A CONVERSATION ANALYTIC EXAMINATION OF ALIGNMENT AND DISALIGNMENT IN BROADCAST POLITICAL NEWS INTERVIEWS

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The present study uses a Conversation Analytic (CA) framework to investigate how interviewers and interviewees display political alignment or disalignment with each other in news interviews. It looks at interviewers’ use and design of questions: negated questions; prefaced questions; disjunctive and prefaced questions. It, then, examines both interviewers’ and interviewees’ use of membership categorization devices as a means of displaying even stronger alignment and disalignment. Use of ethnic and religious categories such as ‘brother’ and ‘friend’ are examined as well as the use of attributes such as ‘terrorist.’ The final section of this thesis examines instances of code-switching to display alignment. Data used in this thesis are taken from video-taped interviews with ambassadors concerned with the ‘Question of Palestine’ and were collected from the United Nations web archive. Taken as a whole, this thesis could be used to compare political discourse in one culture/language with the discourses of other cultures. This type of comparison is needed for better cross cultural media relations and diplomatic negotiations, especially at international institutions such as the United Nations.
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The United Nations’ Media Stakeout
UNHQ before the Security Council
To my Mother
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This thesis examines instances where interviewers and interviewees display political alignment and/or disalignment with one another in broadcast news interviews. I will examine the discursive strategies employed by both the interviewees and interviewers in this institutional setting to display stance, e.g., to challenge, display adversarialness, or support through question/answer designs (Chapter 2); membership categories; and code-mixing (Chapter 3).

Data

In this thesis, my data come from video recordings of naturally occurring interactions, broadcast political news interviews at the United Nations Stakeout with Ambassadors concerned with the “Question of Palestine” at the Security Council (SC). Interviews are held after the Security Council meetings are over. They begin with the ambassador briefing the audience (a group of journalists) with what happened during the SC session in terms of statements or resolutions. After the ambassadors’ briefs, the journalists ask questions about those statements. All journalists will already be positioned before the media stakeout, and all strive to take advantage of these opportunities and ask ambassadors and politicians direct or indirect questions, confirmations, denials or agreements—all in the form of question-answer—about issues being discussed at the SC. The interviews1 are recorded and archived regularly after the Security Council meetings are held. While the interviewees are visible, the interviewers are not; only their questions are heard. For this thesis, I will examine some interviews discussing the ‘Question of

1 These interviews can be accessed at the main UN webpage [www.un.org/webcast](http://www.un.org/webcast). Interviews are sorted by date.
Palestine, as labeled by the United Nations organs. These interviews normally target the ambassadors who are directly involved in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Interviewees can be Palestinian, Israeli, American and other Arab ambassadors in addition to any representative from the fifteen Security Council members. IRs, too, come from different cultural, political and linguistic backgrounds as is the case with all the UN staff and employees. English, however, is the main medium of communication in most of the Stakeout interviews chosen for this chapter, although both IRs and IEs do sometimes switch to Arabic. Snippets of all these archived interviews could be later used and broadcasted by various news agencies, which means that there is an anonymous audience. Excerpts are taken from broadcast news interviews at the United Nations Headquarters between journalists from different backgrounds and Ambassadors of various states involved with the question of Palestine. I collected these interviews from the United Nations’ website where all interviews are recorded and archived (and are made available to the public). These interviews might be broadcasted by various international news agencies. For this thesis, excerpts from the interviews were selected and transcribed in detail using the CA transcription symbols that attempt to make what was said and how it was said available for analytic reference.

**Methodology**

The Methodology used in this thesis is Conversation Analysis (CA). CA was first

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2 The Question of Palestine is one of the issues that the Security Council has been dealing with since 1948. It mainly refers to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict since 1948 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Jerusalem in 1967. More information can be found at [http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/](http://www.un.org/depts/dpa/qpal/).

3 The UN Security Council is composed of five permanent members (with Veto power) — China, France, Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United States — and ten non-permanent members (with year of term's end, and no Veto power); the non-permanent members at the time of this research are Belgium, Burkina Faso, Costa Rica, Croatia, Indonesia, Italy, Libya, Panama, South Africa, and Vietnam. Retrieved from the UN main webpage on 11/25/08.

4 A description of CA transcription symbols, first developed by Gail Jefferson, can be found in Atkinson and Heritage (1984) and in the Appendix.
developed to study ordinary conversations and then it has been applied to the study of institutional talk such as classroom interaction, political speeches, doctor-patient talk, and news interviews. Arising from sociology, CA emerged as a methodology that places a “new emphasis on the participants’ orientation to indigenous social and cultural constructs” (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990, 283).

CA research focuses on recorded conversations that occur naturally without any intervention from the researcher (Drew and Heritage, 1992, p. 235). CA methodology derives categories of analysis from the data provided and does not rely on any theoretically generated categories of analysis (Koshik, 2005, p. 3). The goal of CA research is to connect linguistic structure with social context in natural settings, where the social attributes of speakers (like gender, age, class, ethnicity) are not the focus of research (Drew and Heritage, 1992, 7). For conversation analysts, the theoretical categories of analysis are not determined beforehand; they are instead derived from the audio and video taped data of naturally occurring talk in interaction. Conversation analysts examine the behavior in interaction both on the turn and the sequence levels, and the actions these utterances perform. CA researchers therefore employ categories taken from the members’ perspectives that are based on actual authentic talk rather than intuition.

When dealing with talk-in-interaction, the sentence can no longer be treated as the unit of analysis. Instead, Turn Constructional Units (TCUs) constitute the units of analysis and these are built from lexical items, phrases, and clauses (Sacks, Schegloff &, Jefferson, 1974). Sacks et al. (1974) explain that turns made up of TCUs are locally managed and are deployed by speakers within a system that organizes the production and allocation of those turns (Heritage & Roth, 1995). TCUs allow for the prediction of possible completion points in advance of their arrival.
and thus “contribute to the precise exchange of speakership, with pauses and overlaps carrying
the meaning of interaction” (qtd. in Ford, Fox, & Thompson, 1996, 428).

When examining participants’ turns, conversation analysts try to understand “why that
now?” (Schegloff & Sacks 1973), i.e., conversation analysts try to understand the kind of action
participants are doing when making a particular utterance at a particular point in the interaction.
Sacks and Schegloff (1973) examined what they called adjacency pairs in interaction;
conversation turns, they added, normally and normatively consist of an initiating action (first pair
part action such as greeting or asking) followed by a responsive action (second pair part) at the
first possible opportunity when the first pair part is completed (Goodwin & Heritage, 1990).

The local management of adjacency pairs is not static; sometimes the first pair part is not
responded to. Other times, the second pair part is delayed. This leads us to the next notion of
‘preference’ in interaction. To draw from Koshik’s (2002) literature for instance, the design of
certain yes/no questions could be used to prefer one answer over the other. This organization is
called ‘preference structure.’ The concept of preference organization relies on the two turns of
the adjacency pairs described earlier. Questions in this case are first pair parts, and the answers
would normally be the second pair part. Schegloff (1995) argues that first pair parts, such as
questions, may make relevant a certain type of response, and possibly “alternative types of
response” which “embody different alignments toward the project undertaken in the first pair
part” (Schegloff, 1995, p. 59). These alternative types of response are called in the CA literature
‘preferred’ and ‘dispreferred’ responses. The conversation analytic concept of preference,
Schegloff (2007) explains, does not refer to psychological preference, but to a structural
relationship between parts of the sequence. Preferred responses align with the activity which the
first pair part seeks to accomplish. For example, in English, offers prefer acceptance and requests
prefer grantings. Dispreferred responses on the other hand do not align with this activity, as in disagreement or rejection.

Overview

After this introductory section which summarizes the thesis, overall methodology, and structure, there will be three additional chapters. In the second chapter, for my analysis of news excerpts, I draw from the CA literature (especially Heritage and Roth (1995), Clayman and Heritage (2002)) on displaying disalignment in news interviews. I will examine examples from the UN data where political disalignment and alignment are displayed through interviewers’ questions. The goal of this chapter is to show that interviewers not only display political disalignment with interviewees, but also, they can and do display alignment with speakers by the use of questions that display their stance. I focus on the design of questions asked by interviewers (IRs) and the responses given by interviewees (IEs). Examples of negated, prefaced, disjunctive, and declarative questions as well as attribution to third parties in broadcast political interviews are examined for the way they perform actions of embedding presuppositions and displaying either alignment or disalignment with IEs.

In the third chapter, I will examine how speakers in political news interviews use and refer to certain ethnic and religious membership categories to show political alignment and/or disalignment with a people or a political cause with emphasis on how the concept of “us versus them” plays out in such institutionalized interviews. I focus on the use of membership categorization collections and attributes used by both interviewers and interviewees as means of displaying alignment or disalignment with the other. The analysis in this chapter will build on Sacks’ (1972) definition of membership categorization as explained in his “Baby Cried” where he argues that the category membership of a person can be alluded to by mentioning a person’s
doing of an action that is category bound. In this chapter, I will use the CA framework to analyze the use of categorization in political news interaction. By so doing, my analysis of categorizations will be derived from the IR’s and IE’s talk. I propose that one of the tactics that both IRs and IEs use to show either alignment or disalignment with the other is by referring to ethnic, religious and national membership categories. Whereas some of the categories are used by certain speakers to refer to one group only (such as ‘friend’ and ‘brother’), other category attributes (e.g., ‘terrorist’) are used by both opposing parties in reference to each other. All those categories and attributes are examined within the context in which they appear, and I show how speakers themselves make them relevant to their cause. The categories referred to by speakers in the political Arab-Israeli discourse in news interviews are typically ‘Arab’ and ‘Israeli’, or ‘Muslim’ and ‘Jewish.’ This chapter will examine the use of categories such as ‘brother’ and ‘friend’ as opposed to the label ‘terrorist.’ In addition, this chapter will also include a section about indexing further alignment and support with speakers when/if alignment is in question. Examples of speakers switching to Arabic, informal Arabic and Hebrew are examined for that analysis.

Finally, the fourth chapter will summarize the findings of this thesis and will discuss implications of this thesis for various relevant fields, especially applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse and CA, communication, and possibly English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for diplomats.
CHAPTER 2

A Conversation Analytic Examination of Alignment and Disalignment in Political News Interviews; Embedding Presuppositions and Refuting Accusations via Questions

1.1 Introduction to Chapter

In this chapter, I will examine examples of how IRs display alignment or disalignment with the IE in a particular set of political news interviews, how they express stance, i.e., challenge, express adversarialness, or support. I will expand on existing research to study the importance of grammatical form (and linguistic manipulation) as well as conversational sequencing of turns in performing certain actions like displaying stance in order to display alignment and disalignment in institutional interaction. As has been found in other studies of political news interviews, especially by Heritage and Roth (1995), Clayman and Heritage (2002), IRs do not necessarily ask genuine information-seeking-questions in their news interviews; IRs tend to embed personal and institutional stance and ideology as well. This present chapter will study how stance is expressed in IRs’ questions, interrogatively formed questions and declarative statements alike, and how these stances display political alignment or disalignment with speakers. Equally important to these questions are the IEs’ responses; hence, I will study their interpretations of and responses to the IRs’ questions. This chapter will, therefore, be concerned with the turns, sequences and preferences of news interviews that show IRs’ alignments or disalignment with the IEs. These may include reversed polarity questions, prefaced questions, disjunctive questions, and declarative uninverted questions. In addition, the lexical choices used in such questions will be addressed. The findings of this chapter will add to the literature on institutional talk that is relevant to multidisciplinary fields, e.g., Applied Linguistics, Discourse and CA, Sociolinguistics, and Communication.
1.2 Literature Review

Functional linguists, sociolinguists, linguistic anthropologists and conversation analysts have had shared interests since the 1980s to capture and explain the linguistic and interactional acts by which speakers express stance in discourse. However, they do not have shared agendas, aims, approaches, and methodologies for their research (Haddington, 2004).

The term ‘stance,’ Haddington (2004) explains, has been used in existing research to carry various connotations like evaluation, subjectivity, epistemicity, footing, alignment, and agreement with coparticipants. Others have used the term to refer to more elusive notions like ideology, discourse, and identity. Haddington adds that because of the differences in researchers’ foci, methodologies and purposes, ‘stance’ is still a debatable term.

‘Stance’ can be used to refer to direct or indirect alignment or disalignment with the speaker’s position. In their findings, conversation analysts such as Heritage and Roth (1995), Clayman and Heritage (2002), Koshik (2002; 2005), for instance, argue that asking questions can be one way to express stance in institutional talk, especially in political interviews.

Heritage and Roth (1995) state that interviewers in most Western societies are not authorized to argue with or criticize the IEs’ position, nor are they allowed to agree with, defend or support it (p. 2). Interviewers instead should maintain what Clayman (1988) coined as a ‘neutralistic’ position vis-à-vis their interviewees. Asking questions, as such, becomes the central resource through which stance can be maintained (Heritage & Roth, 1995, p. 2).

Clayman and Heritage (2002) have studied the ways through which IRs adopt an adversarial stance and exert pressure on their respondents, and how the IRs design their questions to handle two competing norms; impartiality and adversarialness (p. 188). They have
argued that interviewers in political interviews “package their actions as ‘questions,’ and may invoke this packaging to defeat interviewee claims that they are pursuing some kind of agenda of their own,” (p. 188). They explain that IRs’ questions are not always strictly neutral and thus refer to such questions as being ‘neutralistic’ instead.

In their comparison of the journalists’ questions’ design both in the US and the UK in the few past decades, Clayman and Heritage (2002) have found that the characteristics of “openness and indirectness of these questions [that] are fundamentally deferential to the power and status of the [IE]” were noticeable in political interviews in the past but do not necessarily apply nowadays. (p. 190)

The concept of conventional indirectness and openness, for instance, is no longer dominant; for the IE, responding to such questions would sound ‘optional’ instead of obliging them to actually give a response. In the example below, the IR is interviewing the British PM, Attlee, on his way back to London – to start his election campaign in 1951 (Clayman and Heritage, 2002, p. 190),

*Figure 1*

1. IR: What are your immediate pla:ns: Mister
2. Attlee[:.
3. IE: \[My immediate plans are <t’go do:wn> to a
4. committee t’decijd on just that thing, .hhh (.)
5. >soon’s I can get away from here.<
6. (0.2)
7. IE: "hheh .hh"
8. IR: \(\rightarrow\) Uhm, hh (. ) Anything else you would> ca:re
9. t’sa::y about th’ coming elections
10. (. )
11. IE: \(\rightarrow\) No,
12. (0.6)
13. IR: Uhm, (0.4) Uhm, ((end of interview))
The IR’s question in lines 8-9 “anything else you would care to say about the coming elections” is a yes/no question without any yes/no operator (in this case, it would be “is there anything...”). Grammatically speaking, however, the question still invites the IE to answer with either yes or no. Clayman and Heritage (2002) find this particular question in line 8 to be too indirect and open since it does not ask about a specific proposition. Consequently, IE’s (Attlee’s) response treats the question as optional; that he would not be pressed for an answer if he did not “care” to respond. Attlee instead gives a minimal answer in line 11 “No” which according to Atkinson et al. (1979) in fact perfectly reflects the syntactic and semantic structure of the IR’s question, but does not give an expected elaborative answer.

Clayman and Heritage (2002) assert that broadcast interview questions are completely different nowadays; complex questions and answers are more prevalent now and their design/structure can overtly index elements of the personal identities of both IEs and IRs. Their complex grammatical and rhetorical constructions, Clayman and Heritage (2002) further explain, tend to either support or challenge the positions of public figures on various issues (p. 191). Roth (1998) points out that today’s news interviews’ questions can be largely “geared to the concerns and preoccupations of the questioner, answerer, overhearing audience members, or all three of these to varying degrees.” (qtd. in Heritage & Clayman, 2002, p. 191)

From their analyses of broadcast news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002) point out that the IRs’ questions could attempt to elicit responses that further their own agenda, or express presuppositions and affirm propositions about matters under discussion. Also, such questions can incorporate ‘preferences’ in that they are often designed to invite or favor one type of answer over the other. Clayman and Heritage (2002) explain that IRs questions normally “select between different possibilities for agenda setting, presuppositional content, and
preference design. These selections are crucial for the work that questions do, the nature of the interview that is built through them, and the interviewer and program identity that is sustained by these means.”(p. 192) Correspondingly, IEs can formulate their responses in ways that accept, resist, or reject any or all of these agendas set by IRs’ question, confirm or disconfirm its presuppositions, and align or disalign with its preferences. (Clayman & Heritage, 2002)

Similar to conversation analysts, others like Bull and Mayer (1993), Bull (2000), and Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003) put equal emphasis on the sequential aspect of news interaction and on the syntactic and the linguistic aspect of displaying stance in news conversations. Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003) studied the varying criteria of forming the basic questions from language to language. They have emphasized that there are possible consequences of the syntactical manipulation of questioning on produced answers. Such questions could restrict the choice or the size of the answer; they might lead the respondent to the desired answer, and select the underlying presuppositional framework encompassing the response (p. 388-9).

By the same token, Koshik (2005) supports Quirk et al.’s (1985) argument that speakers can design certain types of questions to display preference for a specific answer from IEs. Koshik (2005) makes a correlation between linguistically conducive questions and their parallel preference in the CA literature, arguing that questions can be designed to prefer a certain response. Such a preference can index the asker’s position vis-à-vis that of the co-participant.

Koshik (2002; 2005) has examined naturally occurring interactions in institutional settings; she explains that the interpretation of questions by hearers does not only depend on the design of the question alone, but also on the displayed knowledge state or epistemic strength of the asker. She argues that through the use of certain reversed polarity questions (RPQs), for instance, speakers can display an epistemic stance in certain sequential contexts when the
speaker knows the answer to the question beforehand. Negative questions, she adds, can assert affirmative propositions and might be heard by the listener to embed a stance. Koshik (2005) in support of her argument has examined an example from a broadcast interview with Clinton, discussed in Heritage (2002), where Clinton reacts to the question asked by the interviewer as if the IR has made an affirmative assertion:

Figure 2  Clinton Press Conference: (Koshik, 2005, p. 12)

01. IR: W’ll Mister President in your zeal for funds
02. during the last campaign .hh
03. didn’t you put the Vice President (. ) an’ Maggie
04. and all others in your (0.4) administration top
05. Side .hh in a very vulnerable position, hh (0.5)
06. IE: I disagree with that, =h (0.8) u- how are we
07. vulnerable if You think it is inherently ba:d ta
08. raise funds..hh and you believe
09. That these transactions are between people who
10. are .hh almost craven. = I mean (I do- wa-)
11. that’s how uh- I I (.) I don’t agree with that. I
12. .h

Clinton’s response “I disagree with that” in line 6 indicates that he heard the IR making an assertion that can be disagreed with and he goes on to specify the assertion he heard the IR making; the members of the president’s administration have been made vulnerable. Koshik (2005) states that Clinton has heard the IR’s turn (lines 3-5) as expressing a strong assertion that challenges the IE and which can be refuted. She explains that Clinton heard the assertion as hostile and accusatory and thus responded with denial “I disagree with that” in line 6. (p. 16)

In another study, “Politicians Interviewed on TV Interviews,” Ekstrom (2001) explains that IRs have been shown to have the upper hand in setting an agenda in that they confront respondents with various alternative courses of action, putting them in different situations; such questions could be designed to elicit or encourage given responses or reactions (p. 165).
Conversely however, Ekstrom (2001) maintains that IR’s dominance and ability does not mean that IEs are powerless to make use of IR’s interrogative strategies to realize their objectives; IEs too may take the opportunity to evade the question given that IEs and IRs speak to an anonymous audience and try to control their self representation and maintain a certain identity (p. 566). For instance, IEs can exert some kind of control through what Greatbatch (1986a) calls the agenda-shifting-procedures if the IRs are heard to disalign with the IEs. A tactic that IEs use in such a case is changing the topic of conversation under discussion (qtd. in Ekstrom, 2001, p. 566). This can be indicative that interviewees do hear adversarialness in the IRs’ questions and therefore tend to evade or avoid an answer if necessary—as we shall see in this present chapter.

The analysis in this chapter will be based on existing CA research findings and categories of Clayman and Heritage (2002), Clayman (2001), Heritage (2002), Koshik (2002; 2005), Heritage and Roth (1993) who all have examined questions and co-participants’ behaviors in either news interviews or institutional talk at large.

2. Analysis

Today’s news interviews and reporters in the US and the UK are becoming more adversarial in their questions when interviewing higher public and political figures; they are more likely to disalign with the IEs’ positions. This chapter will show that under certain circumstances, the IRs express disalignment with the IEs when they are not politically aligned with them whereas they will show alignment with IEs when they are politically aligned with them or when they happen to belong to the same membership category.

Reporters who disalign with the speakers’ stances do so by displaying explicit and implicit challenges, disapproval, and/or some form of criticism/accusation to what the IE had previously
said in their initial briefing. Based on existing conversation analysts’ categorization of some of the pragmatic functions of questions in real world interaction, I will investigate similar uses in my own data. I propose that IRs display alignment and disalignment with the previous speakers by any of the following means:

1. Hostile questioning: use of negated yes/no and wh- questions, Reversed Polarity Questions (hereafter RPQs)
2. Accusatory questions: accountability questions that follow the form ‘how about,’ ‘why did you’?
3. Multi sentence questions that consist of prefatory utterances (before the actual question) to give more context and possibly display alignment or disalignment and thus a stance
4. Lexical choices that align or disalign with, and possibly defend or criticize, the IEs’ position and the parties they represent

2.1 Negated yes/no questions

Although IRs employ interrogative forms in the interest of ‘questioning’, Heritage (2002) argues that there is evidence from a range of contexts that neither questioners nor answerers treat negative interrogatives as genuine questions. For example, in the Senate Judiciary Hearings which led up to the vote on the impeachment of President Clinton, the following transpired during the examination of the Prosecutor’s Panel. The questioner is Senator Howard Cobel (Republican, North Carolina):

*Figure 3  Senate Judiciary Committee Hearings 8 December, 1998 (Heritage, 2002: 1431)*

1. Sen:  Now lemme ask you this Mister Davis,
Heritage (2002) argues that here it appears that the Senator was on his way to asking ‘Wouldn’t you acknowledge that this committee’s consideration...’ where the remainder of the sentence complement (which is revised in the course of the actual utterance) would sound like the asker is giving his and other Republican members’ (of the Senate Judiciary Committee) opinion, and that they are in disagreement with the IE. Catching his utterance before he began to produce it, the Senator articulates his intention and admits the conduciveness of the intended question design as ‘speaking for you.’ The Senator then rephrases his question design without using the negated operator “wouldn’t” so that he gives the witness the opportunity to ‘speak for himself’ (p. 1431).

Clayman and Heritage (2002) assert that IRs can use any interrogatively-formed structure/utterance to be understood as engaged in questioning rather than stating an opinion. But some interrogative structures are especially designed to assert a position; the most prominent form to do so would be the negatively formed questions. Negative questions, Clayman and Heritage (2002) explain, are strong enough for an IR to project an expected answer, which when
produced in association with a question that challenges the IE’s stance, will be disagreed with by
the IE. The following is an example from Clayman and Heritage (2002) to support this argument
(218-19):

Figure 4  UK BBCTV Newsnight: Sep 1993: Liberal Party

IR: Jermy Baxman  IE: Paddy Ashdown

1. IR: .hh Right. (.) Okay. So (0.2) you have loose cannon:s. (0.2) on
2. your deck just (.) as you rightly say all parties have. .hh But if we
3. generously put this down to (.) over exuberance. (0.2) tch hh (.)

4. → doesn’t that suggest that your party is still: (0.2) immature. (0.3)
5. irresponsible (.) undisciplined: h (0.2) unserious.
6. IE: Well, (0.2) prove that:
7. (0.6)
8. IE: you made th’proposition, > (0.2) propose it to me.=

The negative question asked by the IR in line 4 displays a preference for an affirmative
response; that the IE will respond saying something similar to “yes it does suggest that the party
is still immature, irresponsible, undisciplined and unserious.” Clayman and Heritage (2002) state
that this preference is so strong that questions formulated this way are usually heard and
interpreted by IEs as expressing an opinion. The IE does not answer the question with a yes nor
with a no. Instead, the IE’s response “prove it” in line 6 treats the IR’s question as having made
an assertion that he can be challenged to “prove” and is an assertion in which the IR had
displayed disalignment with the IE and made a “proposition,” as shown in line 8. Such examples
seem to be especially used when the question design is used to propose a position that counters
or challenges the IE’s stated position. This example is similar to extract number 2 above where
the IE also hears the IR’s question as expressing a strong stance that should be refuted.

A similar example from the United Nations Stakeout archive shows that negated
questions, also known as Reversed Polarity Questions (RPQs) (Koshik, 2002; 2005), are used by
reporters to display stances and show disalignment with the speakers. In the following excerpt, the IR challenges the Russian Ambassador to the United Nations for the Ambassador’s condemnation of the Palestinian side only without any condemnation of the Israeli attacks on Palestinians. The IR thus uses a negated yes/no question to show his disalignment with the IE’s position:

1. Russ Ambsdr: in my national capacity we do
2. believe that this
3. terrorist attack in Jerusalem stands
4. out and clearly deserves to be
5. strongly condemned by the security
6. council and we regret that it didn’t
7. happen today
8. Journalist 1: Mr. Ambassador don’t you think that the
9. attacks by Israel on the Palestinians
10. in Gaza also deserve to be strongly
11. condemned [ as much as you ( )]
12. Russ Ambsdr: [ I do i- I do and certainly
13. we have a track record of
14. expressing very strong- very
15. serious concern about those
16. developments in fact in the council
17. we also discussed this overall
18. situation just last Saturday
((Conversation deleted))

Here, the IR’s negated yes/no question in lines 8-11 displays the IR’s stance that “the attack by Israel also deserved to be condemned.” The IR asks a grammatically negated question with the contracted “n’t” that is heard by the IE not only as the IR’s affirmative stance but also as an accusation of the IE’s position as stated in the IE’s earlier statement. Given that the IE, as a
president of the Security Council at the time of the interview, had just condemned the Palestinian act and labeled it as ‘terrorist,’ together with his admission that it should have been strongly and officially condemned, the follow up question by the IR suggesting that he also consider the Israeli acts against Palestinians in Gaza and label them as ‘terrorist,’ is heard by the IE as disaligning with his position. The IR’s reversed polarity yes/no question expects an affirmative response that is intended to favor the following answer: “yes Israel should be condemned too,” Similar to a yes response, the “I do” answer here agrees with the IR. Unlike “yes” however, “I do” has another function here; it suggests that the answer is contrary to the IR’s expectation. Therefore the IE rejects the IR’s accusation. In suggesting that the attacks on Gaza also should be condemned, the IR is accusing the IE of not doing this. The IE’s “I do” response therefore both aligns with the IR’s opinion about condemning Israel and also rejects the accusation that he doesn’t also condemn Israel. The Russian ambassador in lines 13-18 starts to defend himself and his institution from what he heard as an accusation for not condemning Israel: “certainly ‘we’ have a track record of expressing strong… concern” and goes over the Russian record of expressing concern about the Israeli actions against Palestinians in the past.

**2.2 Negated Wh- Questions:**

WH- Questions are questions formed with one of the following interrogative words: who, what, which, when, where, how, why (Quirk et al., 1985, pp. 817-823). From a purely grammatical point of view, wh- questions are used when one piece of information is missing and are normally used to ask about a specific point or proposition (ibid, p. 804). Following this logic, the pragmatic use of wh-questions should entail that speakers assume that co-participants know both the proposition and the background of the conversation.
Among other conversation analysts, Koshik (2005) argues that wh-reversed polarity questions, similar to those yes/no RPQs, express a strong epistemic stance and are thus heard to challenge the IEs. Heritage (2002b) also examined how wh-interrogatives accomplish something other than questioning by virtue of the sequential context in which they are deployed (p. 1428). Heritage and Clayman (2002) studied how some wh-questions like “how could you?” are designed to display accusations in institutional talk, especially in broadcast news interviews, and they argued that negated wh-questions can be heard as confrontational.

Quirk et al (1985) state that some positive questions have a negative orientation and are heard by the participants as conducive and could be disagreed with. That said, I will examine an example from the UN political news interviews to support this premise.

Figure 6  Jan, 8, 2008

IR: American Journalist  IE: the Palestinian Ambassador to the UN

01. Pal Ambsdr: ((cont’d conversation)) and also
02. security council should
03. demand the Israel to uh reverse
04. its position with regard to declaring
05. Gaza as a hostile entity because
06. this is illegal from the point of view
07. of international law. and a: one point
08. five million Palestinian should not
09. be punished in a collective form
10. eh because of the political position
11. that Israel has with a political
12. party that is in control in Gaza
   ((Journalists talking loudly—unintelligible talk))
13. Pal Ambsdr: yes yes (( looking at someone))
14. Journalist 3: <uh forgive me (.) if you call the
15. closing of border crossings a war crime
16. what pray tell do you call the firing
17. ov missiles into people’s livingrooms?<
18. Pal Ambsdr: well a: our position as Palestine a and
19. as a Palestinian liberation
20. organization is well known; we condemn
21. the killing of innocent civilians for whatever reason by wh- by any party,
22. because killing innocent civilians is a crime, and it should not happen. and if
23. those who are interested in characterizing killing innocent
24. civilians in the Israeli side, they should pay attention to the killing of
25. thousands and thousands of innocent life on the Palestinian side. since
26. year two thousand, about five thousand Palestinian were killed by Israeli action.

Quirk et al. (1985) point out that some questions have negative orientation due to the use of some ‘nonassertives’ in them; i.e., the use of negative polarity devices that make questions conducive. Such nonassertives include the use of ‘yet’ and ‘already,’ among others. In conformity with Quirk et al.’s argument, other lexical choices can be used to serve the same purpose as shown in the above example; ‘pray tell’, for instance, is used as “a way of adding ironic or sarcastic emphasis to a question”(The Canadian Oxford Dictionary). After the Palestinian Ambassador states that he and his mission are expecting the Security Council to intervene against the Israeli illegal actions in Gaza, lines 1-12, the IR in line 14 starts his question with a “forgive me.” Initiating a question with a request to be “forgiven” indicates that the remainder of his turn will be a disagreement with what the IE had stated earlier in the interview. This is followed by the IR’s own indirect opinion and stance in line 14 by proposing a conditional question “if you call the closing of border crossings a war crime what pray tell do you call the firing ov missiles into people’s livingrooms?” Here, the IR’s question functions as a means of setting up a contrast, saying that if this less serious issue of “closing border crossings” is a crime, then one should consider the more serious issue of “the firing of the missiles into people’s living rooms” as the
real crime here. The IR also displays disalignment and disagreement with the IE by choosing the
lexical analogy between just a border crossing issue and ‘missiles falling on innocent people in
their living rooms.’ Treating the IR as confrontational in his previous turn, the IE in response
refrains from actually using any of the IR’s labels such as “war crimes” or “firing of missiles.”
Instead, the IE hears the adversarialness of the IR’s question and begins to defend his position as
the legitimate representative of the official government, “our position as Palestine and
Palestinian liberation organization is well known.” The IE continues to defend his institution
against their condemnation of the killing of innocent civilians on any side by disconnecting
himself and his institution from the other political party that launches missiles into living rooms.

     Nonetheless, the IE does not end his turn by defending his institution against the
accusation of the IR. Interestingly, He fires back in lines 24-33 and shows a counter
disagreement with the IR’s proposition; the IE states that those who want to categorize the
killing on the Israeli side “should pay attention to the killing of thousands and thousands of
innocent life on the Palestinian side.” This clearly shows that the IR’s question, a grammatically
affirmative questions, acts as an RPQ and conveys negative assertions; the IE, as a result, hears
its conduciveness as an excessive disalignment with his statement.
2.3 Presuppositions embedded in questions

Embedding presuppositions is another way through which interviewers convey stance in questions in political news interviews. The next example is taken from Clayman and Heritage (2002) to illustrate this; the IR is Robin Day and the IE is a British trade union leader, Arthur Scargill.

Figure 7 National Union of Mineworkers:

UK BBC Radio *World at Once*, 1979
IR: Robin Day IE: Arthur Scargill

01. IR: .hhh er **What’s the difference between your**
02. Marxism and Mister McGahey’s communism.
03. IE: er the difference is that it’s the press that
04. constantly call me a Marxist when I do not, (.)
05. and never have (.).er er given that description
06. of myself. [.hh I-
07. IR: [But I’ve heard you-

Although the question asked by the IR in lines 1-2 above is hostile in light of its embedded accusation of the IE for being Marxist, i.e., “what’s the difference between your Marxism and Mister McGahey’s communism?”, Clayman and Heritage (2002) argue that the IE still plays the ‘interview game’ very well where he frames his answer saying “it’s the press… call me Marxist” and denies the presupposition being embedded in the IR’s question. The IE refutes the accusation made by the IR, and he never gives an answer to the question about the “difference between the two” (p. 127).

Embedding presuppositions is also used as a means through which interviewers show alignment through questions with the IEs. In the next excerpt taken from the United Nations Archive, the journalist displays a stance and conveys alignment with the Libyan Ambassador.

Figure 8 IR: Arab Journalist IE: Libyan Ambsdr
In his earlier briefing, the Israeli Ambassador labeled Libya as a terrorist state that has always supported terrorism. In response, the Libyan Ambassador (prior to the above excerpt) defends his country from the Israeli Ambassador’s accusations and accuses Israel of being the terrorist state. After the IE had given his briefing statement in English and refuted the Israeli accusations of his country for being terrorist, an Arab journalist, as shown above, asks a question in Arabic that was already answered by the IE in English (which is not transcribed here). This time, however, the IR’s question has an obvious stance that aligns with the Libyan Ambassador. The IR’s question “what is your response to accusing Libya of being a terrorist state by the ambassador of
a state whose practices are of course well-known” does much more than questioning; it also conveys an embedded presupposition and an accusation of Israel. The presupposition is heard by the IE to convey that Israel’s practices are well known, and that Israel should be the one labeled terrorist. Therefore, the IE hears an alignment with his stated stance and responds by saying “we are not waiting for a certificate from eh- from a representative of the Zionist entity that is (known) to have been established based on terrorism and bloodshed and still occupies the Palestinian Territories.” This statement includes a confirmation of the presupposition in lines 6-8; the IE elaborates on the “well known practices” as consisting of “terrorism and bloodshed and occupation of the Palestinian Territories.”

2.4 Prefaced Questions:

Some IR complex questions involve multi TCU questioning units i.e., they are prefaced with statements that eventually lead to the question itself. Such initial statements, Clayman and Heritage (2002) argue, could stand and are treated as a completed turn in its own right and are responded to as such in conversation (p. 104-5), but in interviews where questions are expected and responses to questions are produced, there are hardly any responses made to these kinds of preface statements.

Heritage and Roth (1995) examined how IR questioning can be defined in terms of grammatical form in multi TCU questions. They show that ‘augmented grammatical form’ is a significant aspect of turn organization and turn transfer in news interview interaction. In other words, the use of grammatically interrogative questions almost always leads to a response, and turn transfer, from the other party in most of the questions they have examined. In particular, they strongly support the claim (Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991) that turn-taking in the news interviews is "largely organized" in terms of IRs' production of interrogative TCUs
that clearly do "questioning." (p. 23) Thus, the prefacing of questions allows IRs to convey hostile opinions in the question preface, knowing that IEs rarely respond to these statements after they are made; they wait until the IR asks a subsequent question to take their turn. Excerpt 9 below is a continuation of Except 7, taken from Clayman and Heritage (2002).

Figure 9  National Union of Mineworkers:

UK BBC Radio *World at Once*, 1979
IR: Robin Day    IE: Arthur Scargill

01. IR: .hhh er What’s the difference between your Marxism and Mister McGahey’s communism.
02. IE: er the difference is that it’s the press that constantly call me a Marxist when I do not, (.)
03. and never have (.). er er given that description of myself. [.hh I-
04. 07. IR:→     [But I’ve heard you-
05. 08. → I’ve heard you’d be very happy to: to: er .hhhh
describe yourself as a Marxist.
06. 09. → er could it be that with an election in the offing you’re anxious to play down that you’re a Marxist.
07. 10. IE:     [er ] Not at all Mister Da:y.= And I:’m (.)
sorry to say I must disagree with you,=you have
11. never heard me describe myself .hhh er as a Marx[ist.]
12. 13. IE:     [er ] Not at all Mister Da:y.= And I:’m (.)
14. 15. sorry to say I must disagree with you,=you have never heard me describe myself .hhh er as a Marx[ist.]=I have o:nly ((continues))

Given that the IE above rejects the presupposition embedded in the IR’s first question in lines (1-2), the IR starts a new turn re-emphasizing his proposition. This time, the turn consists of a question (starting in line 10) that is prefaced with a statement starting with “but I’ve heard you-
I’ve heard you’d be very happy to: to: er .hhhh er describe yourself as a Marxist” in line 7 above. Prefatory statements per se, Heritage and Clayman (2002) propose, can often times draw interviewees into a situation of disagreement when followed by a question similar to the one
above where the IR’s prefatory statement precedes his interrogatively formed question, as in line 10-12. Additionally, the IR’s prefatory statement above starts with a “but” which entails that the reminder of the IR’s turn is a disagreement with the IE’s position.

Clayman and Heritage (2002) maintain that there is a subtle understanding between IRs and IEs about turn taking, i.e., IEs withhold taking a turn until they hear the subsequent question and understand that such statements are prefatory. Here the IRs prefatory statement starting in line 7 counters the IE’s denial that he is Marxist. Clayman and Heritage (2002) claim that the IE could have initiated a turn of disagreement when this prefatory statement was over in line 9. Yet, Scargill instead waits for the IR to ask a question before initiating a response. The IR’s actual question starts in line 10 with the yes/no question operator “could.”

In the same interview with the Russian Ambassador to the United Nations on March, 8th 2008, there is an example where an IR shows disalignment with the Ambassador who labels the attack in Jerusalem by a Palestinian as a terrorist attack. Here, the IR does not only use a negated wh-question, but he also prefaces his question with a personal stance:

Figure 10 March, 8, 2008
IR: a journalist⁵ IE: Russian Ambassador to the UN & SC president at the time

1. Journalist 2: Mr. Ambassador you are easy to say- to
call the at- attack in Jerusalem
terrorist (...) why don’t you call the
same when it comes killing two weeks
[ago when]=
6. Russ = [we- we do
7. Journalist2: = [both babies in
8. Gaza?]
9. Russ = [we do have- we do have strong
10. words those are of course d- different
11. situations (.) you know I think one can
12. one ca- in in in this environment
13. let me remind you one aspect of the

⁵ The Journalist in this excerpt is not a native speaker of English
situation when one is particularly careful about not insulting religious in any form and shape to see people walk into a religious school and open fire on the on the students there. that is something we should really give someone pose <especially those who care about religion>

((Conversation deleted))

In this excerpt, the IR does not start with a question right away; he in fact prefaces his question with a statement that displays the IR’s personal opinion about the IE’s previous statement and position as “easy” in reference to the IE’s use of the term ‘terrorist’ to describe the attack under discussion in lines 1-2. Such statements can be heard by IEs as a disagreement when followed by a question (Clayman & Heritage, 2002, p. 127).

This preface is then followed by the negatively formed question which is designed to convey an affirmative assertion; the IR’s question “why don’t you call the same when it comes [to] killing two weeks ago both babies in Gaza?” is an RPQ that is heard as the IR’s own stance for its excessive conduciveness; the presupposition behind the question can be heard as “you should label Israeli attacks against Gazan children as terrorist too.” The IE treats the question as an accusation and tries to defend his institution in lines 9-11 by explaining that they do have “strong words” possibly to label the Israeli actions too. Interestingly, the IE does hear the accusation early in the interview by line 5 before the IR mentions anything about who the anticipated victims are (the two babies in Gaza in this case); consequently, in line 6 the IE tries to overlap the IR’s question before the Gaza victims were mentioned. This shows that the negated form “why don’t you” supported by a prefatory statement “you are easy…” were enough for the IE to perceive the complement of the turn as accusatory and disagreeing with his own position. Moreover, the IE’s contrastive response “we do” is similar to the IE’s “I do” answer in
example 5 above. Here the IE hears the IR’s question as a suggestion that he doesn’t call the attack on Gaza and the killing of children as terrorist, and responds with a contrastive answer.

Clayman and Heritage (2002) explain that the practices of prefacing questions and using negated questions are intended to favor a particular response and can be developed by IRs to present irrefutable positions and then invite the IE to deny them. Hearing the IR’s turn as an accusation in lines 1-5 above, the IE starts to give a response before the whole IR’s question is complete, although the presence of a transition relevance place (TRP) after “ago” could have been heard as an opportunity for the IE to initiate a response. The overlap however does not make the IR cut off his own turn; he still completes the question in lines 7-8. The IE still hears it as a further accusation against his institution and refutes it in lines 9-10 by explaining their position. Although the IE answers the questions with “we do have strong words…” as if beginning a contrastive answer to reject the accusation, he defends his position by saying that these are different situations. The IE continues to elaborate on his response to the accusation made in the prefatory statement in line 1 “you are easy…” by giving an account in lines 11-21 to why he said what he said; after some repair attempts in lines 9-12, the IE starts to explain that it is a different situation now.

2.5 Declarative Questions:

Declaratives that are produced with rising intonation are heard as questions and do require an answer. Danet et al. (1980) (cf. Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, p. 388-9) examined how questions vary according to the degree to which they coerce or limit an answer. Declaratives, they maintain, are regarded as the most coercive because they make a statement about facts and events rather than ask a real question. Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003) further explain that
the organization of questions on a continuum from more to less coercive questions provides a descriptive framework to interpret the activity of questioning and to understand question-answer exchanges with respect to previous conceptualizations, because it strongly associates questions to power and control (Berk-Seligson, 1990)… [T]he role of the person who has the power to ask questions often allows him or her to use the questions in a strategic way to coerce the “narrative freedom” of the respondent and impose his or her own version of facts. (p. 388-9)

Heritage and Roth (1995) examined declarative questions in interaction and argue that some of these questions invoke the IE’s opinion (p. 10). In Figure (11) below, Heritage and Roth (1995) argue that the IE begins a response in (line 6) to the IR’s prior interrogative (lines 1-5) but withholding an intonationally projected continuation in the face of the IR’s overlapping talk. After a first possible completion point (line 7) of the IR’s overlapping, declarative TCU, the IE starts a next response in (line 9). Heritage and Roth (1995) explain that this response is revised to display a "fit" to the IR’s turn in lines 8-9, where that fit involves the design of the IE’s second response as a preferred response to the IR’s most recent, negatively polarized statement (p. 19-20) that is heard to display a strong disalignment with the IE.

Figure 11  (MacNeil/Lehrer 2/3/92:5) IE: Democratic Congressman Charles Rangel

1. IR:  Are- are you saying that it's within thuh
2. discretion of the State Depar:tment or thuh president
3. or::immigration (. ) ser:vice .hh to kind'v interpret
4. the ex-ist ing law more generously: until thuh
5. situation is settled there,<if they chose to? =
6.IE =There's no ques[tion about it,
7.IR: [They Don’t have thuh do it
8. [thuh way they (do th-)
9.IE: [OF C 0 U R S E Not::: ] an- an- an- an let's look
10. at it this way. Uh there was a time you know
The next excerpt, Figure 12, from the UN archive, shows that the stance conveyed through the declarative question is the stance conveyed in the statement itself, i.e., the IE hears the IR making a statement similar to “the failure of the Security Council to condemn the attacks [on Palestinians in Gaza] and the collective punishment of the Palestinians . . . have encouraged such operations that happened in Jerusalem today.” After the Security Council (SC) failed to issue a condemnation of the attacks in Jerusalem, the ambassador of Panama, one of the fifteen members of the SC, appeared at the Stakeout and stated that the SC should have condemned the attacks. The ‘attacks’ below, however, refers to the attacks launched by Israel on Palestinians in Gaza and not the attack by Palestinians in Jerusalem that the SC “failed to condemn.”

Figure 12  IE: the Permanent Representative of Panama, Ricardo Alberto

1. Journalist1:  (Mr. Ambassador) th- buh- the failure
2. of the Security Council to
3. **condemn**: the attacks and th’
4. collective punishment of the
5. Palestinians, they have encouraged such
6. operations th- that happened in
7. Jerusalem today?
8. Panama Ambsdr: Panama has been in **favor** (2.0) all
9. through (this time) to condemn the
10. situation in **Gaza** end (also to express)
11. and condemn the violence in Gaza, but
12. today what we see before us and what we
13. have to face today (. ) is a **h**ideous act
14. that took place in Jerusalem, and
15. Panama condemns very **c**learly and very
16. **s**trongly those acts (. ) thank you very
17. much

The IR asks a declarative yes/no question without the use of a question operator or a negated polarity device. The IR’s turn is heard as if he is defending the attacks in Jerusalem by giving an account in lines 1-5; ‘the Security Council has failed to take an action and condemn Israel for its collective attacks on Gaza’. The IR is not only disagreeing and disaligning with the IE’s position,
he is also seeking confirmation from the ambassador after giving him an account for why he disagrees with him. The IE in turn does treat the IR’s statement as accusatory and begins in line 8 to defend Panama’s position as being in favor of Palestinians and condemning the Israeli violence on earlier occasions. The IE, starting in line 11, further gives an account to justify his current position against what he heard as an accusation and disagreement. He explains that the Jerusalem attacks cannot be justified with such an argument: “but today what we saw… is a hideous act that took place in Jerusalem.”

**2.6 Disjunctive Questions:**

Clayman and Heritage (2002) argue that among the most elaborately hostile questions are those that place interviewees in a situation of inconsistency and self contradiction in their positions. They explain that British journalists refer to this style of questioning as “split-hunting” (p. 227). It places the IEs in a dilemma or a “fork” where respondents have to select among alternatives that are usually unfavorable.

Clayman and Heritage (2002) provide an example where the IE -- then Senate leader Bob Dole -- is asked to explain the fact that President Reagan’s political programs are “in trouble.” In the question preface, the IR offers two anonymous third-party attributed formulations of the situation. The first is that Reagan’s programs, but not the President himself, are “in trouble.” The second gives an explanation for the trouble in terms of ineffective legislative leadership. The latter explanation, which engenders a little laugh from Dole, Clayman and Heritage explain, is explicitly offered as implicating Dole himself, as shown below: (p. 230-31)
In the final formulation of the question (lines 15-17), Clayman and Heritage (2002) explain that the IR draws on this extensive question preface and explicitly invites Dole to identify “the problem” in terms either of the weaknesses of the programs, or ineffective legislative leadership. These are presented as exhausting the possible explanations for Reagan’s legislative difficulties. Clayman and Heritage (2002) argue that none of the two options can possibly commend itself to a Republican senate leader. Although the next turns are not available in their data, Clayman and Heritage add that the IE’s response avoids these two options “in favor of a response that cites the weakness of his majority in the Senate” (p. 231).

Another example from the UN stakeout is examined below where the IR uses a disjunctive question. Here the Palestinian Ambassador gave a briefing about the emergency situation in Gaza early in January of 2008 which caused the Palestinians and Arab states to call for an immediate session of the SC to intervene and condemn the Israeli attacks on Gaza. In his
briefing to the IRs, the Palestinian Ambassador stated that it was an open session and that the experts are working on the final draft before sending it to the blue (i.e., before sending it as an official document on which the members would have agreed unanimously). After giving his briefing in English, the IR here asks the question in Arabic:

*Figure 14*

**Journalist 1:** seyadet al safeer law samaHt hal antum
Mister the ambassador if possible, are you ((pl.))

1. Mr. ambassador, ((a question)) please, are you ((pl))
   
   radoun ‘an galsat alyawm wama tamakhadda
   satisfied with session today’s and-what came out

2. satisfied with today’s session and its outcome

   ‘anha mn bayan shafahi la yatanasbu ma’
   from-it from statement oral no suitable with

3. in the form of an oral statement that does not

   ‘amaliyat ul qatl walintihakat al
   operations the killing and-violations the

4. correctly reflect the violations and killing

   israeliyya fi al aradi almuHtallah
   Israeli in the territories the-occupied

5. Operations by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories

**Journalist 1:** am la?
Or not?

6. Or not?

**Pal Ambsdr:** eh al- al a:- ma waqa’a alyawm howa- laqad
   eh the-the a:- what happened today is- well

7. Eh the a:- what happened today is- well

   talabna jalsah fawreya limajles
   we-asked a session immediate of-Council

8. we asked for an immediate session of the Security

   al’amn lelt’a’ati ma‘ aljara’em al
   the-Security to-respond with the-crimes the

9. Council to take action against the Israeli crimes

   israeliyya ‘ala alardh alfalastiniyya
   Israeli on the-territory the-Palestinian

10. In the occupied Palestinian territory
almuHtalal khasatan fi Ghazza wahathihi the-occupied especially in Gaza and-this especially in Gaza and this session

aljalsa tammat wa nashkur allatheena the session done and we-thank those has already taken place and we thank those

sa’adona khasatan ekhwatuna fee libya helped-us especially our-brothers in Libya who helped us especially our brothers in the

alatheena qadamu alda’wa ila who sent the-call to Libyan delegation who called for a Security

almajles biniyabati 'anna (.) the-Council on-behalf us (.) Council session on our behalf (.)

((talk continues))

The IR’s question, “are you satisfied with today’s session and its outcome in the form of an oral statement that does not correctly reflect the violations and killing operations by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories, or not?” presents two alternative answers before the IE; one alternative is being satisfied with just an oral statement that does not depict the situation in Gaza correctly, which would make the Ambassador look bad to his people (both Palestinians and Arabs at large); the other alternative is NOT being satisfied, which would show him as inefficient because he did not take action to change the outcome. Both alternatives fall under what Clayman and Heritage (2002) termed as “split hunting” since whichever answer the IE chooses to align with will put him in a dilemma. The IE appears to hear this disjunctive question as adversarial and accusatory, because after some repair initiations in his initial response (line 7), the IE chooses to evade the question. The IE does not pick up on or elaborate on any of the two presented alternatives. Instead, the IE, in response to the accusation, begins to re-state what he already mentioned in his briefing (not shown here), i.e., that his Mission did call for an
immediate session and the session did take place, thus ‘he did do his part.’ The IE then moves to thank the Libyan delegation (Libya is one of the fifteen SC members) for helping convene the session on the Palestinian behalf. In thanking them, he calls them “brothers.” Thus, the IE defends his institutional position as a Palestinian and as an Arab, too, from what he heard as an accusation in the IR’s question.

2.7 Third-Person versus Non-attributed Statements

Statements attributed to third parties as a source can be used by IRs to convey challenges and, at the same time, to avoid being accused of failure to remain neutral. The attribution of IR statements to third parties involves a shift in "footing" (Goffman, 1981), which makes it a useful resource for IRs who are institutionally charged with maintaining a "neutralistic" position (Heritage, 1985; Clayman, 1988, 1932; Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991). For example, the format can be used to topicalize, but not align with, another IE’s stated position.

The IR in the next example mitigates an interruptively initiated challenge to the IE by formulating his talk as reporting the position of a third-party (the President) (Heritage & Roth, 1995:27).

Figure 15  (MacNeiVLehrer 7/19/93:2) ((On the firing of FBI director William Sessions))

01. IE: well certainly the F.B.I.: has: done some
02. tremendously wonderful thngs in thuh last few
03. years.... They sol:ved thuh problem (. ) of other:
04. terrorists ah in New Yor:k. Arrested a whole
05. group of them, .h an:d the uh ano:ther in Los
06. Angeles just a few: weeks ago. Of skinhead:ds
07. [ who were heavily arm ]ed
08. IR: [.HHH But on the other--]
09. Excuse me but on the other hand thuh President
10. di::d say that the agency was (. ) in effect a
11. adruh- adrift, a deep (. ) morale pruh- problem.
Clayman and Heritage (2002) explain that the IR turn above is clearly fashioned as a counter to the IE’s remark: The IR begins the assertion (line 8) with a challenge-projecting “But on the other-.” That challenge, however, is referred to as the position of none other than the U.S. President. Thus, the IR’s turn gives the IE, in effect, a position to refute. It is notable that the IE does not treat the IR’s challenge as representing the IR’s own personal position; the IE responds in lines 12-13 that he is perfectly satisfied with what the president said.

In the following excerpt, in contrast, the IR’s statement is not third-party attributed and becomes the object of direct and repeated attack (lines 4 and 7):

Figure 16 John C. Heritage and Andrew L. Roth (1995, 28) (Afternoon Plus: 7.3.79)

1. IR: .hhhh Lord Longford erm (0.5) we- we- we do take a lot of trouble (0.8) rehabilitating (0.5) criminals. .hhh
2. er: [and long]
3. 4. IE: [Well I d ] on’t- I [don’t ( )- ]
4. 5. IR: [long term ] scheme for the criminals.
6. 7. IE: No I don’t agree wi[th that at all (sir). ]
8. 8. IR: [But we don’t seem] to- Sorry.

Unattributed statements are heard as personal opinions. The IR, in the above example from Heritage and Roth (1995), abandons this line of argument in line 8. The distinction between statements that are third-party attributed and those that are not is an important one for the news interview context. Responses to non-attributed statements are heard by IEs as instances of IR assertion, agreement, criticism, or argument, all of which are “inappropriate given the IR’s institutional (and, in the U.K., legal) position” (p. 28). Third-party attributed statements,
however, are usually treated by IEs as “adhering to the expectation of IR neutralism as well as accomplishing questioning and are treated as ancillary, but legitimately so, to IRs' core questioning practices” (ibid).

In the following example, the American Ambassador to the United Nations opposed issuing the Security Council statement in January 2008 that condemns the Israeli attacks on Gaza. The ambassador claimed that his Mission wanted to condemn the counterattacks by Palestinians on Israeli towns, thus, his Mission opposed issuing a condemnation of Israel without condemning the Palestinians also. A journalist afterwards comments on the Ambassador’s briefing about the deterioration of the humanitarian situation in Gaza after Israel blocked the entrance of fuel and supplies to the territory.

*Figure 17*

1. F Journalist6: =Mr ambassador you keep saying that
2. the you don’t want a humanitarian
3. situation to develop and Israel agrees
4. with you on that but last week John
5. Holmes the secretary f- for the
6. humanitarian ‘n [ (emergency) ]=
7. Amer Ambsdr: [under-secretary]
8. F Journalist6: = relief told us
9. yesterday that there is already a
10. crisis there so exactly what is your
11. [definition =
12. Amer Ambsdr: [ .hh ]
13. F Journalist6: = of a crisis
14. Amer Ambsdr: = we said we don’t want a crisis and we
15. have made our view clearly to our
16. Israeli friends that we recognize their
17. right to defend themselves that they
18. need to take needs of e::: e::
19. civilians e: Palestinians and suffering
20. potential- suffering caused to
21. Palestinians in Gaza into account thank
22. you ((walks away fast))
The IR here does not start with a direct question; she first starts with a prefatory statement accusing the American ambassador of not knowing or being blindfolded to what is actually going on on the ground; she does so without attacking him directly by stating that there is a humanitarian situation going on already in Gaza—according to a specialist’s report. In order to maintain a neutralistic and objective stance, she attributes the statement to the Humanitarian [Under-] Secretary in Gaza; John Holmes. Only after introducing the third party does she move to her question by using “so” in line 10; she asks him a wh- question “so exactly what is your definition of a crisis.” The IE hears her question both as disaligning with and challenging his previous statement. This becomes clear in his attempt to initiate talk in line 12 (the in-breath ‘.hh’) before she finishes her question in line 12, but his attempt to talk was not acknowledged by the IR who continued with her question anyway. In line 14, the IE gives a response and does not treat the IR’s question as her personal opinion; the IE does not refute the proposition nor does he disconfirm it. If the question were heard by the IE as the IR’s personal opinion, the IE would have possibly responded to the question with disagreement and rejection of the IR’s presupposition that a crisis exists. The IE would most likely have given a similar response to that of Lord Longman in the previous example. The IR here, however, does not respond to the prefatory statement nor does he comment on Holmes’ definition of a crisis. And he does not ever answer the IR’s question and give an ‘exact definition of the term ‘crisis’’ because he does not hear it as an info seeking question but as a challenge. Thus, he begins to defend his institution’s position that they do not want a humanitarian crisis. He goes on to give an account that Israel has the right to defend herself.

3. CONCLUSION:
This chapter has built on the findings of existing research to support the premises that IRs’ questions are no longer neutral and that they are intended to show disalignment with political figures. I have also examined examples from political news interviews where IRs’ questions can also be used to display alignment, in certain situations, with the IEs. Existing CA literature has not focused on IR’s use of questions used to display political alignment with the IE. Negated, prefaced, disjunctive, and declarative questions as well as attribution to third parties in broadcast political interviews can perform actions of embedding presuppositions and displaying either alignment or disalignment with IEs.
Chapter 3

Membership Categorization: The Us vs. Them in Political News Interviews

In this chapter, I will examine how speakers in political news interviews use and refer to certain membership categories to show political alignment and/or disalignment with a people or a political cause, with emphasis on how the concept of “us versus them” plays out in such institutionalized interviews. Combining CA literature with findings from other areas particularly from ethnography, discourse analysis and sociolinguistics research, I will examine the examples from the UN data where speakers categorize not only themselves but also the “other.” The analysis in this chapter will build on Sacks’ (1972) definition of membership categorization as explained in his “Baby Cried” where he makes the argument that ‘crying’ is an activity tied to the category ‘baby.’ Sacks (1972) argues that the category membership of a person can be alluded to by mentioning a person’s doing of an action that is category bound. Interest in membership categorization (MC) and more specifically in Sacks’s analysis of MC attracted researchers other than Conversation Analysts. Lucy Suchman (1994), for instance, suggests that Sacks’s categorization can benefit those using it in some domain of activity where such categorization devices, she adds, can be used to organize “people, events or activities by whom they are used and/or to which they refer” (p. 182). However, Schegloff (2006) argues that subsequent researchers have misinterpreted Sacks argument. Schegloff argues that Sacks’s discussion of “crying” as an activity tied to “baby” was not the result of an analysis, but an observation which then became the focus of his analysis; Schegloff was concerned with the analysis of how these actions get linked to certain categories. He stresses that the categorization of participants is done and understood through talk and warns researchers about examining the data with a preset theoretical framework about categorizing people. Schegloff (2006) explains
that researchers can locate a membership categorization collection in interaction by understanding the “reference to the set of practices for referring to persons… [one practice] could be characterized as doing description, the other of which could be characterized as word selection, i.e., how the speakers use a term and how the recipients hear it in the same interaction (p. 463) (italics in original).

Schegloff (2006) questions the warrant given by those whose categorizations of the people studied in much of the social science research is structured by reference to how different kinds of people behave, whether in the marketplace, in the polling booth, and so forth (p. 475). He points out that “actual membership in a category is not a sufficient basis or grounds for using it to categorize someone” (p. 474). Schegloff points out that there is a Membership Categorization Device (MCD hereafter) that consists of any collection of membership categories (with at least one category) that can apply to a group (with at least one member) and which, together with the use of some rules of application, provides for pairing group members and categorization device members (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 4). The categories at issue here, Schegloff (2006) explains, are ones like men, women, protestants, professors, conservatives, vegetarians, 20-year olds, cat-people, stamp collectors, etc. The categories of person (or member of the society in Sacks’s analysis) which figure in interaction and in social life more generally are not a simple, single aggregate of categories, but are organized into collections of categories. A collection is a set of categories that ‘go together’ – for example, [male/female]; [Buddhist/Catholic/Jew/Muslim/Protestant . . .]), [American/Canadian/Dane/French . . .] etc. (p. 467).

In this chapter, I will use the CA framework to analyze the use of membership categorization in political news interaction. My analysis of categorizations will be based on the
IEs’ and IRs’ talk. I propose that one of the tactics that both IRs and IEs use to show either alignment or disalignment with the other is by referring to ethnic, religious and national membership categories. Whereas some of the categories are used by certain speakers only to refer to one group only (such as ‘friend’ and ‘brother’), other category attributes (e.g., ‘terrorist’) are used by both opposing parties in reference to each other. All those categories are examined within the context in which they appear, showing how speakers themselves make them relevant to their cause. The categories referred to by speakers in the political Arab-Israeli discourse in news interviews are ‘Arab’ and ‘Israeli’, or ‘Muslim’ and ‘Jewish.’ In this study, I examine the use of additional categories: ‘friend’ and ‘brother’ when speakers share co-membership categorization. Likewise, the use of ‘terrorist’ is also examined especially when speakers do not share any of the membership categorizations mentioned above.

Each of the abovementioned attributes and categories, as we will see in this paper, will have different referents depending on the person using it in the conversation. Some of these labels will be used in reference to a certain group (“brother”) while other labels (e.g., “terrorist”) are used by both opposing parties in reference to each other. This resonates with Sacks’s partitioning inconstancy argument where he noticed in his study that while some categories have limited and fixed (i.e., ‘consistent’) references like ‘age’ and ‘sex’, others have unlimited references and vary depending on the user and the occasion; i.e., their reference is inconsistent.

Partitioning constancy registers the observation that on a given occasion, with its particular composition of participants, some two MCDs could turn out to partition those participants identically; that is, the same individuals end up differentially being members of the same categories under the application of alternative category collections. On the other hand, some two MCDs may have on that occasion partitioning inconstancy, each partitioning the local population differently than the other does, yielding alternative co-class memberships. Which MCDs (if any) have as a feature partitioning constancy or inconstancy varies from
occasion to occasion, depending on the composition of the population in the occasion. (Schegloff, 2006, p. 468)

The labels ‘brother’ and ‘friend’ used by politicians in news interviews are used in reference to ethnic and religious *categories* (Arab, Muslim). The label ‘terrorist’ is used by politicians in news interviews as an *attribute* of ethnic and religious categories (Arab, Israeli, Muslim and Jew). These labels are used by speakers leaving as a result two MCDs with a partitioning inconstancy as we will see later in the chapter. This could be a result of what Sacks defined as viewers’ or hearers’ maxims which, as we will see later in the chapter, entails that “if you are presented with a performed action that is tied to some category from some collection, and its performer can be seen as a member of that category, then understand or grasp her/him that way.” (Schegloff, 2006, p. 471). This is especially relevant because these interviewers and interviewees have different agendas categorizing themselves and others, and most importantly they have different overhearing audiences both in and outside the media stakeout.

Sacks (1972) explained that in order to apply any membership category to a population, two rules should apply; the *economy* rule and the *consistency* rule. The economy rule provides for using a single membership category to describe a member of some population where a single category will be enough to introduce members (Sacks, 1974, p. 219) (italics mine). For example, when a person is introducing a friend to the family, it would be redundant to also introduce the friend with “an extended list of membership categories with which the friend might be described; one, such as a ‘student at Laurier’ will do” (Hester & Eglin, 1997, p. 4). And, the consistency rule states that if a collection refers to a member of the population then it would also refer to other members of that same population (Sacks, 1974, p. 219). In other words, when some category from some collection of categories in an MCD has been used to refer to some person on
an occasion, then other persons in the setting may be identified or referred to by reference to the
same category or other categories from the same collection. For example, Schegloff (2006)
explains that being introduced to one person at a first meeting as ‘a sociologist,’ for example,
made others readily orient to disciplinary categories, and the relevance of doing so is given by
the previous bit of identifying. For some next person to be identified or to self-identify as
‘Canadian’ is registerable as a departure from any other introduced relevancies, and it can incite
a search for what occasioned that categorization, i.e., the ‘why that now’. And that can operate
not only when the initial category has been introduced by mentioning a category term, but also
when it has been introduced by way of a category-bound activity (p. 471).

According to Sacks and Schegloff’s characterization of membership categorization, any
person who is assumed to be a qualified member of a category can be a representative of that
category where “what is ‘known’ about the category is presumed to be so about them”
(Schegloff 2006, p. 169). In the next fragment which is taken from Sacks’ suicide prevention
center data, the speaker, for instance, tries to block what can be presumptive knowledge about
the characteristics of being a 48-year-old by using some modifiers.

Figure 1

A: How old are you Mr. Bergstein?
B: I’m 48, I look much younger. I look about 35, and I’m quite ambitious and quite
  idealistic and very inventive and conscientious and responsible.

So here Mr. Bergstein immediately addresses what he figures will be presumed about him due to
the fact that he is 48 year old; these are the modifiers the speaker uses to contradict what might
be presumed about him – the ‘but’s’. Schegloff (2006) explains that all these modifiers provided
by Mr. Bergstein in description of himself as a younger person were invoked because of what he thought would be presumed about him as an “older” person otherwise (p. 469).

Schegloff (2006) cites another instance from Sacks’s Suicide Center materials. Here, a man has reported himself to have been a “‘hair stylist’” and to have “‘done fashions.’” As the conversation continues, the man (B) takes a later question about “‘sexual problems’” to have been generated by the inference that he is gay.

Figure 2

1. A: Is there anything you can stay interested in?
2. B: No, not really.
3. A: What interests did you have before?
4. B: I was a hair stylist at one time, I did some fashions now and then,
5. things like that.
((Then a few minutes later))
6. A: Have you been having some sexual problems?
7. B: All my life.
9. B: Naturally. You probably suspect, as far as the hair stylist and, uh, either
10. one way or the other, they’re straight or homosexual, something like
11. that.

As obvious in the above example, Schegloff (2006) argues that the connection between category and action/activity is not restricted to someone’s formulating or describing an action in a certain way; doing some action or even doing an utterance analyzable by recipient as doing some action, can activate and invoke a relevant category. Sacks (1972) and Schegloff (2006) noticed that this type of action, hair styling, is category bound, and in this case it is treated as bound to being “gay” (p. 470).

In this chapter, a few examples from the UN data will be examined with particular emphasis on the usage of three membership category devices as evoked by the different speakers. These collections can be interrelated depending on their use by the speaker, and are
being made in relation to three attributions: government, ethnicity, and/or religion. The categories are Arab, Moslem, Israeli, Jewish, brother and friend. Speakers’ use of category bound characteristics (‘terrorist’ for instance) in order to both self and “other” identify will also be examined. As is the case with power differentials, and in alignment with the theme of this chapter, as Suchman (1994) states, an outsider non-compliance with the use of a particular category, especially one that is “imposed from outside, or even the adoption of an alternative [category] are … acts of resistance.” (p. 182)

“Terrorism” has become one of the most disturbing terms heard by both lay and professional people whether in an institutional or everyday setting. In his book Inside Terrorism, Bruce Hoffman (2006) wrote that the term is both subjective and pejorative; it has intrinsically negative connotations that are applied to one’s enemies and opponents, or to those with whom one disagrees and would otherwise prefer to ignore. This definition goes well with the common saying: ‘one man’s terrorist is another man’s freedom fighter.’ This term is frequently recurring in both the Palestinian and Israeli discourse in reference to each other.

Given that the data examined here are taken from the United Nations, I will give the UN definition of “terrorism” before I proceed with the membership categorization analysis. Due to different international opinions on what constitutes terrorism, the international community “has never succeeded in developing an accepted comprehensive definition of terrorism” (Matryn, 2002). During the past few decades, the United Nations’ attempts to define the term have floundered because of the differences of opinion between various members about the use of violence in the context of conflicts over national liberation and self-determination (ibid).

In their book, Uniting Against Terrorism, Cortright and Lopez (2007) explain that terrorism is one of the most long-standing challenges to the UN due to the lack of a universally
accepted definition of terrorism. While some countries condemn terrorism as any act endangering or taking innocent life, others seek to differentiate what they consider legitimate acts of resistance against oppression and occupation. Some have emphasized the need to include “state sponsored acts within the definition” (p. 44). However, Middle East states, the authors state, have been refusing any counter terrorism (i.e., any political or military activities designed to prevent or thwart terrorism) definition that might prejudice the Palestinian resistance against the Israeli occupation (ibid). Cortright and Lopez (2007) stress that there is already a “clear normative framework” within international law and the United Nations agreements against states intentionally targeting civilians and killing noncombatants. The same UN panel also acknowledged the right of resistance to foreign occupation (but does not justify the killing of civilians) (p. 45).

However, leaving aside the controversial definition of what constitutes terrorism versus resistance, I will examine how the term ‘terrorist’ is used in the ambassadors’ talk. I will specifically examine two examples taken from the UN webcast after both the Israeli and Libyan ambassadors categorized each other as terrorists. This happened right after a SC meeting when the Libyan delegation at the UN opposed a press statement condemning Palestinians for a crime committed by a Palestinian in Jerusalem.

But before examining the use of “terrorist,” I will look at how the label “brother” is used. This will give a better perspective when contrasted with ‘terrorist’ in the following examples. In the next excerpt, the Palestinian Ambassador briefs the journalists about the emergency SC meeting Palestinians called for through the Libyan delegation (given that the latter is one of the fifteen SC members) after Israel attacked the Gaza strip. Here, the Palestinian Ambassador starts his statement by thanking the Libyans for their help in convening the meeting. The Palestinian
Ambassador uses a positive categorization in reference to the Libyans, perhaps to display gratitude.

Figure 3  
IE: Palestinian Ambassador

1. IE: I just want to say that the Palesti- 

2. Palestinians and president Abbas requested 

3. an emergency meeting of the Security Council 

4. this morning and we were able to have 

5. that emergency meeting and open session 

6. of the security council in this connection 

7. we thank all our friends on the council 

8. particularly our brothers the ambassador of Libya who was very 

9. accommodating in convening our request 

10. ((conversation continues))

In the opening lines, the IE speaks on behalf of Palestinians and the Palestinian president, saying that they requested the Libyan intervention in convening an emergency SC meeting. After the Libyans achieved this, the IE, on behalf of the Palestinians, thanks “all our friends” in line 7 who were responsive to the Palestinian needs “particularly our brothers … the ambassador of Libya…” in lines 8-9. Thinking of “why that now,” the use of friendly and brotherly attributes indicate a sense of collaboration and alignment—especially in the way it is used by the speaker above. In fact, the IE implies that there might be more ‘friends’ who helped with convening the meeting, but he then singles out a particular group in the group of ‘friends’ and calls them ‘brothers.’ Introducing the category “brother” after the use of “friends” suggests the existence of
a blood bond. This indicates that the IE places both the Palestinians and the Libyans in one ethnic category: Arabs. In fact, ‘brother’ has been repeatedly used by Palestinian and other Arab Ambassadors in reference to each other (but those examples are not transcribed here).

In contrast, negative attributes are used when there is a strong disalignment between speakers as explained in the next example. Following the attack carried out by a civilian Palestinian against Jewish students in a seminary in Jerusalem, there was a Security Council (SC) closed meeting to issue a press statement to condemn the attack. In those closed meetings, only the fifteen members of the SC meet together to discuss the issues at hand; there are always five permanent members with veto powers and another ten nonpermanent members with no veto powers. In the case of press statements, a consensus among the fifteen members will suffice for the statement to be issued. The Libyan delegate was one of the nonpermanent members at the SC at the time, but neither the Israeli nor the Palestinian delegates was a member of the SC, so neither of them were at the closed meeting. In this excerpt, the Israeli ambassador briefs the journalists on what happened inside the SC meeting and condemnsthe blocking of a statement that could have condemned what he termed as a massacre.

Figure 4
IE: the Israeli Ambassador to the UN, Summer 2008 ((UN Webcast))

1. IE: Hi good evening, (.).h as you heard
2. from the American ambassador the Security
3. Council (.). was unable .hhh a: to reach a:
4. decision (.).a unanimous decision on
5. condemning the massacre that happened in
6. Jerusalem (.).tonight, .h (0.4) unfortunately
7. this is what happens (.). when the
After the Israeli ambassador reminds the recipients of what happened in the meeting and that the SC was unable to reach an agreement, he at first states in lines 3-4 that there could have been a consensus that did not happen because it was blocked. From the beginning of his briefing, it is clear that the Israeli ambassador is selecting highly emotionally and negatively charged words like “condemning the massacre” in line 5 which displays an early disalignment and dissatisfaction with the lack of a press statement condemning the attack under discussion. He then provides an account why there was no unanimous decision: because the SC is “infiltrated by terrorists” in lines 8-9. The term “terrorist” is an attribute used in reference to a category, i.e., the Libyan delegation. The IE did not, explicitly, introduce the category, Libya, yet, but he referred to the country that committed terrorist acts; the country that sponsored Lockerbie. The
reference to Libya is therefore done through describing some of the attributes bound to the category “Libya,” according to the IE’s statement. Libya is the only Arab country serving as one of the fifteen members of the SC, and it represents all Arab nations politically and linguistically (and is a “brother” country as shown in the Palestinian Ambassador’s statement in figure 3 above). The Israeli ambassador puts together a number of attributes that help define Libya (and possibly other Arabs by extension) as terrorists. The Israeli ambassador’s statement that the SC is infiltrated by terrorists in reference to Libya is also emphasized in the following lines by invoking the kind of acts that terrorists do. Given that the characterization of a group is done through describing the group’s doing (Sacks, 1972; Schegloff 2006), the Israeli ambassador’s characterization of ‘the other’ as a terrorist is done by linking Libya to the Lockerbie attack decades ago, and more recently, for blocking a press release that condemns Palestinian “terrorist” attacks. Libya is being categorized as a terrorist country that has infiltrated the SC and that knows about terrorism more than any other country since it sponsored the Lockerbie attack, and a country that therefore should not be on the SC or even part of the UN. The Israeli ambassador is implying that the decision condemning the massacre was not officially made because the SC is infiltrated by terrorists, a characteristic bound to the other (Arabs/Libyans) with whom the Israeli ambassador is disaligning and disagreeing. The Israeli ambassador links those who did the massacre (Palestinians) with those who did the Lockerbie attack (Libyans).

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6 On Wednesday 21 December 1988, an aircraft flying from London’s Heathrow Airport to New York’s JFK International Airport – a Boeing 747-121—was destroyed by a bomb, killing all passengers and crew members in addition to eleven people in Lockerbie, southern Scotland as large sections of the plane fell on the town, bringing the total number of fatalities to 270. As a result, the event has been referred to as the Lockerbie Bombing. In 2001, a Libyan secret agent was convicted of involvement in the attack and was sentenced to life imprisonment. According to the BBC, the Libyan government took responsibility for the attack undertaken by some Libyans and has finally paid all financial compensations to the victims’ families in America and renounced terrorism by 2003. By so doing, the UN sanctions against Libya were lifted between 1999-2002, and the US government removed Libya’s name from the ‘states sponsoring terrorism’ list in 2003.
Thus, according to the Israeli ambassador, the Libyans did not condemn the attack by Palestinians because they are also ‘terrorists.’

The Israeli ambassador’s briefing is then followed by the Libyan delegate’s briefing. Although the Libyan ambassador says he is not replying to the Israeli ambassador’s accusation, he does address it by defending Libya’s election to the SC and Libya’s role in international peace and security—as shown below.

Figure 5

1. IE: (0.2) for what thee a- the Israeli
2. representative said I don’t want to reply
3. about wha- wa- his allegations; Libya has
4. been elected to the council almost in
5. unanimously eh our- our contribution to the
6. peace and international secure- security is
7. well known by all, especially in Africa

The Libyan ambassador gives his briefing in English after his Israeli counterpart and explains that he does not want to respond to the Israeli ambassador’s accusation that Libya is a state that sponsors terrorism. After the Libyan ambassador is finished with his briefing to the press in English, an Arab journalist, however, starts speaking Arabic and asks the Libyan ambassador to respond to the Israeli ambassador’s accusation and categorization of Libya as a terrorist state. After hearing the alignment embedded in the IR’s code switching (Jan-Petter & Gumperz, 1972) to a language spoken by both the IE and IR (i.e., two members of the same ethnic category), the Libyan ambassador gives a response. In this response, he uses the same category bound attribute (terrorist) to refer to the “other”-- more specifically here, the state of Israel.

Figure 6  

IR: Arab Journalist  
IE: Libyan Ambassador to the UN

ma howa raduka ‘ala ittiham libya ‘ala
what is your-reaction on accusing Libya as

1. IR: what is your response to accusing Libya of being a
annaha dawla irhabiyya tumares al irhab mn-being state terrorist practices the terrorism
terrorist state by the ambassador of a state whose

2. IR: →

mn safer ma’rouf tab’an mumarasatuhu?
from ambassador well-known of course his practices?

3. IR:

practices are of course well-known.

naHnu la nantather Shahadah mn eh- mn
we no waiting certificate from eh- from

4. IE:

we are not waiting for a certificate from eh- from

mumathel lelkayan al soyouni al
representative of-the-entity the-Zionist the

5. IE: →

a representative of the Zionist entity that is

ma’rouf bi annahu kayanun a: qama ‘ala
wellknown as it is entity a: established on

6. IE:

known)to have been established based on

al irhab wa sfku-addima’a
the terrorism and shedding-blood

7. IE: →

terrorism and bloodshed

wa mazal yaHtalu alaradi al Filstiniyya
and still occupies the territories the Palestinian

8. IE:

and still occupies the Palestinian Territories
((talk continues))

Suchman (1994) explains that “if membership categorization is appropriable as a technology of control by some parties over others, acts of resistance involve a taking back of systems of naming and assessment into indigenous categorization schemes developed by the “others” themselves” (p. 182). Suchman (1994) cites an example from Sacks’s 1966 lecture published under the title “Hotrodder: A Revolutionary Category” where he was trying to understand the relationship between kids and cars; Sacks stated that those kids who were assigned to a categorization not of their own making, e.g., “teenagers,” developed categories for themselves, e.g. “hotrodders” which in Sacks’s terms is a revolutionary act.
Back to the excerpt above, the IR’s wh-question that he posed in Arabic in lines 1-3, “what is your response to accusing Libya of being a terrorist state by the ambassador of a state whose practices are of course well-known?” embeds a presupposition that is heard by the IE as an alignment with the Libyan ambassador on the one hand and a disagreement with the Israeli accusation that Libya is a terrorist state on the other. The categorization of the “other” in figure 6 is invoked by the IR’s presupposition and indirect categorization of Israel as a terrorist state, in lines 2-3 “by the ambassador of a state whose practices are of course well-known?” where the IR refers to the practices done by Israel, i.e., the category bound activities, rather than directly labeling Israel as being “terrorist.” By implying that Israel is the terrorist state, the IR in fact displays that he is in the same membership category with the IE, and that he is therefore showing alignment with the IE. The IE (Libyan ambassador) therefore speaks out after the IR makes it explicit that they both share membership categorization. The switch to Arabic as well as the implication about Israel being the other are the devices that could make the IE confident in adopting the act of resistance, which Suchman (1994) described, to go further in condemning Israel for committing acts of terrorism. The IE starts responding by stating that they are not waiting for “a certificate from eh- from a representative of the Zionist entity” in lines 4-5. By doing so, he is also reminding the other Arab speaking audience members (the IRs and/or viewers at home) of Israel being a state whose existence is not fully recognized by members of their category, given that the term ‘zionist entity’ is used by many Middle Eastern countries as a pejorative euphemism for Israel. The selection of the term ‘Zionist entity’ is an indication that the speaker does not only imply that the existence of Israel is not legitimate, but also that any accusations by such an “illegitimate/Zionist entity” should not be legitimate either. In lines 6-7, the IE mentions that Israel was established based on committing acts of bloodshed against
Palestinians that are associated with the term “terrorist”, and implies that it still does by occupying Palestinian territories, in line 8. Thus, as was the case with the Israeli ambassador earlier, the Libyan ambassador here provides an account for his characterization of Israel as a “terrorist” state in lines 6-8; the IE elaborates on the expression “well known practices” that was introduced by the IR earlier in his question. Those practices, the IE makes clear to the other IRs and audience, consist of “terrorism and bloodshed and occupation of the Palestinian Territories.” By so doing, the IE confirms both the presupposition made by the Arab IR and the characterization of the “other” (i.e., Israel) as terrorist based on the acts it has committed against Palestinians.

Both opposing parties here categorize each other as “terrorist.” Sacks explains that this is relevant to “hearers’ maxim” which:

[t]ook the form of instructions to an apperceiver: if you are presented with a performed action that is tied to some category from some collection, and its performer can be seen as a member of that category, then understand or grasp her/him that way... If a category-bound activity is asserted to have been done by a member of some category... Then hear it that way”. That is, both the activity and the categorized person have been mentioned by another – have already been formulated, and the maxim instructs us on how to understand those mentions or formulations, and how they have been used. (Schegloff, 2006, p. 471)

This indicates that for the hearers, it is important to hear the category-bound activity discussed by speakers and identify the person performing the action. Hearers, accordingly, can make inferences concerning their identity or category incumbency. Acts of ‘terrorism’ and ‘brotherhood’ are discussed and presented by IE’s in reference to others and speakers’ membership is accordingly perceived by the audience. For the Arab and Palestinian audience, references to ‘friends’ and ‘brothers’ are perceived and formulated as including all Arabs. Similarly, labeling Israel as a terrorist state could influence a sympathetic audience’s opinion to
always perceive Israel as a terrorist state. Similarly, the Israeli ambassador’s characterization of both actions (the Lockerbie and the Jerusalem attacks) as terrorist acts could also mold the audience perception of Arabs (and Palestinians) as ‘terrorists.’

Terrorist, from the examples above, is used as a category bound characteristic to refer to larger ethnic and national categories such as Libyan (Arab) and Israeli respectively. Categorization is empirical, Schegloff (2006) maintains, i.e., categorization is understood and done through talk and is not derived from some theoretical framework; it is all provided in the data and analysts can go back to the empirical data and references they have to support an argument. Both the Libyan and the Israeli ambassadors’ labeling of each other as “terrorist” does not necessarily abide by the UN panel definition of terrorism (described earlier in the chapter). For speakers to self- or other- identify as a part of a certain membership category in political news interviews is an act of indexing their similarities or differences with the people and/or causes being discussed. Therefore, political speakers display either alignment and support for one party if they declare themselves as members of the same category, or they would disalign with and confront others by characterizing them in ways they would never refer to themselves—as is the case with the term “terrorism” which is a characteristic that applies only to the other but never to any member of “us,” as shown in the UN interview excerpts above. Labeling a group as terrorist might also be done with the purpose of prejudicing the audience against one’s political enemies at such an international institution where the overhearing audience and possibly other ambassadors would also take a stance against those “terrorists” and question the credibility of their future claims and statements.
Indexing Categories

In this section, I will examine two examples of code mixing/switching used by either the IE or the IR to display alignment and disalignment (alignment with co-participant in their disalignment with a third party) when membership categorization is not heard as enough support. In his final statement to the SC followed by his last briefing to the reporters as the ambassador of Israel to the UN, Dan Gillerman (the IE) summarizes his final points stating that the problem of today is not a matter of “clash of civilizations but a clash of a civilization in the singular.” He also reiterates that most terrorism nowadays comes from Islam and Muslims and therefore there is no peace in the region. The IE finally expressed gratitude to have worked with all the journalists for years and wished them all luck. An American journalist makes an effort to speak Gillerman’s native language—Hebrew, yet, he (IR) displays problems pronouncing Hebrew when he addresses the IE, thus he switches between English and Hebrew as shown in the excerpt below. Considering Schegloff’s and Sacks’ (1973) “why that now?”, i.e., what kind of action participants are doing when making a particular utterance at a particular point in the interaction, why would the IR in the fragment below switch to a language he cannot easily speak or pronounce if he can simply say what he wanted to say in English? The IR uses code mixing as a tactic to show not only political alignment with all Gillerman’s statements (Blom & Gumperz, 1972), but also to stress that they do belong to the same membership category where code switching is the device used to emphasize that co-membership. To ensure that the IR makes himself intelligible to the IE while speaking in Hebrew, the IR switches back and forth between English and Hebrew repeating the same words in different languages.
01  IE: thank you very much ((looks around))

(2.0)
02.  IE: thank you,

((starts to walk away))

(0.2)
IR: ah: (0.2) mister amb[assador, ] hashagrir ?
03.  IR: ah (0.2) mister amb[assador, ] ambassador?

04.  IE: [yes, ]

IR: =u:h < bi:shm rigon hakatavim ((said much slower than his prior talk))
   = u::h < in name of the association
05.  IR: = u::h < on behalf of the United Nations’

shil ha’omot hamoyochadot<
correspondence of the nations the united
06.  Correspondents association
07.  a: h. >on behalf of the UN correspondents
08.  association< .hhh we wanded to wish you (.) u:h

   a:: nasi’a tova,
a: trip good,
a: good trip,
09.  <to say firstly ho- what pleasure n honor az been
10.  to cover you- to cover some of youz- some of us
11.  for up to six yea:rz .h an:d tuh wish you

   nasi’a tova veh shalom vi lehetraot
   Trip good and shalom and farewell
12.  a safe trip and peace and farewell

   veh bhataslacha rab[ba ] =
   And good-luck ma[ny ] =
13.  and lots of good l[uck ] =
14.  IE: [ thank you,]
16. IR: = (    ) good journey ((continues...))

((IE, smiling, walks toward the IR and shakes hands with him))

As soon as the IE finishes his briefing and says his farewell to all the reporters, his first “thank you” in line 1 was not responded to by any of the IEs. Probably feeling a bit awkward, turning his head and smiling after not hearing a reciprocal “thank you too” or “goodbye” in two seconds; the IE repeats “thank you” again in line 2. In line 3, an American IR starts a turn calling after the ambassador and repeating the word ambassador in Hebrew “hashagrir.” The IR, as a member of the UN Correspondence Association (UNCA), in line 5 claims to be a representative of all the present journalists who remained silent after the IEs statement and farewell, and continues in Hebrew to wish the IE a safe trip in line 9. The IE is addressing an audience who understands Hebrew and is therefore likely to be primarily Israeli or ethnically Jewish. The IR does repeat his earlier turns (i.e., the turns he said in Hebrew in lines 6-7) in English in lines 7-10, only this time it is said in a faster and smoother pace given that American English appears to be his native language. Switching back and forth between slower Hebrew and faster English utterances in lines 7-14, the IR seems to manage to show support for and alignment with the IE as is obvious in the IE’s reaction to the IR’s efforts; in response, the IR continues to smile, thanks the IR in line 15, and does something the other interviewees have hardly done before; he approaches the IR and shakes hands with him. These gestures could support the claim that the IE heard both political and linguistic alignment that puts him and the IR in the same ethnic and religious categories.

While the above excerpts show that language can be used to reflect co-membership between members who share not only the same ethnic background but also similar political alignment, sometimes when political alignment within the same category is in question, speakers
may resort to more than one technique to display alignment. In the following excerpt, the interviewer is the Egyptian ambassador, and Egypt is known to have full diplomatic relations with Israel—which makes it the only Arab state that has helped Israel, especially with border monitoring against any Palestinian attempt to allegedly smuggle weapons to Gaza (given that Egypt and Gaza are physically connected). The following excerpt took place on March, 2nd of 2008 after the Palestinian Ambassador had called the SC for an emergency meeting to condemn and stop the Israeli invasion of Gaza. This SC meeting aimed for a resolution and so it is an open meeting where members from different UN organs can attend. During this meeting, the Secretary General (SG), Ban-Ki Moon from South Korea, condemned both sides and called on them both to end the violence. In his report too, the SG mentioned that Palestinians had smuggled rockets through the borders with Egypt. Here, the Egyptian Ambassador makes an appearance to refute two accusations made by the SG at the SC meeting: calling Palestinians (Hamas specifically) “terrorists” and holding Egypt responsible for smuggling weapons into Gaza. After the Egyptian ambassador gives his briefing in English, an Arab IR asks the ambassador (IE) in Arabic for his opinion about the SG’s description of Hamas’s launching of rockets as terrorist acts while he (the SG) did not give the same label in reference to Israel’s killing of Palestinians. In his response, below, the IE tries to evade giving an answer, given that he is positioned in what Heritage and Clayman (2002) call the split and fork situation explained in the earlier chapter. The IR’s question in Arabic is translated in English as “What is your response to the SG’s description of Hamas launching rockets by Hamas as being terrorist while he did not describe Israel’s killing of Palestinian civilians as terrorist, too?” The IE’s answer is transcribed below

**Figure 8**

*Egypt Ambsdr: = .hh lam nasma’ mn al-sulta al-
.hh no heard from the-authority the*
hh we didn’t hear the Palestinian

Palestinian who describes these

Authority describe these acts

acts as being terrorist and

as terrorist and

[alameen al’am ]
[the Secretary General]

alameen al’am yasef mn yasha
The Secretary General describes whoever

let the Secretary General describe whoever

he wants however he wants

and didn’t also [he]describe this

didn’t he also describe the current

the authority- (. ) these acts terrorist

[Palestinian] Authority- (. ) these acts as

in report in front of Council Security

terrorist in his report at the Security

this no obliges us anything

Council, this doesn’t oblige us in anything

((talk continues))
The IE's response in line 1 above might be an attempt to evade an answer by simply invoking a third party; the Palestinian Authority (i.e., Fatah, the secular party dominant in the West Bank and which has been in disagreement with Hamas recently). The IE explains that the official Palestinian opponent to Hamas (which is Fatah) does not describe Hamas’s acts as terrorist. And, the IE’s official opinion too could be similar to that third party which he invokes (i.e., Fatah which does not use the term ‘terrorist’) and not the SG’s opinion. In other words, the IE indirectly adopts the Palestinian’s rather than the Secretary General’s opinion. However, the IR overlaps the IE’s response and initiates a repair attempt in line 4 by repeating the “Secretary General” indicating that the IR wants to hear the IE’s response to the Secretary General’s accusations. The IE in lines 4-5 says “let the Secretary General describe whoever he wants however he wants” which not only indicates that the IE disagrees with the SG’s statement, but also that the IE is not concerned about it at all. The IE then reminds the IR of the previous accusations made by the Secretary General of the current legitimate Palestinian Authority. The IE in lines 7-8 invites the IR to remember that the SG had also accused the current (legitimate) Palestinian Authority of acting as a terrorist in the past too. This time the IE switches from formal Arabic to Egyptian Arabic, hence he assumes a less formal role by switching to an informal dialect. By doing so, the IE seems to align with the IR’s (and the overhearing Arab audience’s) stance and reflects this alignment by using the common people’s dialect. This can be perceived as alignment with common people’s stance as well i.e., the pro Palestinian stance that does not label any Palestinian party as terrorist. In line 9, the IE resumes formal Arabic again and states that “these [reports/accusations by the SG] do not oblige us in anything.” In the IE’s next turn (not shown in the script), the IE re-emphasizes that they are only obliged by the UN panel’s comprehensive agreement on the definition of terrorism that allows people under occupation to
resist the occupation. In other words, although the IE in the beginning of the excerpt showed indirect alignment with the IR’s question about the SG’s categorization of Hamas as terrorist by agreeing to switch to Arabic and by adopting the formal Palestinian stance, the IE’s response did not seem to please the Arab IR since he (IR) initiates a repair attempt and stresses again that he wants the IE’s response to the “Secretary General’s” accusations as shown in the overlap in line 4 above. Therefore, the IE redoes his alignment in his next turn and says in lines 5-6 “let the Secretary General say what he wants however he wants” which, as argued earlier, indicates that the IE is not concerned about the SG’s statement. Additionally, the IE starts speaking informally in lines 7-8 and thus displays a more informal stance of alignment through the use of informal Arabic that is closer to the Arabic-speaking audience in the same room and the overhearing audience in the Arab world.

Given that code-switching is both intended and “situational” i.e., that change of language corresponds to the change in the situation (Blom & Gumperz, 1972), speakers who code switch claim a new relationship with recipients, which is based on shared identities with local cultures (p. 125). The last two excerpts on code-switching are examples of how certain membership categorization tactics (code switching to another language and/or to another form of the same language) can be used by speakers in political news interviews to show alignment with the speaker and by extension an alignment with all the members in the same category.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Scholars and educators have showed increasing interest in institutional talk, especially in question-answer designs and the actions they perform in political discourse and other types of communication. In this thesis I have applied the findings of Clayman and Heritage (2002) and Koshik (2005) who maintain that certain questions, particularly reversed polarity questions (RPQs), can be heard as conducive by participants, and thus, recipients can hear the question as adversarial and disaligning. This thesis argues that interviewers’ questions can be designed to perform acts of both political alignment and/or disalignment with the interviewees in broadcast news interviews. This thesis also examined the use of membership categorization collections and attributes (as proposed by Sacks 1974; Schegloff 2006) in political interviews to stress the notion of ‘us versus them.’ These interviews are archived at the UN website and can be selected and broadcast by different international news agencies concerned with the Israel- Palestine ‘conflict’; therefore the role of the overhearing audience is important for both Arab and Israeli viewers.

The importance of this thesis stems from its potential implications that can be summarized as threefold:

This thesis adds to the CA literature on the relationship between questions’ design and the actions they perform especially in an institutional setting. Chapter 2 investigated the discourse strategies through which interviewers and interviewees in political news interviews manage to display political alignment and/or disalignment with one another. It examined examples where IEs and IRs practiced various kinds of wh- and yes/no questions to display agreement or disagreement with the speaker. This second chapter has expanded on the findings of existing research to support the premises that IRs’ questions are no longer neutral and that
they are intended to show disalignment with political figures. It examined examples from political news interviews where IRs’ questions can also be used to display alignment, in certain situations, with the IEs. Negated, prefaced, disjunctive, and declarative questions as well as attribution to third parties in broadcast political interviews can perform actions of embedding presuppositions and displaying either alignment or disalignment with IEs.

Chapter 3 examined instances where IEs and IRs employ membership categorization attributes and collections to index alignment with speakers who share the same ethnic and/or religious categories with speakers, and disalignment with those who do not share a co-membership. In other words, speakers, when asking questions or giving statements, can make references to membership categories that they share with the participant to index alignment. Or, they can label the “other” with negative references (like ‘terrorist’) to index disalignment with their political position. This thesis argues that the importance of categorization of speakers is especially relevant because these interviewers and interviewees have different agendas in categorizing themselves and others, and most importantly they have different overhearing audiences both in and outside the media stakeout. Sometimes when political alignment within the same category is at question, speakers may resort to more than one technique to display alignment, as examined in the last section.

Consequently, an important implication of this thesis is the potential of using its findings in various relevant fields, especially applied linguistics, sociolinguistics, discourse and conversation analysis, communication, and possibly English for Specific Purposes (ESP) for diplomats. The connection between the linguistic design of questions/responses and the acts they perform is important for teaching and researching communicative skills and strategies used in political and institutional discourse.
The analysis in this thesis can be used to compare Arab political discourse and how it compares to the discourses of other cultures. This information is needed for better cross cultural media relations and diplomatic negotiations at international institutions. This study began to answer questions regarding the culturally specific features of the Arabic language with regard to alignment and disalignment strategies, especially with Arabs’ and Muslims’ use of ethnic and religious categories (‘friend’ and ‘brother’ as opposed to ‘terrorist’) to index some sense of a special alignment that perhaps goes beyond politics.
References


APPENDIX A

Transcription Symbols

[   ] Overlapping utterances

= Latching: when there is no interval between adjacent utterances

(0.2) Timed silence within or between utterances in tenths of a second

- An abrupt cutoff of a word or sound

: Extension of the sound

. Falling intonation, e.g. final intonation.

, Continuing intonation

? Rising intonation

_ Stressed syllable

° Quieter than surrounding talk

CAP Louder than surrounding talk

↑↓ Marked change in pitch: upward or downward.

(h) Aspirations

(.h) Inhalations

< > Utterance is delivered at slower pace than surrounding talk

> < Utterance is delivered at quicker pace than surrounding talk.

(   ) Unclear hearing

(( )) Comments, details of the scene

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i Adapted from Atkinson and Heritage (1984).