Question/Answer Sequencing in Arabic TV Shows with Political Topics

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This research sheds light on the study of the language in interactions, namely conversations and how conversations work in political interviews especially in questions and answers. It will focus on the interactional practice of asking questions in Arabic political interviews. The study seeks to find out the kind of actions associated with the practice of questioning and answering in this setting, and what it tells us about the institutional responsibilities of its participants. Such transcripts which are widely available online can be utilised as an authentic language material for political discourse studies. Results showed that there are unique functions and forms to the question and answering turns in this institutional setting of talk, political interview. These functions are affected by the institutional mandate of the interviewer and the interviewees. Such differences may be the result of the specific institutional responsibilities that are framing the conversation and how it contributes in clarifying the public opinion with confrontational questions, considering the interviewee position as the top government figure in the country, the Prime Minister. Question/answer sequencing has been identified as a matter of concern in political interviews. According to the researchers' knowledge and the literature reviewed, no systematic study has been undertaken in the context of an Arabic (Iraqi in particular) TV show discourse, with political concerns. Approaches on talk-in-interaction, institutional talk and its effect on conversation will be applied. A literature review for these approaches is described with a focus on the question/answer turns. The data to be investigated consists of a single episode of Al Arabiyah "Frankly" show transcripts.

Key words: *authentic language, political interviews, TV show discourse*

Introduction

The purpose of this research is to shed light on the study of the language in interaction with a focus on the institutional discourse in a political interview setting and to check the usability of these transcripts as an authentic language material. The following questions were answered in this study: first, what mandates and thus departures from natural conversation are associated with the use of questioning and answering in this setting (TV show with political subjects in the Arab world)? Secondly, what are the institutional responsibilities of both interviewer and the interviewee in this setting of talk in interaction? The study is limited to the investigation of the question/answer sequencing of the TV talk show transcript of one episode of Al Arabiyah "Frankly" show.

This study is drawn from discourse analysis model that asserts that the interpretation of the social action must be executed taking into consideration the participants conduct in interaction. This qualitative study is drawn from discourse analysis model that asserts that the interpretation of the social action must be executed taking into consideration the participants conduct in interaction.

The study is meant to analyse an interview in the Al Arabiyah channel "Frankly" show. The data is the transcript of one episode of that show aired on the website of the Al Arabiyah Satellite channel. The transcript is of an interview with Iraqi Prime minister Nuri Al Maliky.

A qualitative research methodology was followed in analysing the data for this study. In this paper, the interactional practices of asking and answering questions will be explained considering the institutional setting of a political interview. The institutional constrains shown in the functions and responsibilities of both the interviewer and the interviewee will be examined in order to understand how far this setting affects the naturally occurring sequences of these turns. Data will be coded in terms of turns numbered chronologically so that they can be easily referred to. The transcripts in its original language will be added in the appendices part and those turns that will be identified as relevant for analysis will quoted and translated into English followed by the analytical explanation. The research site is the interview in the Al Arabiyah channel "Frankly" show. The data of this research is taken from the Al Arabiya Satellite channel website. The transcript is for an interview with Iraqi Prime Minister.

Literature Review

Talk-in-interaction is the home environment for language use. It is central for the working of institutions in society. Formal and informal situation both involves talking. Thus direct face-to-face interaction as it is assumed in conversation analysis (Atkinson and Heritage,

1984). Thus, talk is the unmarked normal daily interaction form in society and all other setting are considered institutional talk (Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

Six places were suggested by heritage to refer to the institutionality of a talk (1977:164): 1, turn taking organisation; 2, overall structural organisation; 3, sequence organisation; 4, turn design; 5, lexical choice; 6, epistemological and other forms of asymmetry. The question answer sequences sought in this research will focus on the first four sites. The notion of conditional relevance accounts for the fact that, given a first pair part, a second part is immediately relevant and expected (Schegloff, 1972: 363). So, there is an orientation to the expected appropriated second part even though if it may not occur. If such second fails to occur, it is noticeably absent. This notion makes clear that what binds the parts of adjacency pairs together is "the setting up of specific expectations which have to be attended to" (Levinson, 1983: 306). Understood this in this way, the adjacency pair structure forms what Heritage called "the architecture of intersubjectivity" (1984).

A main aspect of the use of discourse is turn at talk (Schegloff, 1996). The turn taking processing is a system composed of two basic components: a turn constructional component and a turn allocation component. To initiate a turn, four types of units are used: 1, one word or lexical units; 2, phrasal points; 3, clausal units and 4, sentential unit. These units of talk are called Turn Constructional Units (from now on TCU). The unit type helps people foresee closely the next turn type to be completed. The allocations of turns can be done by speakers by way of two groups of techniques: 1, current speaker selects next speaker; 2, next speaker self selects (Sacks, Shcegloff and Jefferson, 1974).

Thus, conversation are analysed in terms of turns as unit as contrasted with sentences and words as unites of discourse. At the end of each of these units the turn reaches a possible completion point, defined by syntactical, intentional, and pragmatic completion. Possible completion is what people observe in the speakers' talks in order to start to speak and it is where, therefore, transition between speakers becomes relevant, at a transition relevance place.

Adjacency pairs are the main unit of the organisation of discourse because upon which the organisation of talk is being built. They are two adjacent turns utterance (e.g. question-answer, offer-acceptance) and they contribute to the identification of the so-called transition of speaker's occurrence. According to Schegloff (1996) adjacency pairs are sequences of two utterances that are adjacent, produced by different speakers, ordered as first pair part and second pair part, type specific, so that a particular pair part requires a particular second pair part, e.g. question requires an answer or reply, invitation acceptance ...etc.

When it comes to the term conditional relevance accounts, it means that a first pair part is usually followed by a relevant second pair part (Shegloff, 1972:363). So, the second pair part is identified in terms of its relevance to the first part and the premise is, hence "the setting up of specific expectations which have to be attended to" (Levinson, 1983).

Preference organisation is another important notion related to conversation. This is closely related to the adjacency pair concept and it means that second pair part is not always positive or unmarked. The second pair part may be preferred such as acceptance to an offer or may be dispreferred or marked such as disagreement to a first pair part content. As stated, preferred second pair parts are structurally unmarked, i.e., they are produced on time, with and are not delayed, etc.; dispreferred ones, on the contrary, are marked: they are produced after some significant delay; with a preface marking their dispreferred orientation (e.g. 'well'), and usually accompanied by some account justifying the preferred second pair part cannot be accomplished. As a last relevant point, Pomerantz (1978) calls attention to action-chains, for example, an assessment may project a second assessment in the second pair part position.

Media Discourse

Natural conversation has recently been the focus of research especially in media discourse and the interactant's use of narrative in mediated contexts (Thornborow, 2000). It is clear that there will be significance difference in how same story is being told by two speakers. Fairclough (1995) asserts that media discourse analysis needs to be highlighted as an important element within the research pinpointing the process of social and cultural change. The emergence of mass media seems to run parallel to that of language. It clearly influences its evolution and it is probably the cause of many changes and innovations that happen in language at both written and spoken level (Signs, 2000).

The discourse occurring in news media is a form of social interaction as the participants are engaged in a real social practice within their community. The idea that power is associated with media comes from the fact that it is persuasive in nature where the objective is to influence the minds of the readers or viewers (van Dijk, 1995). Fairclough (1989) points out that practicing language in media discourse is not merely listing of facts, but it is also exercising of power that is increasingly achieved through ideology, and more particularly through the ideological workings of language.

Recent work in the field of media discourse has been concerned with various levels in the organisation and structure of audience participation programs such as TV talk shows; on radio and television other approaches to the analysis of talk in these settings have focused on the interactional frameworks at play in the talk (Thornborow, 2000). The general public relies more or less uncritically on the news and media for much of its understanding of issues

and events in the public domain. Media theorists usually regard news reporting and media programs as value laden and ultimately ideological, as a social force typically acting to support the interest of various economic and political elites.

News Interview and TV Shows

Clayman (2001) defined news interviews as a central means by which journalists gather information that will later be worked up into finished news stories. It is also employed as a finished news product in its own right, a basic form in which news is packaged for public consumption. Munson (1993) states that talk shows originated on the radio as early as the 1930s when audience participation and interactive talk radio started to emerge. Munson (1993) claims that, since the listeners were potential consumers, controversial and sensationalised talk soon became the weapons used to attract listeners. The economic strategy of talk radio was to exploit controversies and contemporary problems about which people were emotionally charged, and therefore vulnerable, so as to get their undivided attention and thus more effectively sell them something.

In the same way as all-news and all-talk programs, talk shows were first conceived as talk service more than twenty years ago. Their goal was to give lively and useful information, centred on interpersonal and psychological matters, to women (Munson, 199); to help them to deal with ordinary and more often interpersonal problems. Furthermore, talk shows have been exported to Great Britain, for example, where Ricki Lake and Opera Winfery are broadcast weekly on channel 4. The formats of such renowned shows as Opera Winfery have been exported and copied in other countries such as Spain, Germany and Mexico. In Arab countries, however, we can consider the Egyptian Hala show talk show is a coinage of the American Opera TV talk show.

The news interview is a familiar kind of broadcast interaction. The difference that it has in relation to other kinds the distinctive orientation clanged to its participants, subject matter and the kind of interaction. In prototypical news interview, the interviewer is known as a professional journalist rather than an advocate or entertainer. Interviewees are public figures, experts or others whose actions or opinions are worth broadcasting (Clayman, 2004).

Interviewing elected officials and public figures is relatively new as this was not the case in the United States, for instance, until after the first half century of the history of this country. Public institution was not publicly accessible and journalists were gradually being granted access to the senate and then to the House of Representatives and only after going through certain type of screenings and approvals (Leonard, 1986). At that time, political parties funded most newspapers and the interest was always in echoing the voice of these parties and not a source of public information (Schudson, 1978). Transcripts of TV shows and news

interviews are plausible as a data for qualitative research. Now, however, Television data is known to provide ecologically valid samples of natural behaviour (Pesarin et al, 2011).

Talk shows and Social Phenomenon

The talk show centres its discussion on a topic (Singes, 2000:12); the discussion is based on the stories told by the guests who come to the program with the purpose of revealing themselves to the public. The topics are personal, intimate, and highly controversial; a fact that leads to polarised opinions between those who are in favour and those who are against. As in casual conversation the talk show dialogue is often intended to find the causes of disagreement and, if possible, to examine possible and acceptable solutions (Illie, 1999: 985 and 986). Unlike news interviews that involves journalists to gather information that will later be worked up into finished news stories (Jerzy, 2001). TV talks shows are usually live discussion of topics of public interest whereby cultural, political and economic forces being presented. According to Signes (2000) talk shows are a candidate for an oppositional public sphere, emphasising the expression of interesting points of view that give voice to participant's perspectives and aim at compromise rather than consensus. In such circumstances the obligation on participants are to express their point of view as clearly and strongly as possible while recognising that there are other interests at stake.

Questions and Answers

Questions and answers are a very productive type of conversational structure, which shows many institutional settings. Drew & Heritage (1992) asserts the activity of questioners, of answerers, and the interplay of questions and answers. This shows the strong sensibility of language to its varied contexts of use and its specificities.

Traditionally, a question is an element of social action spoken in search of information through an interrogative syntactic structure. According to the later trends of semantic grammar, however, interrogative form is not the only form of asking question and in the language use in turn at talk; other syntactic forms may be made questions. According to Schegloff (1984) for instance, the position occupied by turns in conversational sequence needs to be looked at. Heritage (2002) stated that there are two methods of mapping interrogative in the sense of seeking information. One way is that the questioning made by other kinds of structures such as declarative questions through adding a rising intonation to it (Quirk et al., 1985). Another way is through statements that belong to the informational territory of the recipient (Labov& Fanshel, 1977) and, second, there are other kinds of questioning that are not meant to seek information where the interrogative form does not function as a question. One example of these is when questions is part of a tag question structure or as an indirect speech acts (Levinson, 1983). They may also be used as a form of

evaluation and assessment (e.g. to outrage or accuse, e.g. 'How could you', Clayman & Heritage (2002)). The interpretation of these different sequences depends on the context in which they occur (Schegloff, 1984). Moreover, Kubashi and Yousif (2020) argues that there is a positive relationship between the critical thinking skill instruction and the EFL students' reading interpretation proficiency. There is also other types of interrogative that is widely used in such setting as news interviews and whose sense as questioning is not always clear. This is the negative interrogative structure (e.g. 'isn't it or 'don't you'), which is usually directed towards expressing a position or an attitude and they are more emphatic than seeking for information. In this case, the conduciveness of the questions –the conveyed predisposition of the speaker to a particular kind of response comes into play (Bolinger, 1957). In terms of questioning in institutional setting, Heritage & Roth (1995) listed the major classes of questions identified by Quirk et al. (1985). According to them, five kinds of questions are identified: yes/no questions, tag-questions, declarative-questions, why-questions and alternative questions. In news interviews, the interviewers' turn is to accomplish their responsibility to ask questions and this does not entail that the traditional interrogative forms of questions is the only form adopted. Thus, in analysing interviewer as person who asks questions, we do need to look at the other form of questioning that Heritage and Roth listed here.

Finally they discuss the fact that the interviewers produce, besides the questioning TCU itself, a multiunit turn termed –the question delivery structure (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991). They found four interviewers' (IR) turns formats, specified in activity terms: (a) background + question; (b) relevance + question; (c) counter + question, and (d) contrast structure + question. This shows us that news interview questioning is a complex, multifaceted activity. Clayman and Heritage (2002) develop a new system for analysing questions in news interviews and press conference. They focus on the phenomenon of adversary in question designs, considering 4 basic dimensions of adversary: (a) initiative; (b) directness; (c) assertiveness, and, (d) hostility. Comparing forms of questioning that characterised the press conference of Eisenhower and Ronal Reagan, they have found some historical changes, such as the fact that journalists have become much less deferential and more aggressive in their treatment of U.S. president. Clayman (1988), on the contrary, discuss these works the strategies used by the interviewers to display a neutral stance in a television news interview. One important strategy is to treat problematic or controvert information as "third-party attributed statements". This projected conduct is also treated by the interviewees's point of view or opinion of another person or as having a different source. Another side of this problem is the possible conduciveness of questioning, when the speaker shows predisposition to a particular kind of response (Heritage, 2002). The question is formulated as to convey an expectation for a positive or negative response. Some question formats like negative interrogative and tag questions have been examined to show their conduciveness (Bolinger, 1957; Hudson, 1975). Heritage (2002) goes a step further when he shows that the boundary

between questions and assertions can be very subtle. The analyst must have in mind the participants' goals and the setting restrictions that operate on the question activity in different contexts.

Since the purpose of this study is to find out the questioning and answering strategies in TV shows tackling political topics, a review need to be made on the literature in media discourse. Interviewing is one of the common tools for media and it involves the host and the guest. Clayman (2002) stated that interviewers or host's responsibility is to ask questions on behalf of the public. This is a general trait that is adopted by interviewers in all cultures and Arabic interview is not an exception. Interviewees, on the other hand, appear to accept the fundamental questions framed this way by the interviewers and they generally proceed to answer them- or at least they present themselves as answering. According to Clayman (2002), this practice does extend beyond the American context and it seems plausible as a legitimate rhetoric in other market democracies around the world.

Since media interviews with public figures include aggressive political topics, it has been noticed that public figures answering discourse lean toward a denial of ethnic and racial stereotypes and prejudices. Van Dijk (1992) stated that this is particularly true for various forms of elite discourse, since the elite's control or have preferential access to the major means of public communication. Actually, this kind of denial or elite discourse is common in political interviews and in media but it often implies the reverse of what is stated and is usually said so to avoid negative impression. This kind of discourse on the part of the interview deserves study and analysis. The denial may also transfer the charge to others 'I have nothing against blacks, but my neighbours (customers, etc)…' Ultimately, denials may also reveres the charges and accuse the accuser for having (intentionally) misunderstood the actor/speaker, for having accused the actor/speaker without grounds or even for being intolerant: 'Not WE, but THY are the real racist'. Such reversals are typical for right-wing attacks against anti-racist (van Dijk, 1991). Following from this it is worth mentioned how similar practice occurs daily in the Iraqi media. The only difference is that the reversals and accusation exchange is ethnic (Shia, Sunni) rather than racist.

Data Analysis and Discussion

A qualitative research methodology was followed in analysing the data for this study. In this paper, the interactional practices of asking and answering questions were explained in light of the institutional setting of a political interview. The institutional constrains shown in the functions and responsibilities of both the interviewer and the interviewee will be examined in order to understand how far this setting affects the naturally occurring sequences of these turns.

The data for this study is the transcript of one episode of the (Frankly) political interview of Al Arabia satellite channel. The episode interviewed Iraqi Prime Minister Nuri Al Maliky and discussed security issues and military operation and other political issues. The Arabic transcript was used for the analysis and it was translated into English the turns that will be analysed after being coded into numbered themes.

Research methodology is qualitative in nature. The study followed a conversational analysis model and the analysis will be centred on the formulation of questioning and answering turns in political interview: The following preliminary analysis has been made and which will be later fully developed:

The objective of the interview was to check the ability of the Iraqi PM in his position and to questions his position and future based on the Basrah military operation and its relationship to the Sadrists Militant group. In this sense PM was questioned on an issue which was highly attributed to the defects of his rule. The following extracts are the interviews' questioning:

Turn [1]: لماذا اخترت الطريق الصعب؟ يعني لماذا لم تستنفد كل الوسائل؟ مع العلم أني أسمع من رجال أعمال كثيرين في البصرة أن العصابات والميليشيات تحكمت في النفوس وتحكمت في كل الإمكانيات الهائلة للعراق ولكن أيضاً سمعت بعض السياسيين يقولون يمكن كان فينا نحل المشكل مع العصابات بالتفاوض. لماذا اتخذت هذا القرار؟

The interviewer initiates his question with a "preface" to address the issue to the audience before transitioning into the core question which took the direct interrogative structure starting with "Why do you take this decision" which is not only merely a question but it also implies assessment from the part of the interviewer. It also meant to give background on the position of the prime minister and the decision that he took which will be the centre of this episode. So the opening question in the context of the political interview does not follow the natural function it has in the naturally occurring conversation. Here it involves an introduction of the interviewee, an assessment of the interviewee's position and also a topic initiator.

The PM's answer was also indirect and implies more than merely answering a question.

Turn [2]: رئيس الوزراء: بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم. أعتقد مراجعة لموقفي التاريخي من التيار الصدري هو كفيل بالإجابة، لأني كنت من الذين احتضنوا هذا التيار وأداموا معه العلاقة ووقف إلى جنبه في مختلف المواقف، وكنا نأمل أن يكونوا فعلاً امتداداً لحركة الشهيد الصدر الأول والثاني. ولكن يقال آخر الدواء الكي. كل المحاولات التي بذلتها وعبر مختلف الأساليب وفي لقاءات مباشرة مع السيد مقتدى الصدر ومع معنيين بهذه المسألة، وأشرت إلى المخاطر ونبهت وأعتقد حتى من خلال العربية نبهت إلى أن التيار في خطر لوجود عناصر مندسة فاسدة من بقايا النظام السابق هم في بداية الأمر اغتاظوا من هذا التصريح ولكنهم بعد ذلك هم أكدوا وجود مثل هذه العناصر الاختراقية. استمرت العملية وأعتقد من حق أي دولة حينما تصل الأمور إلى وجود دولة ثانية إلى جنبها وجيش آخر إلى جنب جيشها وأمن إلى جنب

أمنها، وهناك من يتدخل بشؤون موظفيها ودوائرها بمختلف التدخل والفساد لا بد وأن يكون المسؤول الذي تولى الأمر أن يعبّر عن مسؤوليته الوطنية والشرعية بإيقاف هذا التدخل وإيقاف هذا التدهور.

The prime minister turn: "review of my historical position toward Al Sadr group is enough to answer this question…" at the beginning of his speech is an indication that the question was not meant to elicit information but was an assessment attempt. This beginning of the interviewee's turn is evidence that the interviewer's question does not seek for information but was meant to assess to the wider viewing audience whist is being talked about. In this case the dispreferred response in this setting is not to disagree with the interviewer, which could be the later part: "that we go directly to the military solution" but rather is to justify the decision of launching the military operation.

In the following abstract and after several questions about sovereignty in case the Turkish army entered northern Iraq, we found the host question all previous turns from PM Maliki about his alleged interest in protecting the sovereignty of the country. This was highlighted when the host hinted out that the PM is OK with Turkey chasing rebels in northern Iraq and his reference to the US and its troops as being part of the responsibility to secure Iraq. The host questioned the legitimacy if the PM's allegation by asking him direct question:

إيلي ناكوزي: ولماذا لا ترسلون الجيش العراقي مثلاً أو مش الجيش جزء أو كتيبة أو يعني لملاحقة هؤلاء من ينتمون إلى حزب العمال الكردستاني؟
"Why don't you send the Iraqi army, for example, and chase those who affiliate with the Kurdistan labor part?"

The answer from the prime minister, one again, started with an account and no direct answer was made. This made it clear that the question was not preferred and in order to cope with this, the PM started the answer with an account and with filling words such as "I say frankly", "In addition the army busy…" and "even though…". This discursive strategy has always been vey effective to avoid giving direct answer to a question that entails a dispreferred answer. Here is the turn where the PM used, preface, introduction, and so on.

نوري المالكي: أنا أقول بصراحة إضافة إلى أن الجيش العراقي منشغل في كل قطعة من أرض العراق وهو جيش فتي لحد الآن لا يملك القدرات والميكانيكية الكافية للحركة داخل الجبال، ولكنه حتى لو امتلكها كما كان الجيش العراقي يمتلك سابقاً فهو سوف لن يكون قادراً على أن يطرد هذه المنظمة من قمم الجبال العالية، نعم نستطيع أن نلاحقهم في المدن، في السهول، في الشوارع، قطع الإمداد، وهذا ما عملنا عليه وسنعمل بكل جدية، لكنه لا الجيش العراقي الآن متفرغ لهي العملية ولا القدرات الموجودة تمكننا ولا العملية تُحل بهذا الشكل من التقدم العسكري لجبال عاصية جبال مرتفعة جبال وعرة يصعب حتى على الجيش التركي أنا أقول أنها صعوبة عليه إمكانية حسم المعركة في أعالي الجبال، لأن الجانب التركي أيضاً لديهم داخل تركيا أيضاً جبال على الشريط الحدودي العراقي وموجودين في حزب العمال، ولكن الجانب التركي أيضاً لم يتمكن من حسم المعركة معهم لأن التحصن بهذه الجبال كما نعرف هو أفضل حماية للمقاتلين

Conclusion

This study is drawn from discourse analysis model which asserts that the interpretation of the social action must be executed taking into consideration participants conduct in interaction. In that we can conclude that there are unique functions and forms to the question and answering turns in this institutional setting of talk, political interview. These functions are affected by the institutional mandate of the interviewer and the interviewees. Such differences may be the result of the specific institutional responsibilities that are framing the conversation and how it contributes in clarifying the public opinion with confrontational questions, considering the interviewee position as the top government figure in the country, the Prime Minister.

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