy to see nuclear power stations built”.

#99

[30] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0650 nuclear power (06:54.0)

IR1: Sarah Montague

IE2: Tim Yeo, Shadow Secretary of State for the Environment

- 148 IR: [But why not  
149 befo:re. I mean people are vo:ting in a couple of weeks.  
150 Surely they have a ri:::ght to know what the Tories will  
151 do [on this issue.=  
152 IE2: [.hh  
153 IE2: = An- an- an- and what we will do is absolutely clear. If  
154 thee if the costs of nuclear power are competitive, .h eh  
155 the:n we are happy to see nuclear power stations built, .h  
156 provided of course that the waste issues can be dealt  
157 with, as [they have now been in a number of countries.  
158 IR: [And given that that is unlikely to cha:nge  
159 within a year, is it your argument at the moment as the  
160 costs stand now: that they are.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

The IR's subsequent question a) follows one of the conditions that the IE has specified—the IR pursues the issue of costs; b) challenges it—raising the fact that the cost issue is 'unlikely to change within a year'—thereby treating the IE's purely raising this condition without defining it for here and now as 'evasive'; and c) pushes the IE to be more committed—the IR pushes the IE to answer to the question whether costs 'are competitive now' rather than after one year.

Discussion:

In all these examples where 'non-committal phrases' are used, the IR's subsequent question treats the response as somewhat 'evasive'. Despite the fact that in the subsequent question turn the IR may a) firstly briefly receipt the answer (#97); or b) follow the IE's new topic (as in #99), the IR would also: c) re-establish the original topic (#97, #98); d) sanction the 'evasiveness' (#97, #99); or e) challenge the new topic brought up by the IE and *push* for a more committed answer (as in #99). 'Pushing for more commitment'—even if it is pushing a more committed answer to ONE element newly brought up by the IE in answer turn—is a new phenomenon in these non-committal responses, and is different from those subsequent questioning after evasive responses in previous section.

Attributing a position to a third party: avoid responsibility

The IR's question often asks about the IE (party)'s position on an issue. In response to these questions the IE could attribute a position to a third party, or different positions to different third parties—this way the IE

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

avoids taking responsibility for any of these positions and being committed to any. The following are two examples:

#100

[46] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0716 Stephen Twigg (03:26.2)

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Stephen Twigg, school minister

- 29 IR: = Well e- e- e- much has been made of thee- the  
30 phonics experiment (that) was going on in  
31 Clackmannanshire in the Scotland which e- appears to  
32 have a remarkable effect, .h saying that children we  
33 were taught in this way at a very early stage, eh were  
34 three years ahead in reading age when they got to eh age  
35 eleven. .h mcht Now, what do you think of the system.  
36 IE: The evidence that's highlighted in the report about  
37 Clackmannanshire I think is important. And I asked that  
38 we look at this, in thee education department to see  
39 what lessons we can learn. .h I am advised that in fact  
40 there is quite a close similarity .h between what they are  
41 doing in Clackmannanshire, .h and what we've been  
42 doing through the national literacy strategy, that the key  
43 contrast is between .h Clackmannanshire and the rest of  
44 Scotland. But others tell [me] that =  
45 IR: [Ehm.  
46 IE: = that might not be the case. We need to look at the  
47 evi[dence] for =  
48 IR: [.hh  
49 IE: = that, more closely. One thing I would want to say  
50 about phonics, is that w[e (taste)-  
51 IR: [(Just)- e- e- just e- for people  
52 who- may not be into the ja:rgon. I mean who are  
53 talking here about recognizing< the sou:nds of the  
54 alphabet.

In #100, the IR's question is specifically targeted at the IE—‘what do *you think* of the system’. In the IE's answer turn he uses first person

pronoun ‘I’ or ‘we’ when he ‘asked that we look at this [issue]’, and when he says that they ‘need to look at the evidence’. Neither responds to the topical action in the question turn, i.e. how do they ‘think’ of the system. When he does address the ‘think’ action, he quotes third parties using agentless passive phrases such as ‘I’m advised that’ and ‘others tell me’. These are all how *other people* ‘think’ of the system, not how the IE or IE party ‘think’. By quoting third parties (also changing the topical person in the question turn) the IE evades the question; avoids taking responsibility for *any* position, and avoids responsibility for choosing one position to affiliate with. The IE concludes these different positions with ‘we need to look at the evidence’, which avoids taking a stance on this issue.

This is in the middle of the answer turn, the IR interrupts with clarification for a technical term and does not sanction the IE’s ‘evasiveness’ here. The following example comes immediately after this excerpt.

#101

[46] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0716 Stephen Twigg (03:26.2) [lines adapted]

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Stephen Twigg, school minister

- 51 IR: [(Just)- e- e- just e- for people  
 52 who- may not be into the ja:rgon. I mean who are  
 53 talking here about recognizing< the sou:nds of the  
 54 alphabet.  
 55 IE: Absolutely, which: thee majority of experts I think now  
 56 would acce:pt, is absolutely vi:tal particularly in the  
 57 early years: of literacy learning. And that’s why we  
 58 actually cha:nged the literacy strategy early o:n, to  
 59 place a much grreater emphasis on phonics in thee early  
 60 years. Now some people say we’ve got that ↑right, and

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 61 that's shown in this report. Others say no we need to go  
62 fu:rther. And I think what we need to do is to  
63 examine .h the detail of the evi[dence from =  
64 IR: [.hh  
65 IE: = Clackmannanshire to see if that might be the case.  
66 IR: = >E:h one of the difficulties< I suppose is that ee-  
67 diifferent children need diifferent kinds of teaching, eh  
68 to improve their reading standard. And presumably  
69 thee- the twenty percent, whatever it is, round about  
70 that figure, .h who are not reaching the standard at age  
71 eleven, might need a different way of approaching i↑t,  
72 from those who are doing well.

Before the IE talks about their literacy strategy the IE first quotes the view of 'the majority of experts. Regarding the evaluation of the IE party's policy, the IE quotes 'some people' and 'others'—again, using agentless phrases. When the IE does address 'we', it is 'we need to...examine the details of evidence', which does not take affiliated stance towards either side. By attributing the view on phonics to 'experts' and the evaluation of policy to agentless third parties, the IE avoids talking on his own behalf thereby avoids taking responsibility for any position.

The IR's subsequent question turn goes to a new topic—'different children need different kinds of teaching'.

#### Raising two sides: being cautious of appearing biased

Raising two sides happens when the IE: a) presents his (party)'s position on an issue as well as raising an opposite position for the same issue so as to balance out (for example, the IE might acknowledge the shortcomings of a policy as well as emphasizing the importance of sustaining the policy); b) presents his (party)'s position on the issue under

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

a particular circumstance under discussion as well as raising a different position for general circumstances (for example, ‘police should comment on the current issue’ VS ‘police should avoid making political comments in general’ in #103 below). In the practice of ‘raising two sides’ there are two types of balancing that the IE is seeking: a) balance between ‘one aspect VS another aspect’ of the same issue; b) balance between ‘one particular circumstance VS the general circumstances’. By raising both sides, despite of the IE’s taking side on the issue under the particular circumstance, the IE avoids appearing biased or over-generalized because he/she acknowledges whatever is going on in the opposite side. Below are two examples:

#102

[39] Thursday 14 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0712 British servicemen (05:10.2) [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys

IE2: Sam Yango, chairman of the Independent Electoral Commission

101 IR: (hhh) Just on that last point. It’s not what you’re here to  
102 discuss in detail Sam Younger, but the who:le postal bo-  
103 voting business we had thee- .h case in Birmingham the  
104 other day the discovery of boxes. .h (Out of) great deal of  
105 concern about this, now the Lord Chancellor was saying  
106 yesterday that- there is nothing to worry about. What’s  
107 your view.

108 IE2: .h Wel- certainly our view: i:s and it has bee:n for the last  
109 two years, that there need to be changes: to the legislative  
110 underpinning for postal voting to make it more secu:re,  
111 that’s clear. [.h

112 IR: [But it isn’t secure at the moment.

113 IE2: It’s n[ot as secure as-

114 IR: [Not as secure as it shou- =

115 IE2: = as it needs to be. And I think when you’ve got the  
116 Birmingham e:h case that came out and people began to

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

117 get yet more worried about it, I think the issue that you  
118 faced was that there was nothing that could be done about  
119 it in legislative terms, .hh before a general election. And I  
120 think our view has been that very large numbers of people  
121 across the country h. eh use postal votes, appreciate postal  
122 votes, and that you mustn't actually .h deprive them of that  
123 opportunity. That said, I think there are still a number of  
124 things short of legislation, .h that have been put in train in  
125 order to make it more secure on this occasion including .h  
126 eh working with the poli:ce for example, and a code of  
127 practice for political parties in the handling of postal votes.  
128 =  
129 IR: = Well we'd be returning to that, before polling day  
130 without any doubt. Sam Younger, Lord Gar<sup>↑</sup>den, thank you  
131 both.

In #102, the IE is trying to balance 'there need to be changes to the postal voting system (i.e. shortcomings of the system)' and 'the opportunity that postal voting system offers people (i.e. good aspect of the system)'. In response to the IR's question turn where Lord Chancellor's 'nothing to worry about' view is presented, the IE presents the Electoral Commission's position that 'there need to be changes'. To avoid leaving the impression that all is bad about postal voting system and the Commission is biased against the system, the IE mentions the good side of it (lines 114-118). Despite stating the Commission's view that there need to be changes or actions in postal voting system both at the beginning and the end of answer turn, the IE deliberately adds the good side of the system in the middle of term—to be cautious of presenting a biased Electoral Commission.

The IR does not pursue the issue in the subsequent question turn, possibly because of the time limit of this interview.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

#103

[34] Tuesday 19 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0709 senior police officer and Tory Home Secretary (04:57.9)

IR: John Humphrys

IE0: Richard Barnes, deputy chairman of the metropolitan police authority and Conservative

IE: Chris Fox, President of the Association of Police Officers

18 IR: Well, police officers aren't supposed to be involved in  
19 politics↑, and ID cards are a hot political issue. = Richard  
20 Barne↑s .h is the deputy chairman of the metropolitan police  
21 authority↑ and a Conservative↑.

22 IE0: I'm aware that he: issued a press statement yesterday to  
23 explain that he- was only restating a position that he had  
24 earlier. .h But I think it's: e- hi:ghly inappropriate during a  
25 general election that a senior police officer should make  
26 political comment.

27 IR: Mcht .h well what do: other police officers think about that?  
28 Chris Fox, (.) of the Association of Police Officer↑s, it's  
29 president↑, is on the line, good morning to you?

30 IE: Good morning John↑.

31 IR: Inappropriate.

32 IE: .hhhh We:ll I- I don't thi:nk so. I mean it's quite right we  
33 shouldn't be commenting on the hundreds of requests we get  
34 everyday t- to talk about po- policies from the different  
35 parties. .hh Bu- events in policing go on, an- and last week  
36 we saw the end of a- of a ma:or terrorist trial. (0.2) With  
37 many questions being asked about the result and about e- e-  
38 how it was progressed or investigated. .h And one of those  
39 issues was identification. .h So I think Sir Ian had- had-  
40 really to say something in that circumstance. .h Bu- but in  
41 general terms polit- commenting on po- party policies isn-  
42 should not be: ehm e- e- a police business at this time. We  
43 should be keeping our lower profile.

44 IR: Except that that who:le case did become hi:ghly politicized,  
45 didn't it. And you say Sir Ian had to say: .h something about  
46 I- ID cards. The fact is ID cards were entirely irrelevant to  
47 that particular case, wer- weren't they, because the asylum  
48 seekers h. eh wouldn't be affected by ID cards.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

In #103, the IE is balancing his ‘support for Sir Ian in commenting on the current issue’ and his view that ‘in general terms police should keep the low profile and avoid making political comments’. On one hand, the IE is president of the Association of Police Officers, which determines his supportive stance towards Sir Ian who is a member of the police, and therefore denying the inappropriateness of Sir Ian’s comments. On the other hand, the IE is cautious about leaving the impression that he supports policemen in making political comments in all similar cases, which is against general principle of separating police from politics. Therefore, at the same time as supporting his colleague in this case, the IE balances the position by mentioning that it would be different when handling requests of comments generally.

In the subsequent question turn the IR follows the IE’s direction in answer turn but does not ‘buy’ the IE’s practice—separating and balancing two sides; instead, he challenges the IE’s practice by pointing out that the ‘whole case did become highly politicized’ and challenges the relevance of ID cards under this special circumstance.

Discussion:

As we have seen in these two cases of ‘raising two sides: to be cautious about appearing biased or over-generalized’, in #102 possibly because of time limit the IR does not pursue the ‘equivocation’ (being ‘non-committal’). In #103 the IR does follow the IE’s practice and also challenges it—he challenges the ‘specialty’ of the particular case under discussion and therefore the distinctiveness of this particular case in comparison with other cases more generally.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Summary

In this section we have examined different ‘practices of equivocation: saying something without being fully committed to it’, including a) Using non-committal phrases to avoid being fully committed; b) Attributing a position to a third party to avoid responsibility; and c) Raising two sides: being cautious of appearing biased or over-generalized. Subsequent question turns to these practices take different formats from Greatbatch’s (1986: pp447-454) findings on ‘subsequent questioning following agenda shifting procedures’. Apparently ‘using non-committal phrases’ are the practice most subject to be treated as ‘evasive’: practices such as sanctioning the ‘evasiveness’, re-establishing the original topic in question, pushing the IE to be more committed, etc. have all been found in the examples—despite the fact that the IR might give a brief receipt of the IE’s response first, or follow the IE’s direction while challenging the contents. Following the ‘attributing to a third party’ the IR has let it go in one example; and following ‘raising two sides’ the IR has challenged the IE’s practice of ‘separating this particular case from general cases’ in one example where there is time to ask a subsequent question.

**5. Indirect responses**

With ‘evasion’ the IE avoids responding to the exact topical elements in the question turn by changing some of them, and thereby avoids a direct answer to the question. By ‘being non-committal’ (a way of equivocation) the IE says something without being fully committed to it. In most examples above for these two types of response, the IR’s subsequent turn

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

treats them as ‘evasive’—in many cases the IR’s subsequent question turn will: a) sanction the ‘evasiveness’; or b) re-establish the original topic; or c) follow the IE’s direction of response but challenge it as well. The most benevolent case is to let the ‘evasion’ or ‘equivocation’ go and start a new topic, which only happened in the two examples where ‘attributing to third party to avoid responsibility’ was used to achieve ‘being non-committal’.

‘Indirect response’ is a practice where the IE provides answer to the question at hand, only in an indirect way—the listeners need to draw inference from the response and reach the indicated answer. This section will briefly introduce this practice; before we move on to examine it in detail in Chapters 6, 7 and 8. We will see that the subsequent question turn to an indirect response usually treat it as a cooperative answer and follows the IE’s direction of response.

Past research on ‘indirectness’ and my contribution

The Indirect Speech Act Theory (Searle 1975b, Levinson 1983: 226-283) provided structures of different ‘indirect speech acts’ such as indirect directives/commissives, requests, warnings, etc. and offered the ‘idiom theory’, ‘inference theory’ and ‘entirely pragmatic theory’ as different ways of explaining how these indirect communications are possible (or, how the hearer could understand them). Politeness theories (Brown and Levinson 1987, Blum-Kulka 1987, Clark and Schunk 1980; Upadhyay 2003) explained the ‘motivation’ under some of the indirect speech acts, although it is not much relevant to the motivation under ‘indirectness’ in political news interviews. Grice’s theory of ‘conversational cooperation’ (Grice 1975: 101-102) and ‘conversational

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

implicature’ (Gibbs 1999a, 1999b, 2002; Hawley 2002; Ariel 2002) are foundations for explaining the existence and interpretation of ‘indirect communication’. Theories of ‘conversational implicature’ showed that there is difference between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is meant’, giving examples in ordinary conversation and also in figurative speech. When there is a difference between the literal meaning of an utterance and the implicated meaning, ‘indirectness’ is said to be involved.

Adding to the past research on various ‘indirect speech acts’, the inference theory for explaining indirect speech acts, the politeness theories looking for ‘motivations’ under indirect speech acts, and the conversational implicature theories pointing out the ‘difference between what is said and what is meant’, this thesis will focus on the practices of ‘indirectness’—in the circumstance of British political news interviews. Firstly we will examine some ‘indirectness’ practices that the IE uses in dealing with hostile question turns (Chapter 6). Then we will examine how the IE constructs ‘indirect answers’—with general practices (Chapter 7) and linguistic practices (Chapter 8). #104 presents an instance of the general practice of indirectness and #105 presents an instance of linguistic practice:

#104

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

- 37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h  
40 IE: [Good morning. =  
41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally

- 42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
 43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
 44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
 45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
 46 progress?  
 47 (.)
- 48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
 49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
 50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
 51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
 52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
 53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h. we had a  
 54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
 55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
 56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
 57 [what =
- 58 IR: [.hh
- 59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh I have a suspicion (.) that this  
 60 statement coming at this time isn't actually ai:med at the  
 61 electorate in Northern Ireland, but as e:nd of the government  
 62 (.) in London. (.) And I think its objective is to try to  
 63 dissuade the government from exploring other possibility. =  
 64 you see over .h the last few weeks, the government h's .h eh  
 65 been saying to the Republican Movement, .h eh th't they  
 66 have to do something or else (.) the government will >( )<  
 67 saying .h that eh if they don't (.) achieve progress with  
 68 Republicans then they have to explore other ways forward. .h  
 69 And I think the objective of this, .hh eh is to keep the  
 70 government on o- on the hook, that they have them. Eh one  
 71 thing that's been quite remarkable is how (it) despite  
 72 everything that's happened, (.) over the last few years we had  
 73 the- assembly collapsed nearly three years ago, .h we had a:ll  
 74 the things that the Republicans have done since the:n in  
 75 terms of (balance) and criminality h. but yet the belief has  
 76 still existed within the government, in the good faith of these  
 77 people. =
- 78 IR: = Ye[s.
- 79 IE: [And that's the objective [here ] to try keep ( ) it's =
- 80 IR: [Well-]

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 81 IE: = crucial, .h that the government emancipates itself (.) eh  
82 from the spell that [Mr. Adams has cast on them.  
83 IR: [D'y-  
84 IR: Do you think it's possible, that Mr. Adams means it.

In the beginning part of the answer turn (lines 41-50), two general practices of 'indirectness' are used—one is referring to a third party and another referring to history: the IE indirectly presents his party's skepticism about the IRA's promises via quoting 'Mr. Bradley' and 'people's skepticism; and by referring to a similar promise in the past the IE draws a parallel between past and present, indicating similar failing promise this time just like in the past. (See Chapter 7 for more detailed analysis of these two general practices.)

The IR's subsequent question turn in line 84 goes along with the IE's direction of response and asks further question around it—in this case, challenging the IE's skepticism indicated in the answer turn. It does not treat the IE's response as 'evasive'.

#105

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vain of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°  
86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have received an

- 88           avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89           who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90           who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91           breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92           problem. And large numbers of people in this country are  
93           very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94           government (.) and political party should address that  
95           issue.  
96        IR:    Right. Thank you very much Dominic Grieve. Lord  
97           Falconer, do you accept that it is: a serious problem which  
98           upsets many people: justifiably.

In this example the IE uses words that are in sharp contrast with the IR's word 'easy'—'for the last three years', 'for longer', 'avalanche of complaints', 'serious and growing problem', 'large numbers' and 'very troubled' all portray a problem that is serious, long-lasting and affecting a large population. With these 'lexical selections' the IE builds up a contrast with the IR's question turn and thereby denies the IR's criticism indirectly. 'Lexical selection' and 'contrast' are the two linguistic practices of 'indirectness' in this example.

The IR's subsequent turn accepts the IE's response ('right') and does not treat it as 'evasive'.

### Discussion

In these examples of indirect responses, the IR's subsequent question turn either follows the IE's direction of response and asks further question around it, or receipts the answer. This is different from the 'evasion' or 'non-committal responses' examined in previous two sections, following which come different types of subsequent question turns including a) in a strongest case, sanctioning the 'evasiveness'; b) in a less strong case,

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

re-establishing the original topic; c) following the IE's direction of response but challenging it; or d) in the most benevolent case, letting it go and starting a new topic.

## 6. Summary

In this chapter we have briefly examined three ways in which IEs may respond in such a way as to shift the agenda (and thereby avoid directly answering the questions put to them). The agenda-shifting practices identified here include focus shift, temporal shift and changing some topical elements while maintaining some topical relevance. I have also identified some of the practices associated with being non-committal, or in Bavelas's terms, equivocal, these being: using non-committal phrases, attributing to a third party to avoid responsibility and raising two sides to avoid appearing biased or over-generalized. We also briefly introduced two kinds of 'indirectness' practices in IE answers in British political news interviews—general practices and linguistic practices.

Greatbatch (1986: 447-454) examined four types of 'subsequent questioning after the IE's agenda shift', including: a) to preserve a topic or topic line which the IE has brought into play or re-established through agenda shift; b) to re-establish the initial topical focus in previous question turn; c) to sanction the conduct of the IE in failing to answer; d) to introduce a new topical agenda. These four types of 'subsequent question turns' are also applicable in the three dimensions of 'evasive' responses. The 'evasion with topical shift or delay of answering' and 'non-committal practices' are mostly treated as 'evasive'—followed by either c) sanctioning; b) re-establishing the old topic; or a) preserving the IE's topic

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

line (for the full version of these three types refer to previous sections) *but* challenging it at the same time. The most benevolently treated cases happened when the IE was ‘attributing to a third party to avoid responsibility, where the IR subsequently let it go and starts a new topic. In contrast to treating ‘evasion’ and ‘equivocation’ practices as ‘evasive’, subsequent question turn following ‘indirect responses’ less often treats them as ‘evasive’— the IR either receipts the answer, or follows the IE’s direction of response and asks further question around it.

In the next three chapters we will examine ‘practices of indirect answers’ in British political news interviews in more detail. Chapter 6 will firstly examine the ‘indirect practices’ that IEs use in dealing with hostile questions.

## **Chapter Six**

# **TWO TYPES OF CHALLENGING QUESTIONS & THE SUBSEQUENT DEFENSIVE RESPONSES**

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

**1. Introduction:**

In chapter 5 we have examined ‘evasive’ response types in news interviews. From this chapter onwards, we move to focusing on ‘indirect’ responses—more specifically, how ‘indirect’ responses are constructed.

This chapter will examine the ‘indirectness’ in defensive responses to challenging questions. Section 2 examines the changing styles of questions in broadcast news interviews—from deferential to challenging. Section 3 examines two types of challenging questions, which is an original contribution to research findings on questions in political news interviews. Section 4 examines the defensive responses to these challenging questions. And Section 5 examines the ‘indirectness’ in some of these defensive responses. The principle focus of this chapter is how ‘indirectness’ is constructed in defensive responses, reported in section 5.

**2. Questions in broadcast news interview: from deferential to challenging**

The questions in broadcast interviews used to be very deferential until 1950s. At the time when the BBC enjoyed a monopoly position in British broadcast, the IR’s job was to discover some very simple facts. ‘It was not thought proper to enquire (even gently) into private lives, or social problems; to ask about money, or industrial relations, or politics’. (Dimbleby, 1975:214, quoted in Heritage 1985:113) Here is an example of deferential question, recorded in one of the earliest known television interviews, given by Clement Atlee in 1951, when he was then Prime Minister. He is interviewed at the airport on arrival back in the UK, having just announced a general election:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

#106

(Clayman and Heritage 2002a [simplified and lines adapted])

UK interview with Clement Attlee: 1951 (British Prime Minister 1945-51)

01 IR: Good morning Mr. Attlee, = We hope (.) you had a good  
02 journey,

03 (0.2)

04 IE: Ye::s, excellent. h

05 (0.2)

06 IR: Can you:- (.) now you're ba:ck hhh having cut short your:  
07 election tour:: (.) tell us [something how you- (0.2) vie::w the  
08 =

09 IE: [° Mm.°

10 = election prospects?

11 (0.2)

12 IE: Oh we shall go in t'give them a good fi:ght, (0.2) very good,  
13 (0.4) very good cha:nce of >winning, = We shall go in  
14 confidently, = We always do, <

15 (0.7)

16 IR: U::h And- (.) on wha:t will Labour take its sta:nd?

17 (0.4)

18 IE: We:ll that we sh'll be announcing shortly.

19 (0.2)

20 IR: What are your immediate pla:ns: Mister Attlee[:.

21 IE: [My immediate plans are <t'go do:wn> to a committee  
22 t'deci:de on just that thing, .hhh (.) >soon's I can get away  
23 from here.<

24 (0.2)

25 IE: °° hheh .hh°°

26 IR: Uhm, hh (.) Anything else you would> ca:re t'sa::y about (.) th'  
27 coming election.

28 (.)

29 IE: No:.,

30 (0.6)

31 IR: Uhm, (0.4) Uhm, ((end of interview segment))

There are a few points in this episode that shows the deference of the  
IR: a) The question in lines 05-06 is in the format of 'can you' which is

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

directly asking the IE's ability to answer a question, and more deferential than a direct question. b) Even when the IE has not provided answer to the previous question (lines 10-12), the IR does not pursue it; instead he goes on to a new question (line 14). c) When the IE avoids giving substantial answer to the question about immediate political plans (lines 19-21), the IR also lets the evasion go. d) The IR even asks the IE what question he should ask further (lines 24-25). e) When the IE says 'no' to further questions, the IR does not know what else to ask (line 29), and stutters to a halt.

In the next episode the IR provides options of questions for the IE to pick and address.

#107

"Omnibus" (1951)

IE: Mr. Eden

- 01 IR: Well now, Mr. Eden, with your very considerable experience of  
02 foreign affairs, it's quite obvious that I should start by asking  
03 you something about the international situation today ↑, or  
04 perhaps you would prefer to talk about home. What should it  
05 be.  
06 IE: Well you know, (.) during this election, I found the (verges)  
07 while they are preoccupied nationally (now) (.) with this  
08 international situation.....

This is an interview with another Prime Minister, Sir Anthony Eden, in 1954—again, as it happens, after he'd called a general election. In lines 04-05, by providing options for the IE and letting him choose which topic to address the IR shows much deference to the IE.

The advent of Independent Television broke the BBC's broadcasting

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

monopoly and rapidly undermined this deferential style of news interview. A more direct, searching, and penetrating style of interviewing was developed. (Day 1961 quoted in Heritage 1985:113). “In the new kind of unrehearsed investigative interview, responses were no longer permitted to stand as stated by interviewers who simply moved on to the next question. Instead they were pursued, challenged, probed, and where necessary, clarified and reformulated. As a result, the NI became a more flexible, lively, and influential instrument of journalistic inquiry.” (Heritage 1985:113) Here is an example of adversarial questions from my data collected in the year of 2005:

#108

[40] Monday 11 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0653 Stephen Twigg and Phil Willis (04:58.2)

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Stephen Twigg, the Labour’s education minister

IE2: Phil Willis, the Liberal Democrat’s education spokesman

- 01 IR: And you will remember Tony Blair’s three bi:g issues  
02 when he first came to power, education, edu:ca:tion,  
03 e:du:ca:tion. Is still that the case? And have they delivered  
04 on those big promises? Well education is the big issue on  
05 the campaign trail today↑, and the education minister  
06 Stephen Twigg is on the li:ne↑, so is the Liberal  
07 Democrat’s education spokesman Phil Willis. .h Eh Mr.  
08 Twigg, eight year↑s of education, education, education  
09 and we’ve got one in five el[even-year-olds who can’t =  
10 IE1: [mcht  
11 IR: = read and write properly. It doesn’t work, does it.  
12 (0.2)  
13 IE1: Mcht, education remains the absolute number one priority  
14 for Labour. [We’ve seen a ] big advance: i:n =  
15 IR: [So what’s going wrong.]  
16 IE1: = terms of the literacy and numeracy achievements of  
17 children in primary schools? But of course we need to do



Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

probing, challenging, adversarial, pursuing, and not at all deferential. It is also worth noticing that the IR interjects into IE's response, when no such interjections occur to the deferential style. There is no overlapping between the IR and IE's talk in the data of 1951, while there is a lot of overlapping in the year of 2005 when the IR starts talk (challenging the IE's response or pursuing the previous question) in the middle of the IE's talk.

With this trend of IR questions becoming more adversarial and therefore the IE becoming more defensive in responses, I noticed a particular type of adversarial question (adding to the findings of Clayman and Heritage: 2002a, 2002b, 2006) in my data—the challenging questions—and IE's corresponding defenses. In the next sections I will examine these challenging questions and the defensive responses.

### **3. Two Types of challenging question turns**

Examining my data from the 'Today Program' (BBC radio 4), I identified a particular type of adversarial question turn—the '*challenging question turns*', where the IR challenges the IE party's position; and there are two ways of constructing a 'challenging' question—one (Type A) is that the IR directly presents a criticism on the IE party's policy or position; the other (Type B) is that the IR presents support for the opposing party's position thereby indirectly challenging the IE 'party'. This section will examine these two types of challenging questions:

Type A challenging question turn: presenting criticism of the IE party's policy

When the topic issue is about the IE party—its policy or position, the ‘challenging’ effect could be achieved by the IR directly presenting a criticism against the policy or position. Below is such an example of Type A challenging question:

#109

[58] Thursday 10 Mar 2005-Irresponsible behaviour-3-3-2

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Hazel Blears, Home Affairs Minister

243 IR: [.h Because as David Davis pointed out, you didn't-  
244 act- on the Lord- Newton Committee .h  
245 recommendations, .h which predicted precisely what was  
246 going to happen, .h and gave you the opportunity as a  
247 government, .h to correct the legislation, to avoid, .h in  
248 precisely this kind of mess whether it's political or  
249 consitution↑, cono- consitutional h. You didn't take that  
250 eh advi↑ce. You ended up with a Law Lords' judgment  
251 which many people saw: coming. .h And then you say oh  
252 dear we've got a legislate in a hurry. Isn't that  
253 incompetence. =

In this example, the IR uses a four-part list to make accusations against the IE—‘you didn't act’, ‘you didn't take’, ‘you ended up with’, and ‘you say’. These are sharp accusations—directly targeted at ‘you’, i.e. directly identifying the IE as target of the criticism; and the list further builds up a bombarding effect. The fact that the government didn't act in time, didn't take advice which they should have done, the failing result, and their rush and complaint in the end all build up to the criticism at the end of turn—‘incompetence’; and the polar question format in the end

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

adds more to the ‘critical’ effect.

Type B challenging question turn: presenting support for the opposing party’s position

The Type B challenging question is used when the topic issue is about the opposing party—its policy or position. In this case, the IR presents a supporting evidence for the opposing party’s position thereby indirectly challenging the IE.

#110

[47] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: anti-war Labour candidates (04:59.7)

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Robin Cook, the former Foreign Secretary

75 IR: Well, th- the problem though, is that there are a lot of  
76 people who say that thee issue of trust is central to this  
77 election. .hh And, there a:re people who say whatever  
78 the consequences, = they believe (.) .h that as a result  
79 of, = >as they would see it< having been led into war  
80 on: a false prospectus, some of them >as we know< .hh  
81 (.) a- accuse the Prime Minister of lying to the House of  
82 Co↑mmons which he’s always (.) of course, vehemently  
83 denied. .h Nonetheless, they feel betray:ed, and they  
84 want to do something about it. In those circumstances  
85 aren’t they right to vote against the Prime Minister’s  
86 party.

This question turn presents the public stance against the Prime Minister and his party, listing ‘people say...people say...they believe...some of them accuse...they feel...they want to...’ (lines 75-83). At the end of turn, the IR uses a prefaced polar question (lines 69-71), which indicates preference for confirmation, to presents justification or

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

support for the public stance.

Discussion

Between these two types of challenging questions, which one the IR would choose depends on the *topical issue*: if the topical issue is the IE party's policy or position, the Type A question may be used—'presenting criticism about the IE party's policy or position'; if the topical issue is the opposing party's policy or position, the Type B question may be used—'presenting support for the opposing party's policy or position'.

Table 4. Two types of challenging questions:

<b>Two types of Challenging questions</b>	<b>Topical Issue</b> (Affecting which Type of question to choose)	<b>Indirectness</b>
<b>Type A:</b> Presenting criticism about the IE party's policy or position	About the IE party's position or policy	Directly adversarial
<b>Type B:</b> Presenting support for the opposing party's policy or position	About the opposing party's policy or position	Indirectly adversarial

With criticism of the IE party in the Type A question, the IR is directly challenging and adversarial with respect to the IE; by presenting support for the opposing party in the Type B question, the IR is indirectly challenging the IE and being indirectly adversarial.

#### 4. Defensive responses to these two types of challenging question turns

In response to these challenging and therefore hostile questions, we can identify four types of responses that the IE has as options to defend his or her party. (For IE answers to hostile questions see Greatbatch 1986; Harris 1991; Clayman 1993; Roth 1996; Schegloff 1998; Clayman 2001; Heritage & Clayman 2001). In response to the Type A question the IE could: a) directly deny the criticism; or b) indirectly deny the criticism by providing some justification. In response to the Type B question the IE could: c) directly reject the presented support for the opposing party; or d) indirectly reject the support. The following section will give examples and examine each type of defensive response one by one.

##### Defensive response to Type A question turn: Direct denial

Direct denial to a Type A question is a direct defensive response. It contains a plain 'no' at the beginning of answer turn, followed by a justification for the IE's party. Here is an example:

#111

[58] Thursday 10 Mar 2005-Irresponsible behaviour-3-3-2

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Hazel Blears, Home Affairs Minister

243 IR: [.h Becau:se as David Davis pointed out, you didn'-  
244 act- on the Lord- Newton Committee .h  
245 recommendations, .h which predicted precisely what was  
246 going to happen, .h and gave you the opportunity as a  
247 government, .h to correct the legislation, to avoid, .h in  
248 precisely this kind of mess whether it's political or  
249 consitution<sup>↑</sup>, cono- consitutional h. You didn't take that  
250 eh advi<sup>↑</sup>ce. You ended up with a Law Lords' judgment

- 251 which many people saw: coming. .h And then you say oh  
 252 dear we've got a legislate in a hurry. Isn't that  
 253 incompetence. =
- 254 IE2: = No we waited properly, for the outcome of our legal  
 255 system in this country >and< don't forget, the Court of  
 256 Appeal unanimously upheld the power for provisions, and  
 257 it was only when it came to the House of Lords that they  
 258 decided they were incompati[ble. .h Now because we've =
- 259 IR: [h h h h
- 260 IE2: = responded properly, [to the decisions of the]
- 261 IR: [h h h. ]
- 262 IE2: = Courts in this country, eh which is a bit of irony  
 263 considering some of the discussion that's gone on in the  
 264 last few weeks? We waited for the legal system to take its  
 265 course, we had since the sixteenth of Decemb↑er, .h  
 266 we've come up with what I think is a good legal  
 267 framewo↑rk, of control orde↑rs, trying to preve:nt acts of  
 268 terrorism, that could damage this country enormously. And  
 269 let's just say now, we've got the decision of the elected  
 270 House. Now say to the House of Lords, >that< think how  
 271 fa:r we've moved, an- and let's have this legislation on the  
 272 statute book, .h so that we can protect people in  
 273 th[is country.

This defensive response to the criticism in IR's question (see #4 for analysis of this question turn) is composed of two parts: Firstly, the IE *directly denies* the criticism, with a plain 'no' at the beginning of turn. Secondly, the IE follows up with a *justification* for the delay of his party's action, with a three-part list—"we waited properly...we've responded properly...we waited..." and pointing out the party's *achievement*, with another three-part list—"we had... we've come up with...we've got...we've moved...we can protect..." The three-part lists of 'we' are in direct contrast with the accusatory three-part list of 'you' in the question turn. Together, the direct 'no' denial and the IE's justification and support

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

for his party construct a defense against criticism in the question turn.

Defensive response to Type A question turn: Indirect denial

An indirect denial to Type A question does not have a plain rejection of ‘no’ at the beginning of answer turn. It goes straight into defense against criticism in the question turn, through various defensive practices including providing contrastive evidence. The following is an example:

#112

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3) [00:03:18-00:04:08] [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92 problem. And la:rge numbers of people in this country are  
93 very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94 government (.) and political party should address that  
95 issue.

Responding to the criticism in the question turn (‘Michael Howard tapping into...the deepest vein of bigotry in our society’ and ‘easy target’), the IE builds up a contrast against this negative interpretation (insincere

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

and with malicious intention) of the IE party's policy of raising the issue of travellers, without a direct denial of 'no' at the beginning of the answer turn. Although the IE does not directly deny the criticism, the descriptions he has made in the answer turn (lines 86-95) indicate that the issue of travellers is 'long lasting, serious and growing, affects a large number of people, important and needs a solution'. It is easily inferred from the answer turn that the IE is defending against criticism in the question turn. The *need for inference*, however clear the inference may be, marks the difference between a direct and an indirect response.

Defensive response to Type B question turn: Direct rejection

A direct rejection to Type B question turn contains direct 'no' and direct denial of the support/justification presented in the question turn, right at the beginning of the answer turn, after which the IE may go on to present his way of interpreting the opposing party's position, policy, action, etc. Here is an example:

#113

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen-5

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

86 IR: = .hh Eh- well, on the other hand, i- i- if you want attention  
87 draw:n to this, he's gone the right way about it, because, we  
88 are discussing it now? [Then people will discuss it quite =

89 IE: [No] thee thee-

90 IR: = properly.

91 IE: = These things are too serious Jim. This isn't about filling  
92 newspaper space o:r the air time on the Today Program. =  
93 These are- things that affect my: constituents' lives every  
94 single day of their lives. = Many live in fear↑, .h because of  
95 thee eh way that the drug barons are lording it in certain

## Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

### In British Broadcast News Interviews

96 places of Nottingham. .hh And we are now fighting back. We  
97 have a tremendous community effort. .h And, b- above all,  
98 led by the officers on the ground, the superb officers, .h in  
99 the Nottinghamshire constabulary. .h And they see the guy:,  
100 who is meant to be leading this h., eh behaving like the man  
101 on the terrace, rather than the manager of the team.

In this example, two elements contribute to the IE's defense against the IR's challenge (via supporting an opposing party—Steven Green): one is the direct negation and rejection of the presented support in the question turn; the other is the IE's interpretation of the issue. Firstly, with a direct 'no' at the beginning of his turn (line 89), the IE directly negates what's presented in the question turn. After one sentence, the IE further elaborates the negation (and therefore rejection)—'this isn't about filling the newspaper space or the air time on the Today Program' (lines 90-91). These two elements together make up *direct rejection* of the presented support for the opposing party in the question turn. Adding to this, the IE also presents his view of the issue—'these things are too serious', 'these are things that affect my constituents' lives every single day of their lives...' The portrait of the issue as 'serious', in contrast with Steven Green's 'frivolous' behaviour, enhances the IE's argument against support for Steven Green in the question turn. So does the criticism of Steven Green at the end of the answer turn: he behaves like 'the man on the terrace'—ill considered, abusive and quick to condemn, rather than 'the manager of the team'—cool and well considered. The feature of 'directness' in the IE's defense shows from direct negations at the beginning of turn.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Defensive response to Type B question turn: Indirect rejection

Indirect rejection to Type B question turn does not contain direct negation. The IE's position has to be inferred. In some cases, at first sight the answer turn may even appear to be agreeing with what is presented in the question turn. The following is an example where the IE appears to agree at the beginning of turn but turns out to disagree with what's presented in the question turn.

#114

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen-3

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

39 IR: = Well it may be:, I can't speak for him, but may well be  
40 that, he thinks th[at, .h ehm i-] it's time to express his =

41 IE: = [hhhh. ]

42 IR: = frustration: with- you know the government say "well there  
43 are more policing- numbers, there's more money", .h (s) all  
44 the rest of it. .h When in fa:ct, he is struggling against the  
45 system where the Home Office ta:rget mea:ns that more  
46 police have to spend their time .hh [eh ] doing =

47 IE: [Ehm.]

48 IR = bureauc[ratic jobs of various so↑rts, some no doubt are =

49 IE: [.hh

50 IR: = important, but some, [.hh that he maybe rega:rds =

51 IE: [e-

52 IR: = [a: ]s pointle↑ss,

53 IE: [Yeah. ]

54 IR = and instead of having people at the scene of a crime.

55 IE: [Indeed, and if eh there a:re problems in the way:, I w- w- I  
56 can assure you Jim that we're all working as a community, as  
57 a council, eh as members of parliament to try to eradicate a:ll  
58 those problems. .h [But we don't- it doesn't help us, any of  
59 us, .h to see those things going straight into the newspapers  
60 rather than- .h If you want to (.) solve the problem about  
61 extra bureaucracy↑, .h then make sure you get your message



Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

which is disapproving Steven Green's behaviour. The contrast between what the IE sees as appropriate behaviour—'rather than if you want to solve the problem...then...' (lines 60-62), and the negative description of Steven Green's behaviour—'constant running to newspapers' also contributes to showing the IE's opposing stance.

In this example, the *indirectness* of the IE's defense comes from the structure of the answer turn: starting with seeming agreement and later presenting his real stance—disapproval of the opposing party.

### Summary

Therefore, in defense against the two types of challenging question turns identified in my data, the IE could either directly deny the criticism of the IE party in the question turn (Type A question turn), or indirectly deny it; either directly reject the presented support for an opposing party (Type B question turn), or indirectly reject it. The difference between direct and indirect defenses is, in part, the *existence or absence of direct negation* at the beginning of turn. In the cases of indirect defenses (including indirect denial of the criticism or indirect rejection of support for an opposing party), there is a *need for inference*, which is generally a clear indication of 'indirectness'. The following section will examine the 'indirect' defenses in the answer turn.

### **5. 'Indirectness' in defensive responses**

In the last section we examined different ways of constructing a defense against challenging questions, among which there are direct and indirect defenses. This section will focus on the indirect defenses—the

indirect rejection of criticism in Type A question turns, and the indirect negation of support for opposing party in Type B question turns.

Indirect rejection of criticism in the Type A question turns

As indirect defense against criticism presented in the Type A question turns, the IE may provide justifications for his party's policy, position, or action—without a direct denial of 'no' at the beginning of the answer turn. The IE's rejection of criticism needs to be inferred from the whole answer turn rather than given straightforwardly at the beginning of turn. Example #111 in the previous section is an example of *indirect rejection of criticism via providing justification*. The following are a few more indirect rejections of criticism:

#115

Friday 11 March 2005: African Commission-3-4

IR: Sarah Montague

IE: Bob Geldolf, singer

- 01 IR: Which brings me to the point made by Andrew M'wenda  
 02 made in that clip the:re which is that if y- you know Africa  
 03 has received a heck of lot of aid in the pa::st, [and what it]=  
 04 IE: [E:hm. ]  
 05 IR: = do:es is conso:lidate .h the power of corrupt  
 06 governments.  
 07 IE: Well in the pa:st you had the col- eh co- completely  
 08 correct. .h In the past you had the cold war = so, you didn't  
 09 ha:ve aid, you had pay (offs) to thugs like Mabutu who  
 10 immediately stashed the money in Western Banks. .h Look  
 11 at the commission dp- i- imme:diately calls for the  
 12 repatriation of that money. .h There is no need to prop up  
 13 these thugs any longer h.. So with this new fluidity in the  
 14 world, with these new fo:rces like globalization tha- that-  
 15 that, .h tha- that collapse of the cold war engendered, .h we  
 16 can look again at the different world we inhabit from

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 17 Brandt, [or of the baleful =  
18 IR: [hh  
19 IE: = history of the la:st twenty years, and trying to find and  
20 understand where we sit in this new world, .h and try to  
21 help to bring .h that constant into it to join up.

The question turn is challenging the IE's supportive stance regarding 'aid for Africa' by suggesting that what aid does is to 'consolidate the power of corrupt government'. In defense, the IE's answer turn: a) negates the presupposition indicated in the question turn—that 'Africa has received a heck of lot of aid in the past'; and b) rejects the criticism that 'what it [the aid] does is consolidate the power of corrupt government'.

What is worth noticing is that there is a twist at the beginning of the turn—the IE starts the turn heading towards disagreement ('well in the past you had the col- [cold war]') but then cuts it off, replaces with symbolic agreement ('completely correct'), and only finally comes to the disagreement ('...you didn't have aid' which is negating the presupposition in question turn—that Africa has received a lot of aid in the past). It is only until after lines 08-09 'you didn't have aid' that the IE's actual position is presented—negating the presupposition and criticism presented in question turn. Therefore, the defense against criticism is not directly and clearly presented at the beginning of turn.

In lines 12-17 and lines 19-21 the IE rejects the criticism by presenting a new world different from the past, proposing that 'there is no need to prop up these thugs any longer' and indicating that although in the past the aid might have been to 'consolidate the power of corrupt government' (the criticism in question turn), in this new world this would

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

not happen any more. Through this contrast between ‘new’ and ‘old’ world, the IE indirectly rejects the criticism in question turn. The criticism in the question turn is portraying the IE party (i.e. the African Commission in this case) as ‘not helping and even doing harm’; while the IE, in spite of acknowledging the past failure, counters the indicated connection between the past and present in question turn and shows that the present is different from the past, therefore indirectly denies criticism of the present aid. Actually, even when the IE acknowledges the stealing of aid by some thogs, he is careful enough to point out that the African Commission ‘immediately calls for the repatriation of that money’, which is also a defense against the criticism in question turn.

Here is another example:

#116

[32] Monday 25 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0715 Shadow Secretary to the Treasury, George Osborne (04:20.8)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: George Osborne, Shadow Secretary to the Treasury

- 108 IR: But- except what you will not be saying in that  
109 manifesto is that a:ll of those (iniculous) taxes heaped upon  
110 business by this Labour government we will repeal. I mean  
111 if you could say that, that’ll be very impressive, and they’d  
112 no doubt say (my world) things are gonna be, = °but° of  
113 course you ca:n’t say that.
- 114 IE: Well as you know we are only making promises [on tax] =  
115 IR: [Ehm.  
116 IE: = we know we can keep. But we have set up how to:  
117 reduce tax, AND of course .h eh we a:re setting aside a  
118 great deal of money from the savings (if you identify) to  
119 avoi:d the tax increases which are coming this way¿ .h...

In the question turn, criticism is presented that the IE party can not

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

promise to repeal all the taxes heaped upon business under Labour. The IE defends his party by: a) Countering the high expectation of certain promises presented in the question turn—By saying that they ‘only make promises...[they] know [they] can keep’, the IE defends his party as ‘sincere’ and ‘realistic’ in making promises, indicating the expected promises in question turn as ‘unrealistic’. It is an indirect way of *justifying* the IE party’s inability to give such a promise as stated in question turn—repealing all the taxes heaped upon business by the Labour government (lines 109-110). b) Presenting the IE party’s achievement—what they *have done* and what they are actually *doing* in reducing taxes. Both rejecting the high expectation and presenting the IE party’s achievement are ways of defending against criticism in the question turn. This is *focusing on the positive side* of the party policy rather than the negative side (see Chapter 3 on ‘focus shift’), and is an indirect way of disagreeing with the criticism in question turn.

*Discussion and summary:*

From examples 114, 115 and 116 we can see that there are different ‘practices’ for indirectly defending against criticism in the Type A challenging question turn:

- a) Providing justifications for the IE party (#112 and #116);
- b) Appearing to agree at the beginning of turn but then turning into disagreement (#115); and
- c) Focus shift (‘distinguishing past from present’ in #10, and ‘shift from negative to positive side’ in #116) so as to counter the criticism.

And we can identify some common points between these examples:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- A common theme of “frivolous, with malicious intention, not helping, or failing” (criticism of the IE party) VS “sincere, with good intention, serving, or successful” (defense for the IE party), in examples 112, 115 and 116;
- The use of Gestalt<sup>14</sup> in argument: the question turn presents a negative perspective regarding the IE party’s policy, position or action while the answer turn presents a positive perspective regarding the same issue;
- Both #115 and #116 are prefaced with ‘well’, which indicates some sort of upcoming disagreement; and
- The IE’s rejection of criticism needs to be inferred from those different ‘practices’ summarized above. It is not directly told (as with a direct ‘no’) at the beginning of turn. As we have noted before, this *need of inference* is a good indication of ‘indirectness’.

Indirect negation of support for opponent in the Type B question turns

In the Type B challenging question turns, support or justification for an opponent’s policy, position or action is presented. Indirect defense against this type of question turn contains indirect negation of the support of, or justifications for, the opposing party. Example 113 is an example where the IE appears to agree at the beginning of the answer turn but then turns out actually to disagree with the support. Here are some further examples:

#117

[49] Tuesday 5 April 2005: Michael Meadowcroft-3

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

IR: Sarah Montague

IE: Michael Meadowcroft, who advises countries on how to run elections

41 IR: But of course this is ehm one of the reasons m- m- postal  
42 voting has been introduced, is to try to get the turn-out hi-  
43 higher. And it has been show:n that it do:es increase  
44 turn-out.  
45 (0.3)

46 IE: But if it increase(d) turn-out of legitimate votes, or the fake  
47 votes, I don't know↑, I can't tell, nobody can tell.

The background of this interview is that the IE is against postal voting. The question turn challenges the IE's position through presenting support for postal voting, giving the evidence that postal voting has increased turn-out. In defense, the IE '*casts suspicion*' on the legitimacy of votes among the increased turn-out: the IE moves from 'I don't know' which indicates a lack of knowledge, to 'I can't tell, nobody can tell' which points out the defect—no one can make an informed judgment as to whether they are fake or true votes. This *undermines* the presented advantage of postal voting (i.e. they increase turn-out) in the question turn.

The IE then goes on to *criticize* the idea of postal voting. He describes it as 'tinkering with the system' rather than 'tackling the disease itself', i.e. not being a serious attempt to solve the root problem but playing with the surface of the problem.

Combining these two techniques, the IE not only negates the presented support for postal voting in question turn, but also directly criticizes the idea. Both are defense for the IE's own position and against the presented support for the opponent in question turn.

Here is another example:

#118

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

[47] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: anti-war Labour candidates (04:59.7)

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Robin Cook, the former Foreign Secretary

75 IR: Well, th- the problem though, is that there are a lot of  
76 people who say that the issue of trust is central to this  
77 election. .hh And, there a:re people who say whatever  
78 the consequences, = they believe (.) .h that as a result of,  
79 = >as they would see it< having been led into war on: a  
80 false prospectus, some of them >as we know< .hh (.) a-  
81 accuse the Prime Minister of lying to the House of  
82 Co↑mmons which he’s always (.) of course, vehemently  
83 denied. .h Nonetheless, they feel betray:ed, and they  
84 want to do something about it. In those circumstances  
85 aren’t they right to vote against the Prime Minister’s  
86 party.

87 IE: Well, first of all, Jim, I represent a: constituency  
88 where: .hh saw for eighteen years vulnerable people  
89 who: were damaged, and h- g- good ( ) which is a very  
90 good severe hardship because of Conservative policies.  
91 I’ve seen also the way .h in which their life’s been  
92 transfo:rmed, about the opportunity in the last eight  
93 years. .h And I want to make sure, that the people I  
94 represent continue to get a government [that can act in =

95 IR: [°.hhh°

96 IE: = their interest, [.h and provi:de them with the help

97 IR: [°ehm. °

98 IE: = that- that they need, .h make sure that we do have the  
99 minimum wage, we do have to tackle the child poverty,  
100 After all w(h)e we check a quarter of children out of  
101 child pover↑ty, .h and we are on ta:rget to hit our  
102 objective [of halving it. Now that’s not gonna =

103 IR: [.h

104 IE: = happen if we don’t get re-elected. On the question of  
105 trust, i::- tha- that is- I think- a- a big issue, not just  
106 for- .h the government, but .hh also h. for h. the bit of us  
107 generally of the decaying trust in our elected  
108 insti[tution.

109 IR: [Do you think the war has made that worse. The

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

110                      way we went to war.

The question turn presents support for the public voting against Labour and justifies for their position. The IE defends Labour via two ways in the answer turn: a) presenting Labour's contributions and achievements (lines 87-94, 96 and lines 98-102) (via 'citing his own experience'—what happened in his constituency: see chapter 7 for more details on the indirectness practice of 'citing experience') therefore proving that the public should vote for Labour; b) broadening the responsibility for 'the decay of trust' to not just the government, but also the 'general public', including the opposing party.

By presenting how Labour has improved people's lives in his constituency, the IE *undermines the support* for voting against Labour in question turn; he also *shifts the focus* from negative side (Labour's fault in Iraqi war) to the positive side of the party. At the end of answer turn regarding issue of trust, the IE shifts the focus of criticism from Labour to all politicians and political institutions—they should also bear responsibility for the 'decay of trust'. In general, the answer turn focuses on the positive perspective of Labour and the negative perspective of the public, both of which undermine the support for the public presented in question turn.

Below is another example of indirect negation of support for the opponent.

#119

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed humps

IR: John Humphrys

IE1: Robert Gifford, executive director at the Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Transport Safety

IE2: Tim Yeo, Conservative Transport spokesman

01 IR: Quarter past seven? The Conservatives want to abolish  
02 speed humps. .h They are putting forward an amendment  
03 to the Roads Safety Bill, which will take them off the  
04 roads in a couple of years. = Their Transport spokesman  
05 Tim Yeo is with us? .hh We're also joined by Robert  
06 Gifford who is executive director at the Parliamentary  
07 Advisory Committee for Transport Safety? = lobby group  
08 on road safety issues. .hh And you must give a rather a  
09 fa:n of these things. = >Do you think they< wo:rk. =

10 IE1: = .h Well, the research tells (that) England, we first of all  
11 we should remember that road humps have been around  
12 for twenty years now. Ehm, .h and research tells us that  
13 they reduce valid mortalities, betwee:n seventee:n and  
14 fifty nine percent. There a:re .h hundreds of pedestria:ns  
15 and cyclists alive today:: .h who: otherwise would have  
16 been killed by cars going too fast for the roads they were  
17 driving down. = So they really are a success story. We've  
18 got to think very carefully about their remo[val].

19 IR: [What about...  
... (lines omitted)

52 IR: Robert Gifford many thanks. Tim Yeo, they a:re a success  
53 story, why on earth you're trying to get rid of them. =

... IE2: ...(lines omitted)

66 IR: [.h [Yeah, but that doesn't quite address the  
67 question, >tht< these things work, why get rid of them. =

68 IE2: = .h Well our approach to- safety will be evidence based.  
69 = We want to use the limited resources in the most  
70 effective way:. .h E::h speed bumps certainly make two  
71 of our key policy aims actually worse. They h. eh  
72 increase the pollution on a street when cars stop and  
73 sta↑rt, that makes the air quality worse? .h They certainly  
74 make congestion worse? Because instead of traffic  
75 flowing, .h freely, = perhaps slowly but freely along a  
76 street, it has to stop and start. = So they completely fail

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

77                    on those two criteria. .hh  
(\* Lines 01-19 and lines 52-53 are background information for the data analysis. Lines 66 to 77 are for the analysis.)

The IE's delay (lines 68-70) in addressing the IR's question 'why get rid of them' (line 67) is the main contribution to the element of 'indirectness' in the IE response. It is not until line 70—starting from 'speed bumps certainly make two of our key policy aims actually worse...' (lines 70-71), that the IE starts to address the question of 'why get rid of speed bumps'.

In the background lines 01-19, the IE1 has cited evidence that speed bumps save lives. The IR then re-presents the IE1's position and challenges the IE2 to argue against it (the first challenge in lines 52-53 and a pursuit of challenge in lines 66-67). In defense, the IE evades the topic of 'saving life' (the advantage of speed bumps) and goes on to talk about the disadvantages of speed bumps—they 'make two of [their] key policy aims [i.e. pollution and congestion] actually worse'. This *shifts focus* from the positive aspect of speed bumps to negative aspects, implying a lack of support for speed bumps and defending the IE's stance against them.

The following episode comes from the same interview as #119 and follows directly after the episode in #119:

#120  
[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed humps

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

IR: John Humphrys

IE2: Tim Yeo, Conservative Transport spokesman

- 78 IR: [But they keep people alive. =  
79 IE2: = Well, as far as the evidence about that is concerned, =  
80 we are certainly prepared to examine it. = The purpose of  
81 this amendment, which we will not press to a vote if it  
82 gets debated, .h it is to explore the evidence. = It's  
83 what's, .h eh called in th- in- in the jargon, a probing  
84 amendment. .h I'm awa:re that the chairman of the  
85 London Ambulance Service h. e::h said in- in two  
86 thousand and three, that hundreds of deaths .h eh may be  
87 caused by ambulances being delayed h. eh in: getting to  
88 hospitals. = The .h the eh a one minute delay in getting to  
89 a .h cardiac (rest) patient h. eh may be the difference  
90 between life and death. = So the evidence is by no means  
91 a[ll the one way. .h [Eh (at least)- (. ) (least) ] =  
92 IR: [But- [Can I- Can I just- just (to)-]  
93 IE2: = also said that h. e:h dri- speed bumps increase the  
94 response times h., eh tha- their vehicles were involved in  
95 getting to emergency.

In this example the IR pursues the challenge, by presenting support for speed bumps—‘they keep people alive’. The IE counters the support by citing ‘the chairman of the London Ambulance Service’—that ‘hundreds of deaths may be caused by ambulances being delayed in getting to hospitals [due to increased response time because of the speed bumps]’ and another evidence (line 91 and 93-95, name of the information source not clearly heard in the data)—‘speed bumps increase the response times...[for] vehicles...involved in getting to emergency’. Again, the IE shifts focus from the positive side of speed bumps (‘saving lives on road’) to the negative side (‘killing lives by delaying emergency vehicles to hospitals’). As the IE2 summarizes—‘so the evidence is by no means all the one way’. The evidence that the IE2 has presented counters that

presented by the IE1 in earlier turns and pursued by the IR.

In the following example the question turn contains both presentation of the opponent's perspective and criticism of the IE party. Therefore the question turn is a combination of Type A and Type B challenge.

#121

[8] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0715 Rick Scannell (03:02.0) [00:02:26-00:03:20]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Rick Scannell

- 50 IR: I see? It is true, isn't it that the government is still saying  
 51 that it's thinking about how to respo:nd to:: [e:h what the =  
 52 IE: [((biting lips))  
 53 IR: = House of Lords has said. >And to that extent they might  
 54 s- say what you've done is a bit pre-mature.  
 55 IE: Well (.) you know (.) as I've emphasized? the: right to  
 56 liberty is a fundamental right. It: (.) has been (.) I think a  
 57 little bit over a month now, since the:: House of Lords gave  
 58 their eh landmark decision? emphasizing the (fundel)  
 59 importance? (.) of (.) the right (.) to liberty. U:h i- i- i- it is  
 60 in my view intolerable that the government should sit on  
 61 (.) a decision (.) like this. It's very simple? Their lordships'  
 62 decision's very clear. And if- the government isn't to  
 63 continue to breach these people's fundamental rights, to  
 64 my mind, e:h the: action that it should take (.) is very very  
 65 simple. [It should =  
 66 IR: [r-  
 67 IE: = release them.  
 68 IE: Rick Scannell? Many thanks.

The challenge in question turn is composed by a) presenting the opponent's perspective (i.e. the government is still thinking about how to respond to the House of Lords), and b) presenting the opponent's possible criticism of the IE—'what you've done is a bit premature'.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

As an indirect defence against the question, the IE criticises the opponent (the government), on the grounds that they have taken too long to make a decision on such an issue that concerns ‘fundamental’ rights and involves ‘very simple’ and ‘clear’ decision.

By using phrases such as ‘a little it over a month’, ‘sit on a decision’ and ‘intolerable’, the IE negates the opponent’s perspective presented in the question turn—that the government is taking time to make the decision and the IE’s action is premature. This is a use of *Gestalt theory*—there are different ways of perceiving the ‘same’ thing. The opponent’s presented position is that more time needs to be taken in dealing with this issue; while the IE’s position is that too much time has been taken. The emphases on ‘fundamental rights’ and ‘very simple (or clear)’ decision supports the IE’s perspective and argument—a decision concerning ‘fundamental rights’ need to be taken as quickly as possible, and a decision that is ‘very simple and clear’ can be taken quickly.

Through the presentation of an opposite perspective, the IE negates the opponent’s perspective; and through descriptions of the issue and negative portraying regarding the opponent’s delay, the IE indirectly criticizes the government. Both the *negation and criticism of the opponent* serve as indirect defense against the challenge presented in question turn.

*Discussion and Summary*

From examples 117, 118 and 119 we can see that there are different ways of indirect defense against support for opponent in the Type B challenging question turn:

- a) Appear to agree at the beginning of answer turn and later show actual

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

disagreement (#114);

- b) Criticizing the opponent (#117, #118 and #121)
- c) Shift focus: from negative (question turn) to positive (answer turn) for the IE party (#118), or from positive (question turn) to negative (answer turn) for the opposing position (#119 and #120);
- d) Different practices such as: citing experience (#118), cast suspicion (#117), quoting third party (#120), building contrast (#120 and #111) are used (These are practices of indirectness which will be examined in detail in Chapter 7 and Chapter 8.)

There are also some common features in all these examples:

- In all these examples, there is either a ‘well’ preface (#117, 118, 119, 120, and 111) or ‘but’ (#116 and 113—In #113, the ‘but’ comes in the middle of answer turn when the actual disagreement starts.) preface, indicating some disagreement with the question turn.
- All these practices undermine the presented support for an opponent in the question turn.
- Again, inferences have to be made from these responses to know the IE’s answer to the question turn.

## 6. Summary

In this chapter we have examined the *two types of challenging question turns* to be found in my data: Type A—presenting criticism of the IE party’s position/policy/actions/etc; and Type B—presenting support or justification for the opponent’s position/policy/actions/etc. Which type of challenge is used largely depends on the subject matter: If the subject

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

matter is about the IE party, the IR uses the Type A question turn to challenge and be adversarial; if the subject matter is about the opposing party, the IR uses the Type B question turn. In defense against these two types of challenging question turns, either direct or indirect rejections are given in the answer turn. It is the *indirect defenses* that we have focused on in this chapter. There are some common practices or features across these indirect defenses to both types of challenging questions:

- The use of Gestalt theory—seeing things from different perspectives, one from the negative side another from the positive. (Or, the *focus shift*—from negative in question turn to positive in answer turn when the subject matter is about the IE party, or from positive to negative when it is about the opponent);
- In some cases, appearing to agree at the beginning of answer turn but turning out actually to disagree later in the turn;
- ‘Well’ preface is widely used, because of the disagreeing nature of these defensive responses;
- Inference is necessary for the listeners to understand the IE’s answer to the question turn because of the indirectness in these responses;

Various practices of indirectness are used in these responses such as casting suspicion, describing the IE’s own experience, referring to a third party, building a contrast, etc. to undermine the presented position in the question turn (i.e. to undermine the criticism of the IE party in Type A question turns and the presented justification for the opponent in Type B

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

question turns). These ‘indirect’ practices will be examined in detail in the next two chapters.

## **Chapter Seven**

# **THE GENERAL PRACTICES FOR CONSTRUCTING DEFENSIVE ANSWERS INDIRECTLY: THE STRATEGIES**

### 1. Introduction:

In Chapter 6, we identified two types of challenging questions and noticed that hostile questions have become a norm in news interview since 1950s. We also identified ways of defense against these challenging or hostile questions, including direct denial and indirect defense. ‘Indirectness’ is a common practice in response to hostile questions, other than evasion and equivocation.

It is worth noticing that all those indirect defenses cited in Chapter 6 are actually ‘*roundabout answers*’ (Clayman 2001: 408-409; Harris 1991: 84-85), which involve twists and turns in the structure of answer turn, and have close connection with ‘indirect answers’. From the observation of my data, I noticed that many IE responses start with providing an answer in an indirect format; then slowly move into more ‘direct’ way of answering, sometimes towards the end of turn, in the format of summarizing the answer turn. It is as if the IE takes the IR and the audience into a journey where at the beginning, the direction of the road is not so clear (i.e. when at the beginning of answer turn, an indirect version of addressing the question is provided); and later on in the journey, the direction becomes clearer (i.e. when a direct answer to the question is provided or summarized near to the end of turn). In this sense, the journey has been roundabout rather than straightforward. (We can also compare this roundabout journey with the ‘trajectory line’ in physics, as we have used this metaphor at the beginning of Chapter 5 to illustrate: a) an ‘indirect answer’; and b) the difference between an indirect answer—as ‘trajectory line’ in physics, and a direct answer—as ‘straight line’ in physics.)

In Chapter 6, we also started to notice various ‘indirect practices’ in

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

those roundabout and indirect answers, such as casting suspicion, describing the IE's own experience, referring to a third party, building contrast, etc. These specific 'practices of indirectness' will be the focus of this chapter (Chapter 7) and Chapter 8; and 'how indirectness is constructed via different practices' will be one of my main contributions to current research on British news interviews.

Before moving to examining the specific practices of indirectness, let us have a brief look at some *direct answers*, as a contrast. When answering directly,

- a) The IE provides an answer in the format that matches with the question format;
- b) The answer is provided right at the beginning of the answer turn.

In terms of the format matching in a):

- A direct answer to a 'yes/no' question or a tag question would be 'yes' or 'no';
- A direct answer to a 'where' question would be a place name;
- A direct answer to a 'who/whom' question would be name(s) of person(s);
- A direct answer to a 'what' or 'which' question would be name(s) of object(s), to a 'why' question a reason/explanation;
- A direct answer to a 'how' question would be an explanation;
- A direct answer to an alternative question would be a choice from the alternatives;
- A direct answer to a question in declarative format would be either a confirmation or disconfirmation; and
- A direct answer to a directive would be an action (in the case

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

of news interview, the IE provides comments when asked to do so) or rejection.

The following is an example of news interview that contains *a number of direct answers matching various question formats*.

#122

[28] Friday 29 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0718 Attorney General’s role (05:35.1)

IR: John Humphrys

IE0: Alan Trench, senior research fellow

IE: Lord Thomas of Gresford

24 IR: .hh Well, is that a fair a:rgument? Let’s put it to Lord  
25 Thomas, who rules the Liberal Democrat? and their  
26 Attorney General? the: he Shadows the Attorney General?  
27 Hh. Eh (.) good morning to you?

28 IE: Good morning?

29 IR: Do you agree with that analysis?

30 IE: No I do:n’t. I- I think that there is a very good case for  
31 having an Attorney General who is independent of  
32 Pa:rlia:ment. .h E::h [eh

33 IR: [ENTIREly] =

34 IE: = Well yes. I think it happens in other jurist dictions. I  
35 think the nearest to us is I:reland. .hh E:h you: then get the  
36 choice of the best talent from the who:le legal profession,  
37 and not just those (°who°) are going for politics. .h You’ll  
38 have someone who would be independent and free of  
39 political bi:as, h. (.) and out of the ladder of political  
40 promotion, [ah-

41 IR: [So who would appoint h°im then°]. =

42 IE: = E:h well the Prime Minister would appoint hi:m↑,  
43 obviously↑, for the for the period of the government.  
44 >Bu:t,< e:h it doesn’t follow: that: m .h e:h he would::  
45 continue- necessarily continue with that particular  
46 government. He could run into another government, as- as  
47 the director of public prosecutions does at the  
48 moment. .hhh The ARGument against is the la:ck of  
49 accountability to Par[liament]. =

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- ... (lines omitted)
- 111 IE: Yeah, but that's not unusual. That's what happens  
112 [in other government s. [°Yeah. °
- 113 IR: [But that's what you do. [That is policy. So that's [a =  
114 IE: [No:, °it's-°
- 115 IR: = Liberal Democrat policy.  
116 IE: = °It's° not policy? It's a matter of that's come up for  
117 discussion. .h eh eh at this particular time because of the  
118 very expo:sed position of this Attorney General, = >but: eh  
119 hh. eh we: were the first to argue, for example that thee  
120 judge(s) should be removed from the legislature, and we  
121 will, (for) people who proposed there should be a Supreme  
122 Court, .h separate from Parliament. ...

There are four direct answers to different question formats in this excerpt:

The first question is a 'yes/no' question—'Do you agree with that analysis?', to which the IE's direct answer is 'No I don't'.

The second is a one-word question—'Entirely'—inviting the IE to either confirm or disconfirm, to which the IE's direct answer is 'well yes'.

The third is a 'who' question—'so who would appoint him then', to which the IE's direct answer is 'the Prime Minister would appoint him'.

The fourth is a question in declarative format—'But that's what you do. That is policy. So that's a Liberal Democrat policy'—inviting the IE to confirm or disconfirm, to which the IE's direct answer is 'No, it's- it's not policy'.

All these answers are direct answers matching different question formats. And in each case, the answer comes *straightforward at the beginning of the IE's turn*.

In contrast with this excerpt which contains direct answers matching various question formats, in #123 the answer turn does not

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

match with the question format:

#123

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble [Note: background info needed]

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

The IE appears to respond to the IR's question by starting answer turn with 'I think' (matching with 'do you think' in lines 08) but goes on to talk about Mr. Bradley, a third party's view and not responding to the 'yes/no' question. The IE's response is not a match either in format—'yes/no' answer to 'yes/no' question, or in content—Mr. Bradley's view in response

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

to a question about the IE's view.

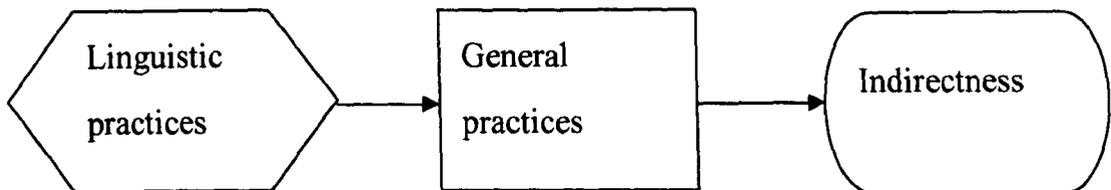
'Indirect answers' (or responses) invariably *violate one or more of the four Gricean maxims* (see Chapter 3, and Brown and Levinson 1987),; they involve *a need for inference* (see Chapter 3 for 'Inference Theory', as well as Levinson 1983; Grice 1975, Searle 1975b; Cooren 2005); and they are usually 'roundabout answers' (Clayman 2001: 408-409; Harris 1991: 84-85) containing various practices. Among those practices preliminarily identified in Chapter 6 (such as referring to a third party, describing own experience, building up contrast, etc.) and even more identified in other news interviews in my data, I have identified *two levels of indirect practices*:

- a) Some general practices at a strategic and therefore higher level (Chapter 7); and
- b) Some linguistic practices at an implementing and therefore lower level (Chapter 8).

General practices are strategies of 'indirectness'. They have to be further implemented by more granular linguistic practices (which we will explore in Chapter 8). When linguistic practices are used to implement the general practices, the relation between general practices, linguistic practices and indirectness can be seen as in Diagram 1:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Diagram 1: Relation between the ‘general practices’, ‘linguistic practices’ and ‘indirectness’ when linguistic practices are used to implement general practices



In these cases, linguistic practices are used to implement ‘general practices’, which in turn are strategies to achieve ‘indirect responses’. However, sometimes certain linguistic practices can also be used as independent practices to achieve ‘indirect responses’. In these cases there is a direct relation between linguistic practices and ‘indirect response’. The relation is illustrated as in Diagram 2:

Diagram 2: Direct relation between ‘linguistic practices’ and ‘indirectness’ when linguistic practices are used independently to achieve ‘indirect response’:



This chapter will examine the strategic level—the ‘general practices’ including referring to history, referring to a third party, citing the IE’s experience and some common features among these three practices. More than one practice can be used within one answer turn. In the following

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

example the answer turn contains practices of ‘referring to history’ and ‘referring to a third party’:

#124

Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble [Note: background info needed]

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h. we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that’s the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

In #124, both referring to a third party (‘Mr. Bradley...’ in lines 48 and ‘people’ in line 56) and referring back to history (‘for our part, we remember that back in May of two thousand...but no fundamental change’) are used in the response. By quoting both Mr. Bradley and ‘people’s

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

skepticism and affiliating with it, the IE shows his own skepticism towards the issue without directly saying that “I AM” ‘skeptical’ or ‘cynical about the timing of it’. In *referring to a third party*, the IE not only

- a) Avoids directly giving HIS opinion on the issue, but also
- b) Aligns himself with a third party who is sympathetic to his opinion.

When the IE comes from the third party ‘Mr. Bradley’ back to ‘our part’ and ‘we’, he uses history—what happened ‘back in May of two thousand’—to illustrate his view on this issue—whether ‘these words [of Mr. Adams] could be a sign of progress’. Similarly, in the past, the IRA had made a promise after which there were a few gestures but no fundamental change. There is a parallel between what happened in May of two thousand and what happens now (also see the table below)—the parallel between the ‘promise’ in two thousand and Mr. Adams’s words now, and the indicated parallel between the result in two thousand (i.e. ‘a few gestures but no fundamental change’) and the possible result of current words (i.e. possibly NOT ‘a sign of progress’).

Table 4: Parallels between history and the present in this answer turn:

	Time	Beginning of issue	Result of the issue
History	In May of two thousand	‘the IRA made a promise to us’	‘we had a few gestures but no fundamental change’
Present	Now	Mr. Adams’ words	<i>Question mark—‘could these words be a sign of progress?’</i>
			**With the parallel between history and present, the IE is indirectly answering ‘No these words are not sign of progresses’.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*Referring to history* is used so as to

- a) Avoid direct comment/prediction on the current issue;
- b) Draw a parallel between past and present and indicate an indirect answer to the question;
- c) Provide an answer which is more convincing than a simple and direct confirmation/disconfirmation because:
- d) It includes evidential support from what happened to the same party on the same/a similar issue in the past; and
- e) It includes more elaborate explanation that is more persuasive than a simple confirmation/disconfirmation.

The next example (#125) contains a third ‘general practice’—*describing the IE’s own experience*, as well as elements of ‘referring to history’ and ‘referring to a third party’.

#125

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3) [00:03:18-00:04:08]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are fra:med, it’s them  
80 and us, it’s: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I’d ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vain of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

89           who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90           who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91           breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92           problem. And large numbers of people in this country are  
93           very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94           government (.) and political party should address that  
              issue.

The main practice of indirect denial of criticism in the question turn is citing evidence from the IE's own constituency (i.e. describing the IE's own experience). Instead of directly objecting to the criticism by saying 'no that's not right', the IE starts the turn with the illustration of his experience in the constituency. The descriptions of what happened in his constituency (through some linguistic practices such as lexical selection and contrastive words which will be discussed in chapter 8) are in direct contrast with the characterization (that the traveller problem is an 'easy' target) in the criticism, which therefore indirectly objects to/disagrees with it. The benefit of using this general practice of indirectness—'*describing the IE's own experience*' rather than giving a simple direct objection in this case is:

- It goes straight into argument (as a more proper response to criticism than a simple objection. The IR has asked the IE 'to respond to it'.); and
- It consolidates the argument because:
  - First-hand knowledge indicates the *reliability* of the source of evidence;
  - First-hand knowledge is *unarguable* to some extent because other people (the opposing party, the IR, or the audience) will not have the same epistemic advantage (Beach 2000;

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Pomerantz 1984; Heritage and Raymond 2005; Raymond and Heritage); and

- As with the previous two practices, it includes more explanation and more persuasion.

When the IE was describing what happened in his constituency, he also referred back to history ('for the last three years') and cited third parties ('an avalanche of complaints' by the public), which assisted the main practice of 'describing experience'. The following sections will examine the three general practices of constructing indirect answers one by one, and explore their common features.

## **2. Referring to history**

When the practice of referring to history is used, the IE avoids directly commenting on the current issue. In some cases (see below #126 and #127 where the IE is asked to comment on an opponent's issue, i.e. defense against Type B challenging question turns identified in Chapter 6), the IE draws a parallel between a similar issue in the past and the current issue. By describing the process and/or result of the historical issue, the IE indirectly indicates that similar process or result will happen to the current one. In other cases (see #125 where criticism of the IE party is presented in question turn, i.e. defense against Type A challenging question turns identified in Chapter 6), what happened in the past is simply cited as evidence against the challenge in question turn. In #126 below, the IE uses the practice of 'referring to history' (i.e. presenting a parallel between history and present so as to indicate what will happen to the current issue)

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

in indirect defense against Type B challenging question turn.

#126

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble [Note: background info needed]

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h. we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

As explained in the analysis following #123, when the IE comes to talk about 'our part' (i.e. his party's view on the issue), his *indirect 'No' answer* or at least skeptical stance to the question 'could these words be a sign of progress' is shown through the illustration of history—what

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

happened ‘back in May of two thousand’. According to the IE, ‘back in May of two thousand’ the IRA made a promise following which a few gestures were given but no fundamental change. This time there are similar promises in Mr. Adams’ words. What would be the result? Are these words sign of progress? Responding to the IR’s question, the IE deliberately presents the IRA’s failure to keep promises in the past. This failure is presented here not by accident—the IE is using it to indirectly show his answer, i.e. the IRA could fail to realize words again this time, just as they did in the past; and these words are not necessarily sign of progress.

Below is another example, (coming from the same interview as the previous example,) of parallel between history and present, and indirect criticism of an opponent. In #127, ‘referring to history’ is again used in indirect defense against Type B challenging question turn (on *don’t know* answers as not directly answering a question, see Heritage 1984: 265-280; and Ekstrom 2008).

#127

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-David Trimble-3rd

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble

84 IR: Do you think it’s possible, that Mr. Adams means it.

85 IE: .h h h h We: gave him, I don’- I don’t know, eh nor did I know:

86 when he made similar promises to us years ago. But we gave

87 him the chance to prove it. (.) Eh and what he did prove was

88 that there was a limit to how far the republican movement

89 was going to go. .h And for the last three years, since the

90 collapse of the assembly, .h we’ve come up against that limit

91 time and time again. = It’s not just once. .h h There have been

92 three distinct attempts over those years, to achieve progress

93 every one of which, .h has foundered on the refusal of the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 94 republican movement, to change fundamentally. Gestures  
95 they've made, they've reduced the level of violence, they've  
96 done some decommissioning, .h but they've refused to wind  
97 up the private army. .h [And I doubt if =  
98 IR: [Ok.  
99 IE: = there's going to be a fundamental change now.  
100 (.)  
101 IR: .h (.) David Trimble? Thank you very much.

Again there are parallels between what happened in the past and what happens now: a) the parallel between 'I don't know' and 'Nor did I know'; b) the parallel between 'similar promises years ago' and the current promises; and c) the hidden parallel between what the IRA proved in the past and what can possibly be the result of current situation. In the past the IRA made promises similar to this time but failed to realize them, 'proving' that 'there was a limit to how far the republican movement was going to go'. This limit has come up again and again in the last three years—each time 'gesture they've made', but no 'fundamental change'. The IE's last sentence 'And I doubt if there's going to be a fundamental change' summarizes his skeptical view on the issue.

In both cases (#126 and #127), the IR asks the IE's view about the opponent (see Chapter 6 for Type B challenging question turns), and in both cases the IE holds a skeptical stance and disaffiliates with the opponent. However, if the IE simply gives a direct disaffiliation, he can easily be challenged with such a question as how come he can make a judgment without having first-hand knowledge—the opponent is the party who owns the issue and has epistemic advantage in making judgment. Therefore, the IE has to find extra support for making his judgment or taking his stance. Drawing a parallel between history and the present helps

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

to obtain this extra support: because a similar issue happened to the opponent in the past and the IE has first-hand knowledge regarding how the opponent handled it, the IE can base upon past experience to make a judgment regarding the current issue. Past experience of a similar case *gives the IE more epistemic strength* for judging (in most cases, criticizing) the opponent on the current issue.

An example of ‘referring to history’ used in indirect defense against Type A challenging question turn can be seen in #125 (for which the answer turn is reproduced below), where history is cited as evidence against the presented criticism of IE party in question turn:

07 IE: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
08 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an avalanche  
09 of complaints about the activities of travellers. who: invade  
10 other people’s land↑ and can’t be removed↑, who buy land in  
11 breach and then start to develop it in breach of planning  
12 control. It’s a serious and growing problem. And la:rge  
13 numbers of people in this country are very troubled by it, and  
14 it’s therefore necessary (.) that government (.) and political  
15 parties should address that issue.

The IE refers to the public’s complaints about travellers ‘in the last three years, indeed for longer’ (indicating that this problem is ‘serious and growing’ and affects ‘large numbers of people’) so as to deny the criticism presented in the question turn that the Conservative Party is playing with the ‘deepest bigotry in society’ therefore being frivolous in raising this issue before election.

Therefore, for both types of challenging question turns, ‘referring to history’ can be used as an indirect defense strategy—either citing history

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

as evidence to deny the presented criticism of the IE party (as in #125: defense against Type A challenge) or drawing parallel between history and present to indicate criticism of an opponent (as in #126 and #127: defense against Type B challenge).

### 3. Referring to a third party

Referring to a third party happens when the IR's question is asking for the IE (party)'s view or position, and the IE quotes an *affiliating* third party's comments or position in the response so as to show indirectly his own (party's) view or position (see also Pomerantz 1984). Again, #125 contains an element of 'referring to a third party' when the IE quotes the public 'avalanche of complaints' (as indirect defense against Type A challenge):

07 IE: For the last three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
08 elected in my constituency, h I have received an avalanche  
09 of complaints about the activities of travellers, who: invade  
10 other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑, who buy land in  
11 breach and then start to develop it in breach of planning  
12 control. It's a serious and growing problem. And large  
13 numbers of people in this country are very troubled by it, and  
14 it's therefore necessary (.) that government (.) and political  
15 parties should address that issue.

By quoting the public complaints of travellers, the IE indirectly presents the 'serious' problem of travellers, as a contrast and denial against the presented criticism in question turn—that the problem of travellers is 'an easy target' and the Conservatives is targeting at 'the deepest bigotry in society' before election. This is an indirect denial because the IE is

describing the travellers' problem through the public complaints rather than his own words; and a successful strategy because in doing so the IE has drawn external support from third parties for his own stance.

Here is another example of 'referring to a third party' (as indirect defense against Type B challenge):

#128

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble [Note: background info needed]

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h. we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

In this example, the IR asks what *the IE* thinks of the IRA's

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

promises; while the IE responds with Mr. Bradley's position on the issue—being skeptical or cynical about the timing of it. This is the IE's indirect way of presenting his own skepticism about the IRA's promises, which is proved in the next few lines (lines 50-57 and 59). The IE makes his affiliation with Mr. Bradley quite clear—'I think Mr. Bradley is quite right...' therefore showing that this third party is not randomly quoted, but as a support for the IE's position. Therefore, in quoting and affiliating with Mr. Bradley's position, the IE has completed two tasks:

- a) Presenting his own position through a third party's opinion;
- b) Drawing external support for his position.

When the IE comes to talk about how they should react to the IRA's promises, he quotes and affiliates with 'people'—a generic third party reference. It is a third party 'people' who are going to say 'well let us see what actually happens', but, it is the IE who *deliberately* quotes and affiliates with this waiting stance. The IE's action of quoting and affiliating with this particular stance shows the IE's position on the issue.

Another example of 'referring to a third party' in response to challenging question:

#129

[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed bumps 1-1

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Robert Gifford, executive director at the Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Transport Safety

01        IR:        Quarter past seven? The Conservatives want to abolish  
02                    speed humps. .h They are putting forward an amendment  
03                    to the Roads Safety Bill, which will take them off the  
04                    roads in a couple of years. = Their Transport spokesman  
05                    Tim Yeo is with us? .hh We're also joined by Robert  
06                    Gifford who is executive director at the Parliamentary

- 07           Advisory Committee for Transport Safety? = lobby group  
 08           on road safety issues. .hh And you must give a rather a  
 09           fa:n of these things. = >Do you think they< wo:rk. =  
 10       IE1:   = .h Well, the research tells (that) England, we first of all  
 11           we should remember that road humps have been around  
 12           for twenty years now. Ehm, .h and research tells us that  
 13           they reduce valid mortalities, betwee:n seventee:n and  
 14           fifty nine percent. There a:re .h hundreds of pedestria:ns  
 15           and cyclists alive today: .h who: otherwise would have  
 16           been killed by cars going too fast for the roads they were  
 17           driving down. = So they really are a success story. We've  
 18           got to think very carefully about their remo[val].  
 19       IR:     [h ...

Again in #129, the IR is asking about the IE's opinion on the issue—whether the IE thinks that speed bumps work. Instead of commenting on his own behalf, the IE quotes 'the research'—'the research' tells that they reduce valid mortalities—and the IE comes to a summary of the research result that 'so they [speed bumps] really are a success story' and his own conclusion that 'we've got to think very carefully about their removal'. It is only until the conclusion part that the IE explicitly comments on his own behalf—using the first person pronoun 'we'. And even then, 'think very carefully about their removal' is not a direct answer to the question 'whether they work'.

Quoting what 'the research tells': a) indirectly answers to 'whether they work', especially with the IE's summary of the research—'so they really are a success story'; as well as b) provides support for what the IE wants to present—that speed bumps are successful and we've got to think carefully about the removal.

Another example below comes from the same interview as the previous one:

#130

[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed bumps 2-1-3

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tim Yeo, Conservative Transport spokesman

(Background lines—immediately before the excerpt for analysis):

52 IR: Robert Gifford many thanks. Tim Yeo, they a:re a success  
53 story, why on earth you're trying to get rid of them. =

54 IE2: = .hh Eh well good morning it. Im- improving road  
55 safety is one of the three key aims of our roads policy,  
56 along with cutting congestion, .h an- and reducing the  
57 damage vehicles do to the environment. Killing three  
58 thousand people a year:, wouldn't be tolerated in the rail  
59 ways, wouldn't be tolerated in the air o:r at sea, so .hh we  
60 won't tolerate it on the roads either. .h An- and we'll  
61 make sure that part of our road spending, .h i- is  
62 specifically to meeting, t- to making those roads that  
63 have been identified by the AA, .h eh on the list, e:h as  
64 as the most dangerous one, making those  
65 one[s safety[, (.) safer.

66 IR: [.h [Yeah, but that doesn't quite address the  
67 question, >tht< these things work, why get rid of them. =

68 IE2: = .h Well our approach to- safety will be evidence based.  
69 = We want to use the limited resources in the most  
70 effective way:. .h E:h speed bumps certainly make two  
71 of our key policy aims actually worse. They h. eh  
72 increase the pollution on a street when cars stop and  
73 sta↑rt, that makes the air quality worse? .h They certainly  
74 make congestion worse? Because instead of traffic  
75 flowing, .h freely, = perhaps slowly but freely along a  
76 street, it has to stop and start. = So they completely fail  
77 on those two criteria. [.hh

The excerpt for analysis:

78 IR: [But they keep people alive. =

79 IE2: = Well, as far as thee evidence about that is concerned, =  
80 we are certainly prepared to examine it. = The purpose of  
81 this amendment, which we will not press to a vote if it

- 82 gets debated, .h it is to explore the evidence. = It's  
 83 what's, .h eh called in th- in- in the jargon, a probing  
 84 amendment. .h I'm aware that the chairman of the  
 85 London Ambulance Service h. e::h said in- in two  
 86 thousand and three, that hundreds of deaths .h eh may be  
 87 caused by ambulances being delayed h. eh in: getting to  
 88 hospitals. = The .h the eh a one minute delay in getting to  
 89 a .h cardiac (rest) patient h. eh may be the difference  
 90 between life and death. = So the evidence is by no means  
 91 a[ll the one way. .h [Eh (at least)- (. ) (least) ] =  
 92 IR: [But- [Can I- Can I just- just (to)-]  
 93 IE2: = also said that h. e:h dri- speed bumps increase the  
 94 response times h., eh tha- their vehicles were involved in  
 95 getting to emergency.

In this example, referring to a third party comes after a few lines of evasion (lines 79-82). The quote from 'the chairman of the London Ambulance Service' that hundreds of deaths may be caused by ambulances being delayed in getting to hospitals presents evidence against the statement in the IR question turn—'they keep people alive'. Although the IE has not explicitly argued against the IR at the beginning of answer turn—he only says that they need to explore the evidence, the quote (lines 84-90) is indirectly presenting *disagreement*. A brief summary immediately afterwards—'So the evidence is by no means all the one way'—makes the disagreement clear and explicit.

Following this there is a second quote (lines 91 and 93-95, which is not very clear in the audio) that enhances the first quote.

Through these quotes, the IE a) indirectly presents disagreement with the statement in question turn; b) provides an authorized evidence/support for the disagreement; c) *avoids direct confrontation on the IE's behalf* against the IR turn and *uses a third party to present a*

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

*conflicting position.*

Summary

In all these examples, the IE has quoted and affiliated with a third party's view or position in response to the IR's challenging question turns.

Various *functions* are achieved by 'referring to a third party':

- To avoid commenting on the IE (party)'s own behalf. There is an aspect of discrepancy between the question turn and answer turn—the question turn is targeted at the IE (party)'s view while the answer turn responds with a third party's view. This discrepancy leads to the evasive aspect of 'referring to a third party'.
- 'Indirectness' is achieved when the IE presents his position via a third party's voice, and when he affiliates with the third party's position.
- Extra support is drawn when the IE quotes a third party who affiliates with the IE's position. In some cases the third party has much authority and therefore adds substantial credit to the presented position.
- To avoid direct confrontation with the IR turn and presents the disaffiliation in a more indirect way. Disaffiliation is a common feature in response turns to challenging or hostile questions. 'Referring to a third party' can give a softer edge to the disaffiliation, even though it is not necessarily the aim of the practice.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#### 4. Citing the IE's experience

In the practice of citing the IE's own experience, the IE may give a description of what happened in his constituency (or other political region ever under his governance) or a description of events about which he has first hand knowledge. This practice is a very useful strategy to defend against challenges in question turns—either criticism of the IE party (as in Type A challenge) or presented support of an opponent (as in Type B challenge).

#131

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3) [00:03:18-00:04:08] [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vain of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92 problem. And la:rge numbers of people in this country are  
93 very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94 government (.) and political party should address that  
95 issue.

In the question turn, the IR cites a criticism of the IE party that raising the travellers issue is 'Michael Howard tapping into...the deepest

vein of bigotry in our society’ and the IR paraphrases it as ‘easy target, go for the gypsy’. In the answer turn, the IE defends against this criticism by describing the situations of travellers in his constituency (lines 86-91) and then expanding it to the whole country (lines 91-94). The IE describes a long-lasting (‘for the last three years, indeed for longer since I had been elected in my constituency’, serious and growing wide (‘an avalanche of complaints about...’) problem of travellers in his constituency, with summary and expansion to the whole country in lines 91-93—It’s a ‘serious and growing’ problem, and ‘large numbers of’ people are ‘very troubled’ by it, and it’s therefore ‘necessary’ that government address that issue. (See Chapter 8 for full analysis of lexical selections and other linguistic practices in this episode of news interviews.)

Rather than directly and simply denying the criticism, the IE describes his first-hand experience of the issue as evidence against the criticism. By describing the IE’s experience, he is achieving the following:

- Defense against the criticism (the linguistic practices used within this general practice of describing experience help to indirectly present the contrast between the IE’s experience and the criticism in question turn); and
- Providing substantial evidence for the defense, because of the epistemic stance, i.e. the IE having first-hand knowledge of the issue.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#132

Thursday 17 March 2005: city academies

IR: Sarah Montague

IE: Sir Peter Vardy, who sponsored two city academies

- 01 IR: Eh Sir Peter Vardy, you've sponsored two: city academies, .h  
02 i- is it no:t too early to tell wha:t, whether they are going to  
03 work. = In fact the evidence so far, judging by the league  
04 tables, is not at all goo:d.  
05 IE: .hh Well I- I quite agree that it is right to monitor and  
06 measure, and we need to make sure that the: schools are  
07 delivering eh value for money. .hh But I can only speak from  
08 my own experience, = (a manual college) where Mr.  
09 Sherman's actually been up and down for a look, .hh is  
10 achieving outstanding results ninety seven to ninety nine  
11 success of GCSE.

The IR asks a question that indicates skepticism about city academies—that it might be too early to tell whether they are going to work. And following that the IR mentions that evidence actually prove the other way, suggesting disapproval of city academies.

In defense against the indicated disapproval, the IE cites his own experience as evidence against it (lines 07-11)—a college, which is probably one of the academies that he was supporting, is achieving outstanding results. His *first-hand knowledge* of this successful city academy gives *substantial evidence* against the indicated criticism in the question turn.

With the token agreement at the beginning of answer turn (lines 05-07) the IE does not directly disconfirm the statement in the question turn; however, this experience of a successful city academy—as a contrast with the negative evidence mentioned in the question turn—*indirectly* does the job of *disconfirming*.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

In the way he describes the success of the city academy, which he sponsored, he displays his disagreement. He has first-hand knowledge of the achievements of this city academy, and this adds credibility to his disagreement with criticism.

In #133, the IR presents a justification for people voting against the Prime Minister's party, which is the same as the IE's, and thereby taking an oppositional stance against the IE. This is the second type of hostile question discussed in Chapter 6.

#133

[47] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": anti-war Labour candidates (04:59.7)

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Robin Cook, the former Foreign Secretary

75 IR: Well, th- the problem though, is that there are a lot of  
76 people who say that the issue of trust is central to this  
77 election. .hh And, there a:re people who say whatever  
78 the consequences, = they believe (.) .h that as a result of,  
79 = >as they would see it< having been led into war on: a  
80 false prospectus, some of them >as we know< .hh (.) a-  
81 accuse the Prime Minister of lying to the House of  
82 Co↑mmons which he's always (.) of course, vehemently  
83 denied. .h Nonetheless, they feel betray:ed, and they  
84 want to do something about it. In those circumstances  
85 aren't they right to vote against the Prime Minister's  
86 party.

87 IE: Well, first of all, Jim, I represent a: constituency  
88 where: .hh saw for eighteen years vulnerable people  
89 who: were damaged, and h- g- good ( ) which is a very  
90 good severe hardship because of Conservative policies.  
91 I've seen also the way .h in which their life's been  
92 transfo:rmed, about the opportunity in the last eight  
93 years. .h And I want to make sure, that the people I  
94 represent contINUE to get a government [that can act in =

95 IR: [°.hhh°

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 96 IE: = their interest, [.h and provi:de them with the help  
97 IR: [°ehm. °  
98 IE: = that- that they need, .h make sure that we do have the  
99 minimum wage, we do have to tackle the child poverty;  
100 After all w(h)e we check a quarter of children out of  
101 child pover↑ty, .h and we are on ta:rget to hit our  
102 objective [of halving it. Now that's not gonna =  
103 IR: [.h  
104 IE: = happen if we don't get re-elected. On the question of  
105 trust, i::- tha- that is- I think- a- a big issue, not just  
106 for- .h the government, but .hh also h. for h. the bit of us  
107 generally of thee decaying trust in our elected  
108 insti[tution.  
109 IR: [Do you think the war has made that worse. The  
110 way we went to war.

In defense against this hostile question turn, the IE cites his experience in his own constituency to show evidence in support of his party through the contrast between failure under Conservative government and achievements under Labour government (lines 88-90, see Chapter 8 for more full analysis of 'contrast'). And in summary (lines 93-94, 96, and 98-102) of this experience, the IE disconfirms the IR's oppositional stance and argues that people should vote FOR rather than against Labour.

Through citing the experience in his constituency<sup>15</sup> and summarizing it, the IE defends against the IR's oppositional and hostile stance. A more direct denial of the IR's argument on the issue of trust comes later in the answer turn (lines 104-108). The practice of citing experience here is an 'indirect' defense and it provides evidence for the disconfirmation in the meanwhile.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Summary

In all these examples, the IR's question turn has been hostile to the IE—either through criticism of the IE (party) or through supporting an oppositional party. In defending against the hostility, the IE cites their own experience to argue against the criticism or the oppositional position.

- Because these experience descriptions do not start with or contain direct denial such as a plain 'no' plus statement, I call them 'indirect defense'.
- These experience descriptions provide evidence for the IE's defense.
- The epistemic advantage of the IE (that the IE has first-hand knowledge about his constituency or any other political or social organization) consolidates the evidence and adds credibility to his position. (Citing experience to provide solid support with the epistemic advantage—i.e. with first-hand knowledge—is also used in direct disagreement. See section 6.)
- In fact, this indirect defense strategy of citing experience provides more elaborate explanations/justifications (with solid evidence) for the IE's position, rather than a simple and direct denial of the criticism or the opposition in the question turn. Therefore, it is more efficient than a simple and direct denial of the hostility in question turn.

### 5. Insertion: a common phenomenon across these different practices

In some examples of these different practices, I have identified a common phenomenon of ‘insertion’ near to the beginning of answer turn. Below is an example of ‘insertion’ at the beginning of answer turn in which the practice of ‘referring to history’ is used. The ‘insertion’ serves as a link between past and present:

#134

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-David Trimble-3

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble

- 84 IR: Do you think it's possible, that Mr. Adams means it.  
85 IE: .hhhh We: gave him, [I don'- I don't know, eh nor did I know:  
86 when he made similar promises to us years ago]. But we gave  
87 him the chance to prove it. (.) Eh and what he did prove was  
88 that there was a limit to how far the republican movement  
89 was going to go. .h And for the last three years, since the  
90 collapse of the assembly, .h we've come up against that limit  
91 time and time again. = It's not just once. .hh There have been  
92 three distinct attempts over those years, to achieve progress  
93 every one of which, .h has foundered on the refusal of the  
94 republican movement, to change fundamentally. Gestures  
95 they've made, they've reduced the level of violence, they've  
96 done some decommissioning, .h but they've refused to wind  
97 up the private army. .h [And I doubt if =  
98 IR: [Ok.  
99 IE: = there's going to be a fundamental change now.  
100 (.)  
101 IR: .h (.) David Trimble? Thank you very much.

The answer starts with referring to history ('we gave him...') and then is quit. The insertion appears more responsive to the question—'I don't know' is responding to the question whether the IE thinks that 'Mr. Adams means it'. Therefore function a) of the insertion is:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- To appear responsive to the question

The change from past tense (we ‘gave’ him) to current tense (I ‘don’t’ know) also helps to correct possible impression of evasion. The question is about a current issue, whilst the answer turn starts with past tense, which could lead IR to treat it as an evasive response and interrupt. Therefore function b):

- To correct the impression of evasiveness

If the inserted sentence (‘I don’t know...years ago’) had come right at the beginning of turn, there is a danger that the IR might treat it as a complete turn and pick up his IR turn immediately after ‘when he made similar promises to us years ago’. Therefore function c):

- To avoid providing a Transitional Relevance Place for the IR

The insertion in this example provides a link between the current situation and the past (the link between ‘I don’t know’ and ‘nor did I know...years ago’) and therefore facilitates the practice of ‘referring to history’. Therefore function d):

- To facilitate listeners to see the connection between current situation and the referred history

‘But’ is added when the aborted beginning of turn is re-started. It is a change of direction from ‘I don’t know’—which literally means lack of knowledge and is not biased towards either ‘yes’ or ‘no’, to an indirect disconfirmation. Therefore:

- ‘But’ is necessary for linking the insertion and the re-started point, indicating a change of direction

In the next example, the practice of ‘referring to history’ is inserted at

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

the beginning of an answer turn where ‘referring to a third party’ is the main indirect practice.

#135

[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed bumps-1-1

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Robert Gifford, executive director at the Parliamentary Advisory Committee for Transport Safety

- 01 IR: Quarter past seven? The Conservatives want to abolish  
02 speed humps. .h They are putting forward an amendment  
03 to the Roads Safety Bill, which will take them off the  
04 roads in a couple of years. = Their Transport spokesman  
05 Tim Yeo is with us? .hh We’re also joined by Robert  
06 Gifford who is executive director at the Parliamentary  
07 Advisory Committee for Transport Safety? = lobby group  
08 on road safety issues. .hh And you must give a rather a  
09 fa:n of these things. = >Do you think they< wo:rk. =  
10 IE1: = .h Well, the research tells (that) England, we first of all  
11 we should remember that road humps have been around  
12 for twenty years now. Ehm, .h and research tells us that  
13 they reduce valid mortalities, betwee:n seventee:n and  
14 fifty nine percent. There a:re .h hundreds of pedestria:ns  
15 and cyclists alive today: .h who: otherwise would have  
16 been killed by cars going too fast for the roads they were  
17 driving down. = So they really are a success story. We’ve  
18 got to think very carefully about their remo[val].  
19 IR: [What about...

There are a few points worth noticing in this example of insertion:

First, the insertion of ‘referring to history’ adds extra support for the IE’s position. The IE starts with referring to a third party, which is abandoned immediately and followed by an insertion. The insertion (‘we first of all we should remember that road humps have been around for twenty years now’) in this example *adds a second support* for the IE’s

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

position, which is the ‘history’ of road bumps.

Second, within the insertion, there is another insertion—‘first of all’ between two ‘we’ (line 10). This mini-insertion has its own significance: a) If the IE hadn’t added ‘first of all’, the IR and listeners might see ‘we should remember...’ as a continuation of ‘the research tells (that) England’. b) ‘First of all’ gives the ‘history’ more significance in supporting the IE’s position, because it puts the support from history as having more priority than that from research.

Third, ‘and’ (line 12: ‘*and* research tells us’) added before the re-started turn shows *continuation* between the insertion and the re-started turn, as well as the aborted sentence. (This is in contrast with ‘but’ as a change of direction in #134.)

In #136, an insertion of ‘citing the IE’s experience’ is added at the beginning of an answer turn where ‘referring to a third party’ is used as the main practice of ‘indirectness’.

#136

Monday 14 March 2005: Police-2-4-2

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Davis

- 01 IR: Do you think the police would want to spend (.) more  
02 time, .h dealing with cannabis crime, = because one of the  
03 points that many police forces make, [.hh ] is that if you =  
04 IE: [ehn]  
05 IR: = want to increase (.) bureaucracy in the police force, the  
06 thing to do: is to increase the penalties for cannabis and they  
07 have been back dealing [with ] low level =  
08 IE: [You know-]  
09 IE: = offences. Jim, you know- you know (of) the Prime

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 10 Minister started off: eh when he came into office, .h talking  
11 about:: in fact when it was in- in my job, Shadow Home  
12 Secretary, talking about being tough on crime, .h tough on  
13 the causes of crime. .h One of the primary causes of violent  
14 crime now:, .h i::s dri:nk and dru:gs. Both of those issues  
15 have been let get out of control by this government. .h As a  
16 result, .h you have got a large number of people, who as  
17 yo[u think your]=
- 18 IR: [Yeah ]
- 19 IE: = self, >.h< are >(se- tu- r-)< doing carrying out crime to  
20 fu::nd (.) their habit? .h And you have (.) a large number of  
21 people, .h involved in violent crime (.) to promote that habit.  
22 =
- 23 IR: = .h[hh
- 24 IE: [Now unless you- snap that off the source, you're gonna  
25 ha:ve a continuous (spiral to climb).= That's what  
26 Nottingham sees, it's what other city- eh city  
27 s[ees. And it's very-] it's a very very tough problem. =
- 28 IR: [David Davi- ]
- 29 IE: =.h But- you shouldn't pretend (.) it's eh it's an easy answer.
- 30 IR: David Davis, thanks very much.

Again, there are a few points worth noticing in this example of insertion:

First, the insertion of 'citing the IE's experience' ('in fact when it was in my job, Shadow Home Secretary', lines 11-12) adds extra support to the IE's position, owing to the fact that the IE has first-hand knowledge and therefore owns epistemic credibility for the argument. It enhances argument for the IE's position.

Second, because the insertion is a phrase rather than a sentence, it does not disturb the abandoned sentence grammatically. Therefore the abandoned sentence can be re-started without adding any linking word such as 'and' in #135 or 'but' in #134.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Third, because the abandoned sentence stops at ‘talking about’—a verb phrase without an object, making it clear that the previous part is not a complete turn yet, the IE does not need to make extra effort in the insertion to prevent the IR’s premature interruption. (Similarly in #134, ‘We gave him’ is an unfinished sentence and indicates that there is more to come after the insertion.)

Summary

There are some common features between these examples:

- In all these cases, the insertion<sup>16</sup> adds support to the indicated answer: in #134, the insertion provides a link between the current (asked in the question) and the history (in the practice of ‘referring to history’); in #135, a brief use of ‘history’ is inserted to provide extra support for the argument; and in #136, a brief use of ‘citing the IE’s experience’ (or in essence, the epistemic advantage) is inserted to provide extra support.
- All these insertions use *first person pronouns* (‘we’, ‘I’, ‘my’, etc.) indicating response to the question turn *on the IE’s behalf* and therefore substantiates the response.
- There are also some mechanisms in all these examples to make sure that the IR will not interrupt the IE prematurely. Some of the mechanisms work in the insertion (#134 and 135) and others work in the initially abandoned turn (#134 and #136).
- In some cases a *transition word* ‘but’ is used if the insertion and the rest of answer go in seemingly different direction, as in #134. Or, a connection word ‘and’ is used to show the *continuation*

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

between the inserted sentence and the rest (i.e. the aborted sentence and the re-started one), as in #135. At other times, no connection word needs to be added, as in #136.

**6. The ‘general practices’: components but not essence of ‘indirectness’**

These practices can be used to construct an ‘indirect answer’ but their existence does not necessarily indicate ‘indirectness’. The essence for ‘indirectness’ is still *the need for inference*, i.e. a) the listener cannot find a direct response matching the format of the question turn; b) the answer to question is implied in the answer turn; c) the listeners need to make their own interpretations based upon the conversational principles and some background information (including knowledge about the specific topics discussed in the interview and general knowledge about language use and conversation), so as to comprehend what is implied as the answer to question. These general practices are means for achieving ‘indirectness’ but not distinct features of ‘indirectness’. Indeed, as I have indicated in the introduction to this chapter, these general practices cannot stand on their own to achieve ‘indirectness’—they have to be further implemented by linguistic practices (which will be discussed in Chapter 8).

To show that these general practices are not unique in managing indirectness. I will give some examples from my data in which ‘referring to a third party’, ‘citing the IE’s experience’ and ‘insertion’ are used in evasive responses, non-committal responses or direct answers. #137 is an example of ‘referring to a third party’ used in a non-committal response:

#137

[46] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0716 Stephen Twigg (03:26.2)

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Stephen Twigg, school minister

29 IR: = Well it- i- i- much has been made of thee- the phonics  
 30 experiment (that) was going on in Clackmannanshire in  
 31 the Scotland which e- appears to have a remarkable  
 32 effect, .h saying that children we were taught in this way  
 33 at a very early stage, eh were three years ahead in  
 34 reading age when they got to eh age eleven. .h mcht  
 35 Now, what do you think of the system.

36 IE: The evidence that's highlighted in the report about  
 37 Clackmannanshire I think is important. And I asked that  
 38 we look at this, in thee education department to see  
 39 what lessons we can learn. .h I am advised that in fact  
 40 there is quite a close similarity .h between what they are  
 41 doing in Clackmannanshire, .h and what we've been  
 42 doing through the national literacy strategy, that the key  
 43 contrast is between .h Clackmannanshire and the rest of  
 44 Scotland. But others tell me that =

45 IR: [Ehm.

46 IE: = that might not be the case. We need to look at the  
 47 evi[dence for =

48 IR: [.hh

49 IE: = that, more clo:sely. One thing I would want to say  
 50 about phonics, is that w[e (taste)-

51 IR: [(Just)- e- e- just e- for people  
 52 who- may not be into the ja:rgon. I mean who are  
 53 talking here about recognizing< the sou:nds of the  
 54 alphabet.

55 IE: Absolutely, which: thee majority of experts I think now  
 56 would acce:pt, is absolutely vi:tal particularly in the  
 57 early years: of literacy learning. And that's why we  
 58 actually cha:nged the literacy strategy early o:n, to place  
 59 a much greater emphasis on phonics in thee early years.  
 60 Now some people say we've got that ↑right, and that's  
 61 shown in this report. Others say no we need to go  
 62 fu:rther. And I think what we need to do is to examine .h



- 117 reduce tax, ANd of course .h eh we a:re setting aside a  
 118 great deal of money from the savings (if you identify) to  
 119 avoi:d the tax increases which are coming this way. .h if  
 120 Labour is elected, = and again I'll draw your attention for  
 121 example to reports there in the paper, .h by the Item Club,  
 122 eh which is a very respected independent organization  
 123 which says there is a considerable fes- deposit in Gordon  
 124 Brown's budget? .h and that taxes will go up. They're  
 125 which is what the issue of Fiscal Studies, another .h  
 126 independent organization said h. last week. The choice in  
 127 the election couldn't be clearer. .h High taxes under the  
 128 Labour, lower taxes and better value for mon(ey) un(der)  
 129 (the) Conservati[ves].  
 130 IR: [Geor↑ge Osbor↑ne, thank you.

The IR's turn is criticizing what the IE's party (i.e. the Conservatives) intends to do with tax policies. The IE first his party defends against the criticism by talking about what they will do to reduce tax. Then the IE adds an agenda of criticizing Labour's failure. It is within this agenda shift part that the practices of 'referring to a third party' are used ('the Item Club' and the 'Fiscal Studies'). The main function of quoting third parties ('the Item Club' and the 'Fiscal Studies') in this example is to *provide external support for the IE's position* against Labour on the issue of tax, which is the same as one function of 'referring to a third party' in indirect answers.

As summarized in section 3 of this chapter, when 'referring to a third party' is used in 'indirect answers', it can achieve functions such as: a) avoiding commenting on the IE (party)'s own behalf; b) indirectly presenting his (party's) position through a third party's voice; c) drawing external support for his own position; and d) in cases of disagreement, avoiding direct confrontation with the IR turn. Despite all these functions

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

that can be achieved by ‘referring to a third party’, when it is used to achieve ‘indirectness’, functions b) and c)—i.e. to present the IE’s position through a third voice and especially to draw external support for the IE’s position—are the most prominent ones. In contrast, when it is used to achieve a ‘non-committal response’ (as in #137), avoiding responsibility for the presented position or avoiding taking a side is the main function. In other cases (such as ‘agenda shift’ in #138) ‘referring to a third party’ can also be used to support the presented position. Below is an example of ‘citing the IE’s experience’ in direct disagreement:

#139

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen-5

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

- 86 IR: = .hh Eh- well, on the other hand, i- i- if you want attention  
87 draw:n to this, he’s gone the right way about it, because, we  
88 are discussing it now? [Then people will discuss it quite =  
89 IE: [No thee thee-  
90 IR: = properly.  
91 IE: = These things are too serious Jim. This isn’t about filling  
92 newspaper space o:r the air time on the Today Program. =  
93 These are- things that affect my: constituents’ lives every  
94 single day of their lives. = Many live in fear↑, .h because of  
95 thee eh way that the drug barons are lording it in certain  
96 places of Nottingham. .hh And we are now fighting back. We  
97 have a tremendous community effort. .h And, b- above all,  
98 led by the officers on the ground, the superb officers, .h in  
99 the Nottinghamshire constabulary. .h And they see the guy:,  
100 who is meant to be leading this h., eh behaving like the man  
101 on the terrace, rather than the manager of the team.

In this answer of direct disagreement (‘no these things are too serious...Today Program’ right at the beginning of answer turn), the IE

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

supports his position by ‘citing the experience’ in his constituency. The IE’s epistemic advantage (having first-hand knowledge of his constituency) gives solid support for his argument. This is the same as one of the functions in ‘citing the IE’s experience’ as a practice of ‘indirectness’ (see summary in section 4).

‘Insertion’ can also be found in cases other than ‘indirect answers’. For example, in #140, ‘insertion’ contains direct disagreement, which is embedded in an answer turn of rephrasing the IE’s position.

#140

Tuesday 5 April 2005-Ed Davey & Liam Fox-2 ‘role of commission’-Liam Fox

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Liam Fox

- 01 IR: So the electoral commission should be able to mandate, not  
02 simply to advise.  
03 IE: .h Well I think it has to: You can't mandate a democratic  
04 parliament, .h but I think we: need to have a: lot more  
05 self-confidence, coming from the electoral commission. .h  
06 I'd like to hear them, .h speaking out far more publicly, on  
07 these issues, than they do.  
08 IR: Alright. Now let's look-

In #141, ‘insertion’ is added so as to ‘appear to agree’ while in fact on the whole the answer turn is indirectly disagreeing with the question turn.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions

In British Broadcast News Interviews

#141

Friday 11 March 2005: African Commission-3-4

IR: Sarah Montague

IE: Bob Geldolf, singer

01 IR: Which brings me to the point made by Andrew M'wenda

02 made in that clip there which is that if y- you know Africa

03 has received a heck of lot of aid in the pa::st, =[and what it]=

04 IE: [E:hm. ]

05 IR: = do:es is conso:lidate .h the power of corrupt governments.

06 IE: Well in the pa:st you had the col- eh co- completely

07 correct. .h In the past you had the cold war = so, you didn't

08 ha:ve aid, you had pay (offs) to thogs like Mabutu who

09 (immediately) stashed the money in Western Banks. .h Look

10 at the commission dp- i- imme:diately calls for the

11 repatriation of that money. .h There is ðe need to prop up

12 these thogs any longer h.. So with this new fluidity in the

13 world, with these new fo:rces like globalization tha- that-

14 that, .h tha- that collapse of the cold war engendered, .h we

15 can look again at the different world we inhabit from Brandt,

16 [or of the bale fore =

17 IR: [.hh

18 IE: = history of the la:st twenty years, and trying to find and

19 understand where we sit in this new world, .h and try to help

20 to bring .h that constant into it to join up.

In both cases, the insertion is added *so as to appear responding to the question*, to show either direct disagreement or direct agreement. This is similar to #134 where the insertion is added so as to appear directly responding to the question as well as providing a link between the question and the indirect answer.

### Summary

From these examples where practices of 'referring to a third party', 'citing the IE's experience' and 'insertion' are used across various

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

dimensions of the answer turns—including ‘indirect answers’, ‘non-committal responses’, ‘agenda shift (as a way of ‘evasion’)', ‘direct answers’ and ‘appearing to respond’, we can see that these ‘general practices’ are *rhetorical tools* that are used to *implement* a particular type of answer. They are important in terms of implementation, but they are *not sufficient in dictating the dimension of the response*—i.e. they can be found in any dimension of answer turn and their existence cannot determine the type of response.

As universal *rhetoric strategies*, ‘referring to a third party’ and ‘citing the IE’s experience’ (and presumably ‘referring to history’ although specific cases have not been found in my data) have some universal functions that exhibit when used in different types of responses. For example, they can be used *to add extra support for the specific argument or stance that the IE presents*.

- ‘Referring to a third party’ can be used to *draw external support* for the IE’s position both in cases of ‘indirect answer’ (see section 3) and ‘agenda shift’ (as in #138); and
- ‘Citing the IE’s experience’ is used to *present the IE’s epistemic advantage on the issue* and thereby enhancing credibility for his argument (see examples in section 4 where ‘citing experience’ is used in indirect answers and #139).

‘Insertion’ is commonly (although not exclusively) used to ‘appear to respond to the question turn’, both in indirect answers (#134 and #141) and direct response (as in #140).

Therefore, these ‘general practices’ are important rhetoric strategies in implementing a specific type or dimension of response, but not essential

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

or sufficient in determining the type of response. They also have some common functions which could exist in various types of responses when these practices are used. ‘General practices’ for ‘indirectness’ have to be further implemented by local linguistic practices, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

### 7. Summary

In this chapter, we have examined the ‘general practices’ for ‘indirect answers’, including ‘referring to history’, ‘referring to a third party’, ‘citing the IE’s experience’ and a common phenomenon of ‘insertion’ across these practices. Here is a summary of the most important points in this chapter:

- These practices in ‘indirect answers’ are used in response to hostile questions, including questions asking the IE to comment on the opponent’s policy (#126, #127, #128 and #129), question turns where the IR presents support for the IE’s opponent (#130 and #133, i.e. Type B challenging questions in Chapter 6), or question turns where the IR presents criticism of the IE (party) (#131 and #132, i.e. Type A challenging questions in Chapter 6).
- When asked to comment on the opponent’s policy, the IE may have an epistemic disadvantage in making a judgment because he or she does not have first-hand knowledge of the issue. This can be compensated by the IE ‘referring to history’ (#126 and #127), where similar issue has risen before and the IE bases his judgment upon past experience. ‘Referring to a

third party' (#128 and #129) is another way to get around this—by drawing external support for the IE's view.

- Benefits or functions of using these 'general practices of indirectness' include the following points:
  - These indirect and elaborate answers are better at handling hostile questions (see the first point in summary) than direct and simple answers;
  - These indirect answers avoid direct comment in some way. For example, by 'referring to history' the IE avoids directly commenting on the current issue; by 'referring to a third party' the IE avoids directly commenting on the IE's behalf;
  - These 'general practices' draw extra support for the IE's position—support from past experience in the case of 'referring to history', support from an external party with affiliated view in the case of 'referring to a third party', or enhancing epistemic advantage in the case of 'citing the IE's experience'; and
  - These answers are inevitably 'elaborate', which provide more explanation and persuasion than a simple or direct answer.
- More than one of these practices could co-exist within one answer turn.
- 'Insertion' is a phenomenon commonly found across these different general practices. Functions of 'insertion' may include either one or more of the following:
  - Adding a second 'general practice' to the answer turn (#135 and #136);

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- Appearing to directly respond to the question turn (#134); or
- Providing a link between history and the present, thereby facilitating the listeners to see the answer turn as ‘indirect answer’ and infer the answer accordingly (#134).
- These ‘general practices’ are important rhetoric strategies to implement a specific type of response, including any of the dimensions such as ‘indirect answer’, ‘non-committal response’, ‘agenda shift’, ‘appearing to answer’ or ‘direct answer’. However, they are neither essential nor sufficient to determine which type of response the answer turn is.
- These ‘general practices of indirectness’ as ‘strategies for indirectness’ have to be further implemented by the local ‘tactics’, i.e. ‘linguistic practices of indirectness’, which will be discussed in Chapter 8.

## **Chapter Eight**

# **THE LINGUISTIC PRACTICES FOR CONSTRUCTING DEFENSIVE ANSWERS INDIRECTLY**

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

## 1. Introduction

In response to challenging or hostile questions (see chapter 6), the IE often constructs a defense in an indirect way. Indirect defenses are constructed through some superordinate strategies and tactics—the strategies being the ‘general practices’ that we have explored in chapter 7, and the tactics being the ‘linguistic practices’ that we set out to explore in this chapter. As noted in Chapter 7, the ‘general indirect practices’ at a strategic level cannot exist alone to achieve ‘indirectness’; these superordinate strategies have to be implemented through local linguistic practices, i.e. the tactics. The next example illustrates ‘general practices of indirectness’ (the strategic level) implemented by ‘contrasts’ and ‘lexical selections’ (the tactics, which will be explored in detail later on in this chapter):

#142

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have received an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing

92                    problem. And large numbers of people in this country are  
 93                    very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
 94                    government (.) and political party should address that  
 95                    issue.

This answer turn contains all three ‘general indirect practices’ including referring to a history (‘for the last three years’), referring to a third party (‘an avalanche of complaints’), and citing the IE’s experience (‘since I had been elected in my constituency, I have received...’)—which is the main practice. The IE describes what happened in his constituency to argue against the IR’s quoted criticism—that the Conservatives have raised the issue of travellers because it is an ‘easy target’ and the ‘the deepest vein of bigotry’ in society. Citing one’s experience enhances the credibility of the IE’s position, but the argument per se is implemented linguistically by the *contrasts* built up between the IR’s presentation of the issue as an ‘easy target’ and the IE’s presentation of the issue as ‘long-lasting’, ‘serious’, ‘growing’, ‘impacting a large population’ and ‘needing a solution’. In turn, these contrasts are implemented through the IE’s *lexical selections*. It is these local linguistic practices (such as ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selection’) as ‘tactics of indirectness’ that we will be focusing on in this chapter.

Before beginning to illustrate these linguistic practices, it is worth pointing out that: Linguistic practices can be used under the umbrella of general practices, to implement these general practices, but they do not have to. Linguistic practices have the potential to be used as independent practices of ‘indirectness’. For example, a) ‘raising the question’ is a linguistic practice that uses question format to indirectly present the IE’s skepticism and thereby presenting the IE’s defense for his position—it can

be used following other general practices, or it can be used on its own in the answer turn (see section 4 for examples); b) a ‘contrast’ can be embedded in other general practices (such as citing the IE’s experience, referring to history, or referring to a third party) or stand as a strategy—which is further implemented by lexical selections—to indirectly defend against a challenge.

Also, as we can see from #142, more than one linguistic practice can exist within one answer turn (‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selection’ in #142), just as more than one general practice can exist in one answer turn (see Chapter 7).

In #142, the linguistic practices of ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selection’ are used in one answer turn:

- 01 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are fra:med, it's them  
 02 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
 03 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
 04 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
 05 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
 06 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
 07 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 08 IE: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
 09 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an  
 10 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
 11 who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
 12 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
 13 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
 14 problem. And la:rge numbers of people in this country are  
 15 very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
 16 government (.) and political parties should address that  
 17 issue.

The IE builds up a contrast against the IR's description—an ‘easy target’

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

in question turn, by portraying the problem as long-standing, serious, affecting large population, growing and needing a solution, via a number of careful ‘lexical selections’ such as ‘for the last three years, indeed for longer’, ‘avalanche of complaints’, ‘serious and growing’, ‘large numbers of people’, ‘very troubled by it’ and ‘necessary’.

Table 5 Illustration of ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selections’ in #142

Features of the problem (In <i>contrast</i> with ‘easy target’ in question turn)	<i>Lexical selections</i>
Long-standing	‘For the last three years, indeed for longer’
Affecting a big population	‘Avalanche of complaints’, ‘large numbers of people’
Serious & growing	‘Serious and growing’, ‘very troubled’
Needing solution	‘Necessary’

#143 is an example of another two linguistic practices—the ‘use of question format’ and ‘change of reference’ in one answer turn, used in combination of other general practices as discussed in chapter 7:

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#143

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h, we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =

58 IR: [.hh

59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

Skepticism, as an indirect 'no' response to the IR's question, is the main theme of the answer turn. It is articulated clearly on the IE's behalf, when the IE firstly introduces the upcoming question ('that's the question') and then uses the question format per se—'are we going to see a fundamental change'. This use of question format implicitly expresses the IE's skepticism on the issue and indicate a 'no' response to the IR's question—'do you think these words could be a sign of progress'.

Indirectness is also achieved via the IE 'changing references'. Using

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

different descriptive terms than those in the question, the IE changes ‘the republican movement’ in question turn into ‘the IRA’: ‘The republican movement’ has a positive connotation while ‘the IRA’ has a negative one. By changing the referential term, the IE emphasizes the military side of the organization and indicates little possibility of fundamental change in the possibility of their disarming. The IE also talks about ‘Mr. Bradley’ and ‘people’ while the IR had asked about the IE’s opinion (‘you’ in line 45). This can also be seen as a general practice—‘attributing to a third party’ in chapter 7.

The following sections will examine these linguistic practices of indirect defense one by one, including contrast, lexical selection, raising the question (i.e. use of a question format), and a change of reference.

## **2. Contrast: further implemented by lexical selection**

‘Building up contrast’ is sometimes embedded in some ‘general practices’ such as when the IE refers to history or cites experience. There are two types of ‘contrasts’ that the IE could construct, and each serves a distinct function:

- The IE can use words that stand in direct contrast with the words used in the question turn, so that the answer turn presents a disaffiliated stance with the question turn and thereby indirectly defending against the challenge within. This is a way of indirect defense against any of the two types of challenging question turns examined in Chapter 6.
- The IE could use contrastive words within an answer turn, with

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

negative words for the position that he is disaffiliating with and positive words for the position that he is affiliating with. In this way the IE indirectly presents his position on an issue, to deal with the Type C challenge in the question turn—those that challenge a predicament for the IE.

In both types of contrasts, the lexical selections are very important. It is through using contrastive words that the contrast is built up. This section will examine these two types of contrasts in the answer turn.

Contrastive words between the question and answer turn—indicating disaffiliation, therefore as indirect defense against challenge in the question turn

As noted above, in this practice the IE uses words that are in direct contrast with those in the question turn, so as to present a disaffiliative stance or a defense against challenges in the question turn. Below are a few examples of this:

#144

[62] Tuesday 08 March 2005: speed bumps 2-1-3

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tim Yeo, Conservative Transport spokesman

- 78 IR: [But they keep people alive. =
- 79 IE2: = Well, as far as the evidence about that is concerned, =
- 80 we are certainly prepared to examine it. = The purpose of
- 81 this amendment, which we will not press to a vote if it
- 82 gets debated, .h it is to explore the evidence. = It's
- 83 what's, .h eh called in th- in- in the jargon, a probing
- 84 amendment. .h I'm awa:re that the chairman of the
- 85 London Ambulance Service h. e:h said in- in two
- 86 thousand and three, that hundreds of deaths .h eh may be
- 87 caused by ambulances being delayed h. eh in: getting to



Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Below is another example:

#145

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

- 79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: and the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°
- 86 IE1: For the last three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have received an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people's land and can't be removed,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92 problem. And large numbers of people in this country are  
93 very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94 government (.) and political party should address that  
issue.

In this answer turn, the IE uses words that contrast with the ‘easy target’ and ‘deepest vein of bigotry’ in question turn (Type A challenge—presenting criticism of the IE party, see Chapter 6). The words that contrast with ‘easy target’ are:

- ‘For the last three years, indeed for longer’, which indicate a ‘long-lasting’ problem;
- ‘Avalanche’ and ‘large numbers of people’, which indicate the problem as ‘affecting a large population’; and
- ‘Complaints’, ‘very troubled by it’ indicating a ‘serious’ and

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘growing’ problem; and

The IE also summaries his turn with ‘it is therefore necessary ...address that issue’, which is in direct contrast with ‘the deepest vein of bigotry’ in question turn—because the IR indirectly presents the intention behind the IE party as *opportunistic* while the IE presents it as *serious attempt* to address the issue. Both contrasts present a challenge against the IR’s presentation of the issue, and therefore a defense against the presented criticism in question turn. As in previous example, these contrasts also provide evidence and support for the IE’s position. Another example is #146:

# 146

[8] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0715 Rick Scannell (03:02.0)

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Rick Scannell

- 50 IR: I see? It is true, isn't it that the government is still saying  
51 that it's thinking about how to respond to:: [e:h what the =  
52 IE: [((biting lips))  
53 IR: = House of Lords has said. >And to that extent they might s-  
54 say what you've done is a bit pre-mature.  
55 IE: Well (.) you know (.) as I've emphasized? the: right to  
56 liberty is a fundamental right. It: (.) has been (.) I think a  
57 little bit over a month now, since the:: House of Lords gave  
58 their eh landmark decision? emphasizing the (fundel)  
59 importance? (.) of (.) the right (.) to liberty. U:h i- i- i- it is in  
60 my view intolerable that the government should sit on (.) a  
61 decision (.) like this. It's very simple? Their lordships'  
62 decision's very clear. And if- the government isn't to  
63 continue to breach these people's fundamental rights, to my  
64 mind, e:h the: action that it should take (.) is very very  
65 simple. [It should =

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 66 IR: [r-  
67 IE: = release them.  
68 IE: Rick Scannell? Many thanks.

The IR presents a justification for the government that it is ‘still...thinking’ about the issue, as well as criticism of the IE’s behaviour as ‘a bit premature’. In response to these challenges (both Type A and B, see Chapter 6), the IE presents an opposite view. (The different perspectives of the same issue presented in question and answer turn are illustrations of Gestalt theory of perception.) A contrast is built between the government’s justification for their delay—‘still...thinking’, and the IE’s negative description of the delay—‘a little bit over a month now’, ‘intolerable’, ‘sit on a decision like this (which is ‘very very simple’)’. The IE has not built up direct contrast against the criticism that his behaviour is ‘a bit premature’; the argument against it is indirectly shown via criticism of the government.

*Summary*

In all these examples, one or two types of challenges are presented in the question turn. To defend against the criticism of IE party or support for an opposing party (see chapter 6 for two types of challenges in question turn), the IE uses words that are in direct contrast with those used in the question turn, so as to indirectly present a disaffiliating stance and therefore defend against the challenges. With the use of contrasts, the IE also illustrates his position in an elaborate way, serving better than a direct denial as defense against the challenges presented in question turn.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

Contrastive words within an answer turn—indirectly presenting the IE’s position, to deal with Type C challenge which triggers predicament for the IE

Other than the two types of challenging question turns examined in Chapter 6 (one is criticism of the IE party, the other is presenting support for the opposing party), there is a third type of challenge—i.e. those that represent a ‘predicament’ for the IE, if the question is answered directly. (See also Heinemann 2008) This kind of question contains more than one element, to some of which the IR agrees while to others the IR disagrees. Under these circumstances, the IE often chooses to answer indirectly and elaborately<sup>17</sup>, so as to separate these different elements and make his position on each separately. When the IE presents his position on one element, he can do so indirectly by presenting a contrast—using negative words for the side that he is disaffiliating with and positive words for the side that he is affiliating with. Here is an example of ‘contrast within an answer turn’:

#147

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

01 IR: It’s now thirteen minutes past seven. What’s going on in  
02 Nottinghamshire. = The Chief Constable says he hasn’t enough  
03 officers to cope with-, murder investigations and violent  
04 crime? .hhh Yet we know that police funding’s at record level  
05 of the- (.) coming financial year? = It’s gonna go to twelve  
06 billion .h pou:nds. .h So what’s the problem. Is it paperwork  
07 and bureaucracy↑ as it’s sometimes claimed? Is it the way  
08 forces are using the money in depl:oying their officers. .h The  
09 comments of the Chief Constable, Steven Gree↑n, have  
10 certainly irritated Graham Allen who’s Labour MP from

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
 In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 11 Nottingham North? .h who's speaking to a Home Office  
 12 minister Hazel Blears today and joins us now. .h Mr. Allen,  
 13 good morni[ng.
- 14 IE [Morning Ji[m.  
 15 IR: [.h Ehm, presumabl:: eh y- you:  
 16 believe that the Chief Constable is just telling it as he sees it.  
 17
- 18 IE Mcht well, there's a lot of people in Nottingham will fighting  
 19 back against the serious crime that undoubtedly exist in our  
 20 city but, talking down Nottingham, demoralizing your own  
 21 workforce and this constant (.) excuse finding .h really (.) has  
 22 got no place in that fight back. We need: inspirational  
 23 leadership and motivation, to actually take on these bad  
 24 guys, .h rather than this constantly running to the national  
 25 newspapers, complaining about how bad things [are. °We°] =  
 26 IR: [.hWell- ]  
 27 IE = need to get in there be positive.[.h (In a-) If Ste]ve =  
 28 IR: [It may well be that-]  
 29 IE: = Green has got some problems about .h bureaucracy or  
 30 anything else, .h he can as he know:s, .h use me↑ or anybody  
 31 e↑lse or get in front of Home Ocer- Office offici↑als, .h or  
 32 ministe↑rs, .h and we will do our level best. .h But just to- .h  
 33 see these things appea:r .h in a Sunday newspaper, .h makes it  
 34 look as though, .h eh that's where the action is rather (than) on  
 35 the grou:nd, where our communities are fighting so  
 36 ha::r[d, ] against some of the =  
 37 IR: [°e-° ]  
 38 IE = worst villains in the UK. =

In the question turn, prior to the declarative question ('presumably you believe that the Chief Constable is just telling it as he sees it'), the IR has set up the two opposing positions: one is that of Steve Green—his claim that there are not enough officers to cope with murders and violent crimes, and that despite increasing funding for police, paperwork, bureaucracy or the way force spend the money may have led to this problem; the other is that of Graham Allen, the IE—who has been irritated

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

by Steve Green's comments. This background information creates a potential predicament for the IE in future responses to questions—on one hand the IE is irritated by the Chief Constable's claims; on the other hand the fact that there is problem in policing is undeniable. The declarative question in lines 15-17 creates a predicament for the IE.

'Well' as preface in the answer turn suggests an upcoming disagreement. Following the 'well' preface, the first sentence of the answer ('there's a lot of people in Nottingham (who) are fighting back against the serious crime that undoubtedly exists in our city') as an indirect response deals with both aspects: first, the IE embeds acknowledgement of the problems in Nottingham ('the serious crime that undoubtedly exists in our city'); second, the IE acknowledges the public contribution to fighting against crime—by avoiding talking about the Chief Constable's contribution and instead praising the general public, disaffiliation with the Chief Constable thereby implying, which indeed is then elaborated and explicated in next few lines (lines 20-25).

In lines 20-25, the IE describes Steve Green's behaviour negatively, such as 'talking down', 'demoralizing', 'constant excuse finding', 'constantly running' and 'complaining'. These negative descriptions are further set against the image of an ideal leadership that the public need—'we need inspirational leadership and motivation, to actually take on these bad guys'. 'Rather than' highlights this contrast between Steve Green's implied poor leadership and the ideal leadership that people need. Through this contrast, the IE implies dissatisfaction with Steve Green, thereby indirectly presenting his disaffiliation.

Similar to the contrast between words in question and answer turns

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

examined in the previous section, using these contrastive words makes the presentation of the IE's position more elaborate and more emphatic.

Another example is #148:

#148

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

- 72 IR: [Do you  
73 think it's got to do with the election. =  
74 IE: = I think s- eh some of this- eh that's the question mark  
75 really which I'll be raising to Hazel Blears. = Is this  
76 appropriate for someone in: .h the chief constable's position  
77 h., e:h (.) possibly weeks before an election, (.) to be:  
78 featured on the f[front page of: the lea]ding =  
79 IR: [.hhh ]  
80 IE: = Conservative newspaper h., making highly political points,  
81 which he hasn't made to me. I have spoken to Steven  
82 Green, .h a dozen times in the last three or four weeks. .h  
83 He's never mentioned the problems th'(t) he now says that  
84 (are) so important that they need to go on to the front page of  
85 Sunday Telegraph. =

The question turn is an open question asking about the IE's interpretation of Steve Green's behaviour. The IE chooses to answer it indirectly, aborting the possible direct answer at the beginning of answer turn—'I think s- eh some of this- eh', and goes on to indicate his skepticism ('that's the question mark really which I'll be raising to Hazel Blears') and a possible 'yes' answer by highlighting the timing of his actions, the place of his comments, the inappropriateness to his post, and also the contrast between his not mentioning anything to the IE and going straight to newspapers—therefore the inconsistency of his behaviour.

The IE presents his view and skepticism mainly via contrasts. Two

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

contrasts are constructed in the turn: one is between Steve Green's apolitical post as Chief Constable of Nottingham and his making highly political comments just before election and in the leading Conservative newspaper (which is not the current government party). The other is between what Steve Green has done regarding going to the newspapers and what he hasn't done regarding the IE—although the IE has spoken to Steve Green 'a dozen times in the last three or four weeks', Steve Green 'hasn't made to me [the highly political points]', 'never mentioned the problems that he now says that are so important that they need to go to the front page of Sunday Telegraph'. Both of these contrasts present inconsistency within Steve Green's behaviour—one is the inconsistency between his apolitical post and his political behaviour, another is the inconsistency between his behaviours with different people. From these inconsistencies, doubt of Steve Green's intention can be easily inferred.

By indicating the IE's skepticism and implying a possible 'yes' answer to the question, the IE avoids a direct and on-record 'yes' answer.

*Summary*

In this section, we have noticed that there is a third type of challenge (Type C) other than the two types challenging question turns explored in Chapter 6, i.e. some question turns could trigger predicament for the IE if he or she answers directly to the question. These kind of question turns challenge the IE's predicament, which is similar to a 'communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict' (Bavelas 1990), and to which the IE often responds indirectly (also Heinemann 2008). We also examined the contrastive words within one answer turn, which are used to

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

present the IE's position in an indirect way, with negative words for the side that the IE disaffiliates with and positive words for the side that the IE affiliates with.

Summary of section 2: contrastive words

In section 2, we have examined 'contrast' as a way of indirectness, which is further implemented by lexical selections—i.e. contrastive words are used to indicate the IE's position. In response to the Type A and Type B challenging question turns explored in chapter 4, the IE can use words that are in direct contrast with those in a question turn, so as to imply a disaffiliating stance and indirectly defend against the challenges; in response to the Type C challenge (also see 'splits, forks and contrasts' in Clayman and Heritage 2002a: 226)—those that challenge the IE's predicament, usually around several elements within one issue—the IE also chooses to respond indirectly, and 'contrast within answer turn' (with positive words for the side that the IE affiliates with and negative words for the side that the IE disaffiliates with) is often used in these indirect presentations of the IEs' positions.

**3. Lexical selection**

Lexical selection is central to practices such as 'constructing contrasts', 'citing the IE's experience' and other general practices. No matter what the superordinate strategy of 'indirectness' is, it has to be implemented linguistically, through lexical selection. By using positive words, the IE presents an affiliating stance; and by using negative words, the IE presents a disaffiliating stance. Below are some examples of lexical

selection implementing the superordinate practices and achieving indirectness in presenting the IE's view.

#149

[47] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 "Today Program": 0852 anti-war Labour candidates (04:59.7)

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Robin Cook, the former Foreign Secretary

- 75 IR: Well, th- the problem though, is that there are a lot of  
 76 people who say that the issue of trust is central to this  
 77 election. .hh And, there a:re people who say whatever  
 78 the consequences, = they believe (.) .h that as a result of,  
 79 = >as they would see it< having been led into war on: a  
 80 false prospectus, some of them >as we know< .hh (.) a-  
 81 accuse the Prime Minister of lying to the House of  
 82 Co↑mmons which he's always (.) of course, vehemently  
 83 denied. .h Nonetheless, they feel betray:ed, and they  
 84 want to do something about it. In those circumstances  
 85 aren't they right to vote against the Prime Minister's  
 86 party.  
 87 IE: Well, first of all, Jim, I represent a: constituency  
 88 where: .hh saw for eighteen years vulnerable people  
 89 who: were damaged, and h- g- good ( ) which is a very  
 90 good severe hardship because of Conservative policies.  
 91 I've seen also the way .h in which their life's been  
 92 transfo:rmed, about the opportunity in the last eight  
 93 years. .h And I want to make sure, that the people I  
 94 represent continue to get a government [that can act in =  
 95 IR: [°.hhh°  
 96 IE: = their interest, [.h and provi:de them with the help  
 97 IR: [°ehm. °  
 98 IE: = that- that they need, .h make sure that we do have the  
 99 minimum wage, we do have to tackle the child poverty;  
 100 After all w(h)e we check a quarter of children out of  
 101 child pover↑ty, .h and we are on ta:rget to hit our  
 102 objective [of halving it. Now that's not gonna =  
 103 IR: [.h  
 104 IE: = happen if we don't get re-elected. On the question of

- 105 trust, i:- tha- that is- I think- a- a big issue, not just  
106 for- .h the government, but .hh also h. for h. the bit of us  
107 generally of thee decaying trust in our elected  
108 insti[tution].  
109 IR: [Do you think the war has made that worse. The  
110 way we went to war.

In this example, lexical selections are used to implement two contrasts—one between the question turn and answer turn, another within the answer turn—both to defend against the criticism of the Labour government presented in the question turn.

The first and higher-level contrast implemented by lexical selections is between the question turn, where the IR uses negative words to present the government's actions on the issue of war, and the answer turn, where the IE uses positive words to present the government's conduct in transforming people's lives. In the question turn, the IR uses negative words such as 'false prospectus' and 'lying', and people feel 'betrayed' by the government—to present criticism of the government on the issue of war as well as support for the public losing trust. The IE defends against this criticism by using positive words such as 'transform[ing]' people's lives, serving the public 'interest' and being of 'help'.

The second and lower-level contrast implemented by lexical selections is within the answer turn—between people's bad life under Conservative and good life under Labour: under the previous Conservative government, the public had been 'vulnerable', 'damaged' and experienced 'good severe hardship'; while under Labour, people's lives have been 'transformed', their 'interest' has been served, and the government has

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘help[ed]’. This contrast presents the Labour government in good light, which in turn implements the contrast built up against question turn and supports the IE’s defense against criticism in the question turn.

Lexical selection is an important tool in both of these two ‘contrasts’ and the IE citing his experience in his constituency. Through the use of positive words for the Labour government, in contrast with the IR’s negative words and the IE’s negative words for the Conservative, the IE sheds a positive light for Labour, presents an affiliating stance for Labour, and a defense against the question turn. Here is another example:

#150

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3) [00:03:18-00:04:08]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are framed, it’s them  
80 and us, it’s: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I’d ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°

86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have received an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people’s land↑ and can’t be removed↑,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It’s a serious and growing  
92 problem. And la:rge numbers of people in this country are  
93 very troubled by it, and it’s therefore necessary (.) that  
94 government (.) and political party should address that  
issue.

Careful lexical selections are used in this example to portray the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

problem of travellers as long-standing, serious, illegal, affecting a large population, and growing; as well as to build up a contrast with the ‘easy target’ in question turn. To illustrate all these different aspects of the problem, the IE uses words such as:

- ‘For the last three years, indeed for longer’ portrays it as long-standing;
- ‘Avalanche’ (see Pomerantz 1986 for ‘extreme case formulation’) of complaints and ‘large numbers’ of people portrays it as affecting a large population;
- ‘Invade’ other people’s land and twice use of ‘in breach’ indicate the illegality of travellers;
- ‘Very troubled’ portrays it as a ‘serious’ problem; and
- The ‘growing’ problem;

All these negative words portray the problem as severe, which is in direct contrast with the implication of opportunism implied to ‘easy target’ in the question turn. In this example, lexical selections are used to implement contrast, citing experience and referring to history.

For another example see #147 where the IE uses lexical selection to build up contrast between the bad behaviours of Steve Green and the ideal leadership the public need. See below for the excerpt:

- 12 IR: .h Ehm, presumabl:: eh y- you: believe that the Chief  
 13 Constable is just telling it as he sees it.  
 14 IE: Mcht well, there's a lot of people in Nottingham (who) are  
 15 fighting back against the serious crime that undoubtedly  
 16 exists in our city but, talking down Nottingham,  
 17 demoralizing your own workforce and this constant (.)  
 18 excuse finding .h really (.) has got no place in that fight  
 19 back. We need e:h inspirational leadership and motivation, to  
 20 actually take on these bad guys, .h rather than this constantly  
 21 running to the national newspapers, complaining about how  
 22 bad things [are. °We°] need to get in there be =

Contrast and lexical selections used after direct response

What is worth noticing is that, similar to some general practices not uniquely used in indirect answers, lexical selections and contrasts are not uniquely used in indirect answers either. They can also be used after the direct denial of the challenge in question turn, to further explain and illustrate the IE's position. Below is an example where 'contrast' and 'lexical selections' are used after direct disagreement with the presented support for an opposing party in the question turn, to further illustrate the disagreement:

#151

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen-5

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

- 86 IR: = .hh Eh- well, on the other hand, i- i- if you want attention  
 87 draw:n to this, he's gone the right way about it, because, we  
 88 are discussing it now? [Then people will discuss it quite =  
 89 IE: [No thee thee-  
 90 IR: = properly.  
 91 IE: = These things are too serious Jim. This isn't about filling  
 92 newspaper space o:r the air time on the Today Program. =  
 93 These are- things that affect my: constituents' lives every

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

94 single day of their lives. = Many live in fear], .h because of  
95 thee eh way that the drug barons are lording it in certain  
96 places of Nottingham. .hh And we are now fighting back. We  
97 have a tremendous community effort. .h And, b- above all,  
98 led by the officers on the ground, the supe:rb officers, .h in  
99 the Nottinghamshire constabulary. .h And they see the guy:,  
100 who is meant to be leading this h., eh behaving like the man  
101 on the terrace, rather than the manager of the team.

At the beginning of answer turn, the IE directly rejects ('No these things are too serious Jim') the presented support for Steve Green in question turn. This rejection is further elaborated by a 'contrast' between what this is not about and what it is about—'This isn't about filling the newspaper space or the air time...These are things that...'; and lexical selections such as 'many live in fear', 'fighting back' and 'tremendous' community effort, which all portray this issue as serious, in contrast with Steve Green's frivolous reaction. From this example, we can see that 'contrast' and 'lexical selection' can be used as rhetorical tools to illustrate or support the IE's position, no matter whether this position is indirectly (as in #144 to #150) or directly (as in #151) presented.

### Summary of section 3

This section has examined 'lexical selection' as a linguistic means for implementing other practices such as 'contrast', 'citing the IE's experience', 'referring to history' and others. As a basic linguistic means, 'lexical selection' is a necessary tactic to construct 'indirectness' through implementing the superordinate strategies. By using positive words the IE presents affiliation with a side, and by using negative words the IE presents disaffiliation with another. This enables but not necessarily leads to indirect presentation of the IE's position or defense against the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

challenges in question turn. As we noted in #151, ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selection’ can also be rhetorical tools to illustrate the IE’s position after direct rejection of the challenge in question turn. They can be used to achieve ‘indirectness’ but not exclusively so.

**4. Raising the question: constructing skepticism and thereby indirect criticism of an opponent**

By raising a question, the IE constructs skepticism about an issue, a position or a party. This indirectly constructed skepticism is often an indirect criticism of an opposing party or its policy, therefore a way of indirect defense against challenges in the question turn (see also Heinemann 2008). These questions can be used in combination with other indirect practices. The following is an example where question is used to indicate skepticism, after the two general practices of referring to a third party and referring to history.

#152

[63] Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:

- 49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
 50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two  
 51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
 52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
 53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h. we had a  
 54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
 55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
 56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
 57 [what =  
 58 IR: [.hh  
 59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

The IR asks how the IE thinks of his opposing party's promise. The IE firstly quotes a third party—'Mr. Bradley' and talks about what happened in history—the IRA made similar promises in the past but fundamental changes never took place, both of which implies a negative answer to the question—i.e. these words are *not* a sign of progress. Following these two practices, the IE more explicitly raises the question—'that's the question, are we going to see a fundamental change'. From the reference to history, inferences have to be made to compare the history with the present, and to infer what would happen this time based on what happened in the past. However, when the IE explicitly raises the question 'are we going to see a fundamental change', the skepticism is more plainly articulated. Raising the question is an indirect way of saying 'I doubt that there will be a fundamental change'. On one hand, the history reference has prepared for an 'indirect skepticism' to be expressed in the later question; on the other hand, the 'question' further articulate the IE's skepticism and a negative response to the IR's question. All three practices (referring to a third party, referring to history, and raising the question) work collaboratively to express the IE's skepticism about an opposing

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

party.

Similar to #152, the question turn in #153 also asks the IE how he thinks about a third party—in this case, a person with whose behaviour the IE has disaffiliated. Through raising questions about this person's intention or the appropriateness of his behaviour, the IE indirectly expresses skepticism and disaffiliative stance towards Steve Green, and implies a possible positive response to the question turn.

#153

[60] Monday 14 Mar 2005-Graham Allen

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: Graham Allen, Labour MP in Nottinghamshire

- 72 IR: [Do you  
73 think it's got to do with the election. =  
74 IE: = I think s- eh some of this- eh that's the question mark  
75 really which I'll be raising to Hazel Blears. = Is this  
76 appropriate for someone in: .h the chief constable's position  
77 h., e:h (.) possibly weeks before an election, (.) to be:  
78 featured on the f[ront page of: the lea]ding =  
79 IR: [.hhh ]  
80 IE: = Conservative newspaper h., making highly political points,  
81 which he hasn't made to me. I have spoken to Steven  
82 Green, .h a dozen times in the last three or four w↑eeks. .h  
83 He's never mentioned the problems th'(t) he now says that  
84 (are) so important that they need to go on to the front page of  
85 Sunday Telegraph. =

The question turn initiates doubt about the intention behind Steve Green's behaviour—his complaining to newspapers might have something to do with the election, and through the 'do you...' question format, asks the IE to either confirm or disconfirm. The IE's direct response at the beginning of turn ('I think s- eh some of this- eh') is aborted, and re-directed into becoming an indirect response—'that's the question mark

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

really...’ By confirming ‘the question mark’, the IE confirms the doubt about Steve Green’s intention, (even though it slips into evasion when he says ‘which I’ll be raising to Hazel Blears’ rather than talking directly about his own view). The IE further elaborates ‘the question mark’—‘is it appropriate for someone...to be...’. As analyzed in previous sections on ‘contrast’ and ‘lexical selection’, within this elaborated clause, we see the construction of an inconsistency between Steve Green’s behaviours, which supports skepticism about his evil or untoward intention, and therefore supports the doubt indicated in the IR’s question turn and the confirmation the IE has provided to the doubt (‘that’s the question mark really’). In this example, confirming the doubt of intention of Steve Green—again indirectly presents the IE’s criticism of an opposing party.

Unlike #152 and #153, the question turn in #154 does not simply ask the IE’s opinion on an issue, but presents support for an opposing position on the part of the IE. In his answer turn, the IE indirectly defends against this Type B challenge.

#154

[49] Tuesday 5 April 2005: Michael Meadowcroft-3

IR: Sarah Montague

IE: Michael Meadowcroft, who advises countries on how to run elections

41 IR: But of course this is ehm one of the reasons m- m- postal  
42 voting has been introduced, is to try to get the turn-out hi-  
43 higher. And it has been show:n that it do:es increase  
44 turn-out.

45 (0.3)

46 IE: But if it increase(d) turn-out of legitimate votes, or the fake  
47 votes, I don’t know↑, I can’t tell, nobody can tell. And  
48 what is more: to say that you can .h deal with th- the  
49 malaise which is affecting politics in Britain elsewhere, .h  
50 by tinkering with the system rather than tackling the

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

51           disease itself, .h seems to me to be remarkable.  
52           [(.) And ( )-

IE's position opposed to postal voting, while in the question turn the IR presents evidence supporting postal voting—that 'it does increase turn-out'. This is a Type B challenge (see chapter 6), supporting a position opposing that of the IE. In response to this challenge, the IE indirectly rejects it by raising the question 'has it increased turn-out of legitimate votes or the fake votes', pointing out the doubt about quality or validity of votes, therefore doubt about the evidence that has been presented for support of postal voting in question turn. In fact, the IE has not only raised the question (lines 46-47), but has also made it explicit that 'nobody can tell' (line 47) the quality of votes, which further expresses or constructs a lack of credibility of the support (i.e. the increase of turn-out) for postal votes provided in question turn. Raising questions about the quality or validity of the increased votes and pointing out that nobody can tell the quality counters the evidence provided for postal votes—which the IE disaffiliates with—in the question turn, therefore counters the Type B challenge and defends the IE's position on this issue.

Summary of section 4

From all these examples, we can see that 'raising the question' about an issue can be an indirect way of expressing skepticism, used to indirectly criticize an opponent or its position. When responding to question turns that ask for the IE's opinion on an issue concerning an opponent (#152 and #153), 'raising the question' indirectly expresses the IE's disaffiliated stance; when responding to challenges in question turn (e.g. Type B challenge—support for an opposing position in #154) 'raising

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

the question’ can counter the evidence for support and thereby defending the IE’s position.

### 5. Change of reference: constructing resistance

We have seen that there are broadly three types or strategies of IR challenges in their questions (i.e. Type A—criticism of the IE party; Type B—presented support for an opponent; and Type C—challenging predicament of the IE) (see Chapter 6 for Type A and B challenges and Chapter 8: section 2 for Type C). In response to these challenges and ‘traps’ set in a question turn, IEs can construct changes of reference can be used to covertly change agenda, to indirectly present disaffiliation with the presented position in question turn, or to avoid the trap. Whatever the function is, changes of reference always indicates certain degree of resistance against what has been presented in the question turn. Below is an example where the IE avoids reference to ‘the Prime Minister’ made in the prior question turn.

#155

[47] Thursday 7 April 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0852 anti-war Labour candidates (04:59.7)

IR: Jim Naughty

IE: Robin Cook, the former Foreign Secretary

75 IR: Well, th- the problem though, is that there are a lot of  
76 people who say that the issue of trust is central to this  
77 election. .hh And, there a:re people who say whatever  
78 the consequences, = they believe (.) .h that as a result of,  
79 = >as they would see it< having been led into war on: a  
80 false prospectus, some of them >as we know< .hh (.) a-  
81 accuse the Prime Minister of lying to the House of  
82 Co↑mmons which he’s always (.) of course, vehemently  
83 denied. .h Nonetheless, they feel betray:ed, and they

- 84 want to do something about it. In those circumstances  
 85 aren't they right to vote against the Prime Minister's  
 86 party.
- 87 IE: Well, first of all, Jim, I represent a constituency  
 88 where: .hh saw for eighteen years vulnerable people  
 89 who: were damaged, and h- g- good ( ) which is a very  
 90 good severe hardship because of Conservative policies.  
 91 I've seen also the way .h in which their life's been  
 92 transfo:rmed, about the opportunity in the last eight  
 93 years. .h And I want to make sure, that the people I  
 94 represent continue to get a government [that can act in =  
 95 IR: [°.hhh°  
 96 IE: = their interest, [.h and provi:de them with the help  
 97 IR: [°ehm. °  
 98 IE: = that- that they need, .h make sure that we do have the  
 99 minimum wage, we do have to tackle the child poverty;  
 100 After all w(h)e we check a quarter of children out of  
 101 child pover↑ty, .h and we are on ta:rget to hit our  
 102 objective [of halving it. Now that's not gonna =  
 103 IR: [.h  
 104 IE: = happen if we don't get re-elected. On the question of  
 105 trust, i:- tha- that is- I think- a- a big issue, not just  
 106 for- .h the government, but .hh also h. for h. the bit of us  
 107 generally of thee decaying trust in our elected  
 108 insti[tution].  
 109 IR: [Do you think the war has made that worse. The  
 110 way we went to war.

In the question turn, the IR repeatedly refers to 'the Prime Minister'—when talking about the Iraqi war, the IR names 'the Prime Minister' as lying to the House of Commons; when talking about people voting against the government, the IR uses 'the Prime Minister's Party' as referring to the current government. By focusing references on the Prime Minister, the IR constructs a link between the Prime Minister lying on the issue of Iraqi war and people's voting against the government—because it

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

is ‘the Prime Minister’s party’. In contrast, the IE never mentions ‘the Prime Minister’; instead he refers to ‘the government’ or ‘our elected institution’. By using such general references and categorizing in strictly political terms, the IE avoids personalizing the issue. This attributes responsibility for all issues to ‘the government’ as a political institution, rather than to the individual person ‘the Prime Minister’. When the reference to ‘our elected institution’ is used, the responsibility of the public is also drawn out—because the public has ‘elected’ the institution or government. These changes of reference take responsibility away from the individual Prime Minister and instead generalizes it to the government as a political institution and the public as the one who elects the government. They construct resistance against the indirect blame of the Prime Minister and therefore indirectly counter the challenge in question turn—Type A challenge: (indirect) criticism of the Prime Minister and his party, with whom the IE is affiliated.

#156 is an example where the predicament of the IE is challenged in the question turn. On one hand, the IE has disaffiliated with Canon Gill’s comments about voluntary euthanasia (the ‘Church’s position’, lines 1-2, being contrary); on the other hand, Canon Gill is the IE’s colleague and the IE is affiliated with him in serving the Church. When challenged, the IE alters the way in which he refers to the issue at hand, in comparison with the question, thereby avoiding addressing the specific issue.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

#156

[9] Monday 17 Jan. 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0733 Voluntary euthanasia (05:08.0) [02:46-03:23]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Tom Butler, the Bishop of Southwark

- 54 IR But- if (.) the Church’s position (.) hasn’t changed? and it  
55 is as you have just spelled it out, is it legitimate .hh for  
56 individual priest to say the ki:nd of thi:ng? that Canon Gill  
57 (.) said.  
58 IE: Well of course it’s always legitimate for priests and and  
59 and e:h indeed lay people eh to discuss ethical issues.  
60 And and as he’s said e:h this is a very difficult area and a  
61 very painful area. And a strong case can be made out. E:h  
62 e:h to- fo:r eh assisted euthanasia. But a much stronger  
63 case eh can be made out, for keeping the present eh legal  
64 and moral position intact.

The beginning of his answer turn (‘of course it’s always legitimate for priests and and indeed lay people to ...’) appears to be an upgraded ‘yes’. The upgraded confirming is communicated via phrases such as ‘of course’, ‘always’, and ‘priests and indeed lay people’ which add to the initial reference of ‘individual priests’ in answer turn. However, resistance or disaffiliation is communicated subsequently through his change of reference—‘to discuss ethical issues’ in place of ‘to say the kind of thing that Canon Gill said’. This change of reference covertly changes the topic—it is not the specific comments that Canon Gill made that the IE agrees with, but the ‘general discussion of ethical issues’. By avoiding talking about the specific issue at hand, the IE indirectly communicates disaffiliation; and at the same time by confirming ‘priests’ ‘to discuss ethical issues’, the IE preserves general affiliation with his colleague Canon Gill. Change of reference in this example enables the IE to avoid

the predicament he is in (therefore the Type C challenge, see section 2 for more details)—disaffiliation on the specific issue but general affiliation with Canon Gill as colleagues.

In #157, the IR describes in negative term the conduct of the leader of the party to which the IE belongs. In response, the IE avoids the negative reference and replaces it with a neutral one, displaying a more dispassionate view on these people.

#157

[24] Monday 21 March 2005: BBC radio 4 “Today Program”: 0730 rights of travellers (08:22.3) [00:03:18-00:04:08] [lines adapted]

IR: John Humphrys

IE: Dominic Grieve, the Shadow Attorney General

79 IR: E:hm: m- m-, but the way the Acts are fra:med, it's them  
80 and us, it's: you: a:nd the:m. Eh- eh- just let me put a- a  
81 quote from one of your Labour critics >I'd ask you to  
82 respond to it. Keith Hill < hhh. said: this is Michael  
83 Howard tapping into what is probably the deepest vein of  
84 bigotry in our society. In other words, easy target, go for  
85 the gypsy. °Look.°

86 IE1: For the la:st three years, indeed for longer since I had been  
87 elected in my constituency, .h I have recei:ved an  
88 avalanche of complaints about the activities of travellers.  
89 who: invade other people's land↑ and can't be removed↑,  
90 who buy land in breach and then start to develop it in  
91 breach of planning control. It's a serious and growing  
92 problem. And la:rge numbers of people in this country are  
93 very troubled by it, and it's therefore necessary (.) that  
94 government (.) and political party should address that  
95 issue.

The IR's reference to 'the gypsy', which potentially has negative connotation of the problems they create—as portrayed in the answer turn as the IE's constituents' experience (they 'invade other people's land', they

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

‘buy land in breach’ and then ‘start to develop it in breach of planning control’) can easily set a trap for the IE if he repeats this reference. The IE cleverly avoids the trap and uses a neutral term ‘travellers’ instead, avoiding the potentially negative reference of ‘gypsy’ and displaying a politically correct and dispassionate stance. As well as displaying a more dispassionate position when he presents his constituents’ complaints and problems caused by these people, this change of reference also shows the IE’s resistance against the question turn—more specifically, against the potential trap in the negative reference in question turn.

In #158, in the question turn a positive reference is used for the opponent of the IE; and the IE changes it into a negative reference in the answer turn, implying disaffiliation and countering the challenge (Type B—presenting support for an opponent) in question turn.

#158

Thursday 7 April 2005: IRA-2 David Trimble

IR: Jim Naughtie

IE: David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists

37 IR: .h uhm Dominic Bradley of the Nationalist SDLP. We are  
38 joined by David Trimble, leader of the Ulster Unionists. Yes  
39 Mr. Trimble, good morning. .h[h

40 IE: [Good morning. =

41 IR: = Ehm i- obviously, there is an election: o:n? Equally  
42 obviously the republica:n (.) movement in Northern Ireland  
43 is- being under hu:ge pressure in recent months because of  
44 thee .h bank robbery and the McCartney murder h.. E::hm (.)  
45 but do you think that, these words (.) could (.) be a sign of (.)  
46 progress?

47 (.)

48 IE: .hh Well I think (.) eh Mr. Bradley is quite right to: be:  
49 skeptical eh eh being if- rather cynical about the timing of it?  
50 (.) E::h for our part, we remember, that ba:ck in May of two

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

- 51 thousand, the IRA made a promise to us, .h that they get rid  
52 of their weapons completely in a ma(tt)er, .h they said that  
53 would maximize public confidence? .hhh And h we had a  
54 few gestures, but ah no fundamental change. And that's the  
55 question, are we going to see a fundamental change. .h And I  
56 think people quite rightly are going to say, .h well let us see  
57 [what =  
58 IR: [.hh  
59 IE: = actually happens. .hhh ...

In the question turn, the IR uses a positive reference 'the republican movement' which presents a political organization with political goals and can be potentially constructive. In the answer turn, the IE changes the reference to the same organization into 'the IRA', which indicates the potentially violent and destructive nature of the organization. By changing the reference, the IE shifts the attention from the constructive (or positive) side into the destructive (or negative) side of the same organization. The IR's reference presents a supportive stance towards 'the republican movement', which the IE disaffiliates with, therefore presents challenge for the IE (Type B challenge). By changing the reference into 'the IRA', the IE counters the support and defends his own disaffiliating stance.

Summary of section 5

In political news interviews, reference is an important way of displaying the speaker's stance, because a negative reference presents a negative stance towards the mentioned party and a positive reference presents a positive stance. Therefore, changing a reference inevitably indicates the IE's resistance, which can be countering Type A

challenge—negative reference and thereby criticism of the IE party (as in #155), countering Type B challenge—positive reference and thereby support for the opponent (as in #158), countering Type C challenge—naming a specific issue which sets the IE in predicament (as in #156), or countering potential trap—the IR using a negative reference, which if repeated by the IE can create a negative image for the IE (as in #157).

## 6. Summary

In this chapter, we have noted a third type of challenge (see Chapter 6 for Type A and Type B challenges)—the Type C challenge in question turn—those that contain a predicament for the IE if the IE answers directly to the question (Type C challenge is similar to the ‘splits, forks and contrasts’ in Clayman and Heritage 2002a: pp226). Usually there is more than one dimension to the question, to some of which the IE affiliates with and to others the IE disaffiliates with. To avoid falling into the trap caused by the predicament, the IE usually chooses to respond indirectly (similar to responses to ‘communicative avoidance-avoidance conflict’ in Equivocation Theory (Bavelas 1990)).

In response to the three types of challenge and other potential traps (for example, the negative reference in question turn that can potentially create bad image for the IE if he repeats the same reference in answer turn, see section 5 on ‘change of reference’) in question turn, the IE usually responds indirectly, using general practices (Chapter 7) or linguistic practices (Chapter 8). General practices as ‘strategies of indirectness’ have to be further implemented by more granular linguistic practices. In most

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

cases, linguistic practices are used under the umbrella of general practices, as implementing tools. For example, words being the basic units of talk, ‘lexical selections’ are often fundamental implementing tools for other practices. However, some linguistic practices can be used as independent practice to construct ‘indirect response’. For example, ‘raising the question’ can be an independent linguistic practice to achieve ‘indirect answer’ (#154) or to follow other general practices (#152 and #153).

Below is a summary of the four linguistic practices examined in this chapter:

- ‘Contrast’ is often further implemented by lexical selections—it is constructed through contrastive words. In defense against the Type A or Type B challenge in question turn, the IE uses words that are in direct contrast with the words in the question turn, to imply a disaffiliating stance. In response to the Type C challenge or to a question asking the IE’s view on an issue, the IE can build up a ‘contrast within answer turn’, using positive words for the side that he affiliates with and negative words for the side he disaffiliates with, thereby indirectly presenting his position.
- ‘Lexical selection’, as basic linguistic means, is a necessary tactic to achieve ‘indirectness’ or to implement other higher-order practices such as ‘contrast’, ‘citing the IE’s experience’, ‘referring to history’ or ‘referring to a third party’. By using positive words the IE presents affiliation with a side, and by using negative words the IE presents disaffiliation with another.
- ‘Raising the question’ is an indirect way of expressing skepticism

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

on an issue (usually concerning the IE's opponent), thereby indirectly criticizing the opponent (#152 and #153) or countering supportive evidence for the opponents (#154).

- 'Change of reference' indicates the IE's resistance or disaffiliation: as different references have different connotations—a negative reference presents a negative stance towards the mentioned party and a positive reference presents a positive stance, when the IE changes the reference used in the question turn, he or she indirectly shows disaffiliation—if countering the challenges, as countering Type A challenge in #155, Type C challenge in #156 and Type B challenge in #158), or resistance—if countering a potential trap of repeating the negative reference in question turn (as in #157).

An extra note about 'contrast' and 'lexical selection' is that they can be used to implement 'indirect answer' but not exclusively so. They can also serve as rhetorical tools to further illustrate the IE's position after a direct rejection of the challenge in question turn. Other than constructing 'indirect response', 'contrast' and 'lexical selection' can also provide more elaborate explanation, evidence or illustration for the IE's position than a direct rejection of challenge.

## **Chapter Nine**

# **CONCLUSION**

### 1. Definition of an ‘Indirect Answer’ in This Thesis

The principal aim of my research has been: to explore how British politicians provide indirect defense against challenges in the IR question, in broadcast news interviews. In this thesis, an ‘indirect answer’ is spotted when the IE: a) has not provided a straightforward ‘yes/no’ answer to a ‘yes/no’ question; or b) has not provided a straightforward answer to a ‘wh’ question; *at the beginning* of the answer turn. The position of this lack of direct answer—i.e. lack of a direct response, *especially at the beginning of turn*, is important because: some of the indirect answers actually move into ‘directness’ when the IE starts to summarize the whole answer turn near to the end of turn. When this move from ‘indirect answer’ to ‘direct answer’ happens, a “trajectory line or route” is taken during the IE’s response, and thereby a ‘roundabout answer’ is provided. There is close connection between an ‘indirect answer’ and a ‘roundabout answer’ in some cases in my data.

To summarize the definition for ‘indirect answer’ in my thesis:

a) There has to be a lack of a *sincere* ‘yes/no’ response to a ‘yes/no’ or ‘wh’ question, or a direct answer to a ‘wh’ question, at the beginning of answer turn;

b) Sometimes there seems to be a ‘yes/no’ response to show agreement with some part of question turn, but they are not sincere. This is a format of ‘roundabout answer’, with appearing to acknowledge part of the question turn first, and plus actual disagreement to other parts later. The ‘roundabout-ness’ in these answer turns contributes to the ‘indirectness’;

c) Another format of ‘roundabout answer’ (which contributes to the

‘indirectness’) has ‘indirect answer’ to the question in the first part of answer turn and a ‘direct’ answer in the summary near to the end of answer turn;

d) The difference between an ‘indirect answer’ and a ‘direct answer’ can be illustrated by and compared to the difference between a ‘trajectory line’ and a ‘straight line’ in physics terms.

## **2. Need for Inference: The Essence of Indirectness**

Although the main target and contribution of this research is to find out the different *practices* of indirect IE responses, it is not these practices but the *need for inference* that makes some responses ‘indirect’. In other words, the need for inference is the basis on which we can distinguish whether a response is indirect or direct. Direct answers have no need for inference—what is said literally is what is meant; whilst to understand an ‘indirect response’, the listeners have to draw inferences from what is said, so as to understand what is meant or implied (also see Section 6 of Chapter 7).

## **3. Functions of Different ‘Indirect Practices’**

The different indirect ‘practices’ are the main findings of this research, and have been explored in Chapter 7 and 8. A *common function* of these ‘indirect practices’, including general practices and local linguistic practices, is to present defense against the challenge in question turns. Other than this common function, these ‘indirect practices’ also have other functions. For example, the ‘general practices’ examined in Chapter 7 can: A) Provide external support for the IE’s position: as in the

practice of ‘referring to history’, the IE draws support from historical events; in the practice of ‘quoting a third party’, the IE draws affiliation from a third party; and in the practice of ‘describing the IE’s experience’, he/she adds epistemic advantage and enhance credibility to the IE’s position; B) In response to hostile or challenging questions, these ‘indirect general practices’ avoid directly confronting the challenge in question turns, and provide a subtle kind of disaffiliation instead; and C) While using these ‘indirect general practices’, the IE also simultaneously provides a more elaborate response, which in turn provides more persuasion or explanation for taking his/her stance and confronting the challenge in question turn. The ‘local linguistic practices’ examined in Chapter 8 can: A) Implement the general practices; and B) Provide more elaborate explanation, evidence or illustration for the IE’s position than a direct rejection of challenge; as in the practice of ‘building up contrast’, the IE often uses a lot of descriptive words for the two contrastive sides.

#### **4. The Two Levels of ‘Indirect Practices’: Strategies and Tactics**

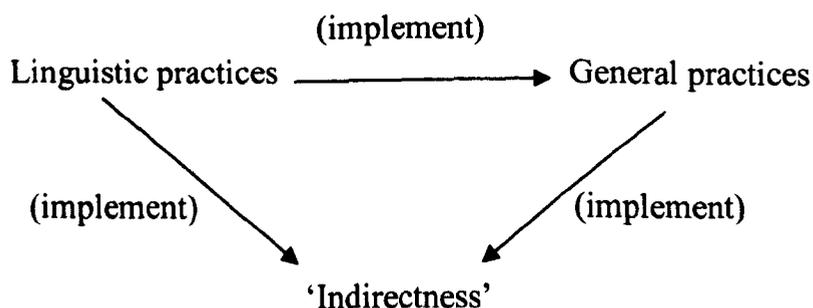
As shown earlier in Chapter 7 and 8, the general practices function at a super-ordinate strategic level to achieve an indirect response whilst the local linguistic practices function at a tactic or implementing level. What is worth noticing is that these general practices are not unique to ‘indirect responses’. They can serve as general rhetorical strategies in any other kind of response or situation, such as in ‘non-committal responses’, ‘agenda shift’, ‘appearing to answer’, etc. Their existence does not decide the dimension of the response; and the other side of coin is that their format can be changed so as to suit the specific type of response that they

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

are serving.

As ‘strategies’ of indirectness, these general practices need to be implemented and fulfilled by the local ‘tactics’, i.e. the linguistic practices of indirectness. Without the tactics as supportive structures, these strategies are like empty building outlines that cannot stand. In contrast, some linguistic practices such as ‘raising a question’ can either stand on its own to make up an indirect response, or serve as a tactic to implement a general practice.

Diagram 3: Relationship between linguistic practices, general practices and ‘indirectness’



There can be more than one general practices, i.e. more than one strategies, employed in one ‘indirect response’ turn; similarly, more than one linguistic practices can be used to implement a general practice.

## 5. Contributions of the Thesis

I would like to identify three areas in which I think my research has particularly contributed significantly:

First, the *technical constructions of ‘indirectness’*. The past literature has covered topics such as: a) the ‘*existence*’ of indirectness—i.e. the theory of ‘conversational implicature’ points out that there is discrepancy

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

between ‘what is said’ and ‘what is meant’; b) the ‘*practice*’ of indirectness in some interactions, as in those Indirect Speech Acts such as indirect requests or commands; c) the rational (i.e. explaining ‘*why*’) behind the indirect speech acts, using Politeness theories; d) theories that explain *what makes indirect communication possible*, i.e. the inference theory, the existence of conversational rules such as ‘the Cooperative Principle’ and ‘the Four Maxims’; and e) a rich area for the use of indirectness—the figurative speech. However, the ‘constructions’ of indirect communication has never drawn full attention from scholars, other than some practices in the indirect speech acts (such as requests or commands). This thesis has, I hope, served to fill a gap in terms of how indirectness is constructed, i.e. the technical linguistic side of ‘indirectness’.

Second, contributions to the *understanding of indirectness in the Second Pair Part of conversation*. Past research explaining ‘why’ (i.e. the Politeness theories) or ‘how’ (e.g. the Indirect Speech Acts theory) in indirect communication has often focused on the First Pair Part of conversation, such as the requests or commands. This thesis focused on the Second Pair Part—the answer to question in the question-answer adjacency pair.

Third, there has been little sustained focus on ‘*indirectness*’ in *broadcast news interview*. Past CA research on answer turns in British or American broadcast news interview has investigated the more ‘evasive’ types of responses, such as the practice of ‘evasion’ and ‘equivocation’, while setting aside matters of indirectness. My research has focused on ‘indirectness’ and examined in detail the different practices or

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

constructions of ‘indirect answers’ (particularly Chapter 7 and 8).

In addition to these three main contributions, this thesis has also made contributions to different aspects of research on news interview and indirectness. Below is a summary of these contributions:

Contributions to literature on news interview

Contributions to literature on news interview include: a) those regarding IE responses, and b) those regarding IR questions.

a) Contributions to the literature on IE responses include:

- Some practices or constructions of ‘evasion’ (Chapter 5);
- Some practices or constructions of ‘non-committal responses’ (Chapter 5);
- The two types of defensive responses—i.e. direct and indirect—to the two types of challenging questions (Chapter 6);
- Constructions or different practices of ‘indirectness’, including the ‘general practices’ in Chapter 7 and the ‘local linguistic practices’ in Chapter 8; as well as distinguishing the strategic level of ‘indirectness’ (Chapter 7) and the tactic or implementing level (Chapter 8).

b) Contributions to the literature on IR questions include:

- The two types of challenging questions (Chapter 6), one is where the IR presents criticism of the IE party and the other is where the IR presents support for the IE party’s opponent;
- A third type of challenge in question turn (Chapter 8), which is when the IR challenges the predicament of the IE and makes it

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

difficult for the IE to give a simple and straightforward answer, especially when a polar question has been asked.

Contributions to literature related to ‘indirectness’

Contributions to literature related to ‘indirectness’ in the linguistic field include:

- As outlined in the account of the principal contributions, the findings on the Second Pair Part of conversation (more specifically, in this thesis, the IE answers or responses being the Second Pair Parts to the IR questions which are the First Pair Parts in the question-answer adjacency pairs or sequences);
- The technical side of ‘indirectness’, i.e. how ‘indirectness’ is constructed, including ‘general practices’ (Chapter 7) and ‘local linguistic practices’ (Chapter 8);
- Past research has studied ‘indirectness’ phenomenon in ordinary conversation, while this research has explored the phenomenon of ‘*indirectness*’ in a special type of institutional talk—the political news interview;
- Furthermore, the ‘indirectness’ that this thesis has examined in political news interview is *a way of defense against hostile initial actions* in communication, rather than general ‘indirectness’ in ordinary communication;
- Different practices of ‘indirect defensive responses’ have been found, including ‘general practices’ such as referring to history, quoting a third party, citing the IE’s experience; and linguistic practices such as contrast, lexical selection, raising question and

change of reference, etc.

## **6. Potential drawbacks of The Data Set**

The main data set that I have used for analysis in this research comes from ‘Today Program’ during the period of January-May 2005. There might be doubts regarding whether these analyses could be generalized or further applied to IR-IE interactions in other periods of ‘Today Program’ or in other news interview programs. My response to these arguments would be that these *technical practices* found out in this research—the practices of ‘evasion’ (especially ‘agenda shift’, Chapter 5), ‘being non-committal’ (Chapter 5), ‘two types of challenging questions’ (Chapter 6), the ‘defensive responses to these two types of challenges’ (Chapter 6), ‘the general practices (i.e. strategies) of indirectness’ (Chapter 7) and ‘the linguistic practices (i.e. tactics) of indirectness’ (Chapter 8)—are all basic practices for the individual categories and can be generalized in other periods of ‘Today Program’ or other news interview interactions. Similarly, the ‘need of inference’ is true to any indirect interactions in news interview settings or other types of interactions. It has not been possible to prove this in this research; however, thanks to the public internet access to other periods of ‘Today Program’ (including those in the past) and many other British broadcast news interviews, it is easy for readers who are interested in testing out these findings in other news interviews to do so.

## 7. Practical Applications of This Research

This research can be useful for both news interviewers and politicians, as well as interactants in other settings in a few ways:

- a) Because of the accessibility of these technical practices (of ‘evasion’, ‘being non-committal’ and ‘indirectness’), news interviewers can easily use knowledge of these practices to spot different dimensions of responses in the politicians’ answer turn.
- b) Because these practices have the potential to be applied in other types of interactions (such as ordinary conversation, courtroom interaction, police-suspect interaction, etc.) wherever ‘evasion’, ‘being non-committal’ and ‘indirectness’ might be involved, they are helpful for the listener in ordinary conversation, for the lawyer or judge in courtroom, for police in police interrogation to spot these different dimensions of responses, and to decide whether the speaker’s response is evasive, equivocal or indirect.
- c) On the other hand, politicians; the speaker in ordinary conversation; the witness, defendant or plaintiff in courtroom examination; or the suspect in police interrogation can use these practices to construct an ‘evasive’, ‘non-committal’ (and therefore ‘equivocal’) or ‘indirect’ answer as they wish.

All in all, these findings will help the two participants in interaction in different settings to spot different dimensions of the opponent’s talk, as well as facilitate their own by giving them choices from all these practices.

## **8. Implications for Research in Other Fields**

‘Evasion’, ‘being non-committal’, ‘indirectness’ in responses; the two types of challenges; the defensive responses to the challenges can be found in other types of interactions including ordinary conversation, courtroom interaction, police-suspect interaction and so on. Therefore, my PhD findings on technical practices of these different dimensions of responses or challenges may be of interest to researchers who wish to explore these dimensions further in other types of interactions.

## **9. Future Research in News Interview Interactions**

Following this PhD research, a few directions could be taken to further develop research in the area of news interview interactions:

- a) To conduct a thorough research on ‘evasion’ and further explore other practices of ‘evasion’;
- b) To conduct a thorough research on ‘being non-committal’ and further explore other practices of ‘non-committal responses’;
- c) To establish the relationship between ‘non-committal responses’ and ‘equivocation’;
- d) To establish the definition of ‘indirectness’, ‘non-committal responses’, ‘equivocation’ and ‘evasion’ clearly and separately;
- e) To further explore the third type of challenge (as briefly mentioned in Chapter 8 of this thesis), and other phenomena in question turns;
- f) To explore the ‘indirectness in question turns’, and the interplay between indirect questions and indirect responses.

Dangjie Ji—Indirect Defensive Responses to Hostile Questions  
In British Broadcast News Interviews

The interplay between indirect questions and indirect responses  
promises to be an interesting topic for future research.