

A Statistical and Pragmatic Analysis on Questioning in Chinese TV Interview Programs

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Abstract. Pragmatically, questioning is a special kind of speech act and language use, which can fulfill many pragmatic functions. The host's every questioning utterance in TV interview programs means to perform some actions; thus it has been a fascinating research theme across many linguistic disciplines. The study applies SPSS 20.0 to conduct a statistical analysis on questioning's syntactical formulation and its functions involved in TV interview programs in details. Based on collected data from three famous TV interview programs in China and with the help of SPSS 20.0, descriptive analysis and crosstabs analysis are implemented and relevant statistical results are then generated in terms of Stacked Bar Charts and Drop Line Charts. The statistical findings show that wh-questions and yes/no questions are the two predominant syntactical forms of questioning applied by hosts in these three TV interview programs and that the hosts' questioning is designed mainly to realize these four pragmatic functions: topic and turn managing, information seeking and checking, positioning taking and sympathy arousing. Based on naturally occurring data from institutional talk, this quantitative study can thus serve as a point of departure and guideline for future questioning research in the flourishing multi-media era.

1. Introduction

The boost of technological innovation ushers in the tremendous growth of mass media. Against this backdrop, TV interview programs in China have been skyrocketing, which provide audiences with numerous visual feasts varying in topics, issues and fields. In TV interview programs, questioning is often seen as a significant component of communication. A successful questioning utterance can well

perform some functions, thus push the program move forward harmoniously and smoothly. Therefore, to secure the smoothness of an interview and the amount of information programs bound to provide, the host's expertise in manipulating questioning exerts highly critical importance. And thus, this linguistic phenomenon has aroused many linguists' interest across different disciplines.

To probe into questioning's main syntactical forms and its functions in TV interview programs, the study conducts a quantitative analysis based on data collected from 24 episodes of three famous TV interview programs (namely, *Dialogue*, *Yang Lan One on One* and *Lu Yu You Yue*). The study applies SPSS20.0 to execute the statistical analysis process. With the assistance of SPSS20.0, descriptive analysis and crosstabs analysis are conducted and Stacked Bar Charts and Drop Line Charts are then generated, which directly compare and differentiate questioning's several main syntactical forms and functions involved in TV interview programs and which thus can serve as a cornerstone for further pragmatic questioning research.

The remainder of the paper is organized as follows: Section 2 reviews and teases out previous literature on questions and questioning from home and abroad. Section 3 conducts the statistical survey and discussion on questioning's syntactical forms and functions in data collected from 24 episodes of *Dialogue*, *Yang Lan One on One* and *Lu Yu You Yue*, each with 8 episodes. Section 4 then concludes the statistical findings and proposes future research focus in pragmatic questioning study.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Pervious Research Work on Questions

2.1.1. Typology of Foreign Questions

In English grammar, the term "interrogative" is often used. The study of questions has aroused lots of logicians, linguists and philosophers' interest, especially in the late 1950s. Usually, it is believed that questions investigation originates from the grammatical filed, prospers in the logical-semantic sphere, and continues to develop in the pragmatic domain. Therefore, there are a considerable number of authoritative scholarly studies in the field. Literature on foreign interrogatives research mainly consists of grammatical/syntactical classifications, focus on illustrations of one type of questions and functions of questions.

Grammarians attach great importance to question classifications. Naiman etl first propose the classification of general question and specific question [1]. By Quirk's account, interrogatives are seen as one of the four major syntactic types that are coupled with different discourse functions, which mainly aim at seeking information about a specific issue [2]. In line with the types of reply and response expected, questions can fall into three categories: the *yes/no questions*, the response to which can be either positive or negative; the *wh-questions*, the reply to which is various and open; the *alternative questions*, whose reply is to choose one from the two or more options offered in such a question. This is the most widely cited classification of question, although it still causes some controversy. Moreover, question can perform other discourse functions as well, such as request, suggestion, invitation and advice. Later, this kind of questions was divided into two types: exclamatory and rhetorical questions. The former "has the illocutionary force of an exclamatory assertion" while the latter "has the force of a strong assertion".

Another syntactically based typological distinction has been made between *direct questions* and *indirect questions* [3]. Bull introduces two additional categories when discussing news interviews: "*moodless*" questions named by Jucker, which refer to questions without a finite verb and *indirect questions* "in which the force of the question is expressed in a subordinate clause" [4-5]. In brief,

direct questions are expressed by independent interrogative sentences, whereas indirect ones are expressed by dependent interrogative clauses playing as complement of a verb such as *ask*, *wonder*, and so on.

Syntactically, among the typology of six major questions, yes/no questions, wh-questions and alternative questions are interrogatives, while declarative, indirect and moodless questions are non-interrogatives. All in all, with these grammarians' research on interrogatives and based on classic grammar, a general classification of English interrogatives is widely accepted, which contains general questions (yes/no questions), tag questions, special questions (wh-questions) and alternative questions.

Many researchers focus on one type of questions in various kinds of languages, such as assertive questions, polar questions, rhetoric questions and like (Skilton, 2017; Hamdani et al., 2018; Destruel, 2017). One issue in the literature on interrogatives is debated, which concerns how to best answer a question. For example, what constitutes an appropriate or possible answer to a wh-question? Linked to this issue is the observation that there exist different types of questions. Based on this, Mention-All and Mention-Some questions are then proposed (George, 2011; Xiang, 2016a; Dayal, 2016). As for rhetoric questions, several theoretical linguistic schools have grappled with its description, features and uses. This kind of questions is profoundly discussed in the framework of structural grammar, transformation-generative and pragmatic approaches (Sadock, 1971; Ilie, 1994; Attila, 2013).

As for the function approach to English questions, many linguists have considered eliciting information the core function of a question (Levinson, 1983; Egbert and Vöge, 2008). McHoul (1987) divides questions into Q-type (questionnaire-type) and N-type (negative-type) in accordance with their functions [6]. In most cases, a Q-type question is often followed by an answer in a strict sense, whereas an N-type is probably replied with defense, admission, excuse, justification or others. Later, Ilie brings forth a new category method according to types of response obtained [7]. This new method is in compliance with pragmatic criteria. That is, the principle of *pragmatic adequacy answers*. Accordingly, four major types of question are identified as information-, answer-, action- and mental-response-eliciting questions. Analogous to Ilie's viewpoint, Freed (1994) develops a linear continuum of question functions [8]. He argues that any question can be located somewhere along the continuum, one polar of which is information sought and the other information conveyed. Freed's four categories of questions, ranging from those at the end of seeking information to that of conveying information, are "the external questions", "the questions about talk", "the relational questions", "the expressive style questions".

CA's function-based model of questions also exert great influences in question research work (Levinson, 2012; Heritage, 2013a). Levinson's functional model of questions is a far-reaching theorization on questions, which is concerned about the social economics of questions [9]. One important consequence of this model is that asking questions is associated with social costs, since questions ask for information which per se has a social value.

According to the above research on different classifications of question, the present study believes that scholars in different research fields classify question in concord with its forms or functions in order to meet their research needs. Besides, question research work in various languages has further explored its universality and specialty, which also shed great light on Chinese question investigation.

2.1.2 Typology of Chinese Questions

In the 1990s, there was an emerging linguistic engagement in questions and questioning. While some Chinese linguists concern English interrogatives (Wang, 1995; Xu, 1998; Xu & Xu, 1999), many Chinese scholars are inclined to acquire foreign theoretical illustrations of English questions

and compare them with Chinese question theorization (Xing, 2001; Shao, 1994; Ding, 2008). Their study focuses on question's syntactical structure, semantic content, and pragmatic value and so on.

As for Chinese interrogative categorization, Chinese grammarians divide Chinese interrogatives in various ways and in accordance with different standards and benchmarks. Xing (2001) divides selective questions into four main types[10]. Shao (2013) discusses the structure types of Chinese interrogative sentences and rhetorical questions [11]. Basically, Chinese interrogative sentences fall into four categories: "Shifei Type" (yes/no questions), "Tezhi Type"(wh-questions), "Xuanze Type"(alternative questions)and "Zhengfan Type"(tag questions), which are shown in Table 1 [12]:

Table 1: Chinese Interrogative Categorizations.

| Chinese Forms | Features | Examples | English Counterpart |
|---------------|--|---|-----------------------|
| Shifei Type | Declarative sentence plus particles such as "ne", "ma", "ba", "ya", etc. | <i>ta zai chifan ba?</i> (Is he eating?) | Yes/no questions |
| Tezhi Type | Using interrogative pronoun in declarative sentences | <i>shui lai le?</i> (Who comes?) | Wh- questions |
| Xuanze Type | The application of "shi...haishi" | <i>shi ni shuo haishi wo shuo ?</i> (Do you say or I say?) | Alternative questions |
| Zhengfan Type | The application of "shibushi" | <i>Ta shibushi xue yixue de ?</i> (Does he major in medicine?) | Tag questions |

According to the above account and analysis, it is obvious to find that the grammatical classification of question is based on types of reply and response. Besides, this kind of categorization basically focuses on syntactical forms of questions instead of their pragmatic functions, which can only be explained in contexts, although some of the grammarians do mention some discourse functions fulfilled by questions.

2.2 Previous Research Work on Questioning

Linguistic scholarship of interview questioning can be concluded mainly from two disciplines: conversation analysis (CA) and pragmatics.

2.2.1 Conversation Analysis Approach to Questioning

Conversation analysts tend to connect CA's conventional key concepts and issues with questioning analysis. In CA, there is a body of work concerning the relationship between questioning and preference, adjacency pair, affiliation and disaffiliation (Leon, 2004; Clayman et al., 2007; Sheng, 2004; Steensig & Drew, 2008; Hayano, 2012; Bolden, 2016; Yu & Liang, 2018). Particularly, conversationists regard questioning as an activity and highlight what it is used to do in interaction in various settings.

Based on preference for agreement in question-answer pair, Leon examines this concept in French news interview questioning, which displays that participants' question-answer sequence design is closely related to the preference for agreement [13]. Yu & Liang (2018) explores the preference for "X" in selective question "X or (Y)"within the theoretical framework of CA [14].

The term question itself is used broadly to refer to the first pair part in an adjacency pair. Question-answer pair is a typical adjacency pair. Based on Sinclair and Coulthard's question-answer pair structure (initiation, response and follow-up), Sheng classifies questioning acts in TV interviews into different categories [15].

Research work on the relationship between questioning and affiliation and disaffiliation is also alive in CA. Stokoe & Edwards describe questioning practice in a way that specifies its affiliation and disaffiliation potential and is explicit about institutional aspects of its use [16].

In brief, CA's research has explicated questioning's interactional property and its activity orientation, which mainly concerns actions questioning occasions in various specific local contexts.

2.2.2 Pragmatic Approach to Questioning

Questioning is an activity aiming at requesting information, which makes it different fundamentally from questions in both forms and functions. The former is characteristic of dynamics and uncertainty, which is to fulfill communicative functions and the functions of which can only be explained and illustrated in specific contexts. In brief, questioning is not mere one in the form of interrogative sentence and not just to approach the goal of getting information.

Recent years has seen questioning research booming in the field of pragmatics. Compared with other linguistic disciplines focusing on questioning's static forms, pragmatics concern more about its dynamic and functional tissue. Basically, research on functions of interrogative sentences has laid a solid foundation for the pragmatic research of questioning. All of those characteristics of questions can therefore form a solid foundation for questioning. Lots of linguists, such as Quirk (1972, 1985), Georgia (1989) and Amy Tsui (1992), probed deep into the analysis of this research.

Pragmatic scholars seem interested to discuss questioning's various functions, including information requesting. Graesser pointed out that questioning can be divided into two types: the real questioning aiming at requiring information and the strategic questioning containing other pragmatic functions [17]. Obviously, as for him, not all questioning is designed to request information.

Chinese researchers also showed great interest in questioning, especially questioning's pragmatic functions (He, 1995, 1997; Wang, 1995; Xu, 1998; Xu & Xu, 1999; Kang, 2001; Yang & Ran, 2017). He (1995, 1997) and Xu (1998)'s pioneering study on questioning shed great light on latter relevant research. He treats questioning as a speech act and process, which is driven and motivated by pragmatic needs and designed to realize certain communicative goals [18]. He views questioning as an act full of various complicated features and interpersonal-situational interactive values and illustrates the relationship between contexts and questioning's pragmatic power and functions [19]. In studying English interrogatives and questioning functions, Xu proposes a new theory entitled Transmutation of Interrogatives [20]. He supposes that transmutation of questions demonstrates itself in two ways: the transmutation in grammatical representation and that in pragmatic functions. The former concerns structural changes which will finally turn interrogatives into non-interrogatives, while the latter bears characteristics of gradual decrease, or even transference of pragmatic functions. Besides, many researchers focus on teacher's questioning in classroom contexts (Yang, 2012; Chen, 2016), which aim at bringing teacher's questioning strategies and pragmatic functions into full play in classroom setting.

As for interview questioning, the pragmatic approach to interview questioning is mostly concerned with cooperative principles and pragmatic functions. Based on framework of Face Model proposed by Bull et al. (1996), Eliliott & Bull (1996) examine the face threats in questions uttered in political interviews. Ilie investigates the discursive and argumentative functions of question-response argumentation in talk shows [21]. Lei testifies the prevalent application of Cooperative Principle, Politeness Principle and Face Theory to host's questioning in TV interview programs [22].

From the above literature review, it can be concluded that from the pragmatic point of view, questioning is an important and universal behavioral mode to effect linguistic interpersonal functions in speech activities. Other related pragmatic research shows that questioning can not only orient to attract interviewees' attention, expressing empathy, intrigue audience's curiosity, but also can help to

keep the interviewing proceed at a steady pace and thus keep hosts' communicative tasks at issue. In a word, questioning matters much to the success of a conversation, for it plays a prominent role in promoting conversations, especially in the TV interview programs characteristic of typical question-answer sequences. Naturally, the hosts' manipulation of the skill of questioning makes great contributions to a successful interview, which has become their top priority in preparation for interviews.

Therefore, in accordance with pragmatics, the present research regards questioning as a kind of special language use and a speech act, which can realize many pragmatic functions so as to satisfy speakers' communicative needs and expectation. As for question, it is then only a kind of linguistic product generated in such communicative environments.

Since a vast past body of work on question and questioning are mainly done with qualitative methodologies and are mostly on English interrogatives, the study intends to explore the two issues with quantitative method in Chinese TV interview settings. Quantitative analyses can reflect main questioning strategies and functions hosts apply in Chinese TV interviews more straightforward and transparent. Thus, it may shed some light on future questioning investigation in the multi-media age.

To conduct this corpus-based research on question and questioning, the study has collected 747 pieces of questioning utterances from 24 episodes of *Dialogue*, *Yang Lan One on One* and *Lu Yu You Yue* (each with 8 episodes). This data are then marked, classified and differentiated through SPSS20.0. Relevant statistical results help to grasp prevalent grammatical forms and pragmatic functions questioning performs in these three programs, which are conducive to understanding questioning's dynamic generation process in TV interview programs and which thus may provide clues to future questioning investigation.

3. Statistical Analysis and Discussion

With the data collected, we now start with the analysis of the syntactical formulation of questioning in TV interview programs. A total of 747 pieces of questioning are collected and analyzed in this part, which is selected from several episodes of three famous TV interview programs in China. The three interview programs are *Dialogue*, *Yang Lan One on One* and *Lu Yu You Yue*. 8 episodes of each program are collected randomly and are involved in the whole analysis of questioning in TV interview programs. The transcript of *Dialogue* is from its own official website, while transcripts of the other two are from video footage. With recourse to SPASS 20.0, the study conducts descriptive analysis and crosstabs analysis. Statistical results will be presented and discussed in two main parts: questioning's syntactical formulation and questioning functions occurring in these three programs. All question examples will be underlined, while AUX is short for auxiliary word, PRT short for particle and NOM short for nominalizer (de).

3.1 The Syntactical Formulation of Questioning in TV Interview Programs

Questioning formulation can be divided from the perspective of syntax. The forms of Chinese interrogative sentences are different from those in English. As is mentioned above, researchers basically classify Chinese interrogative sentences into four categories: yes/no questions, wh-questions, alternative questions and tag questions [12]. These four basic question forms are prevalent in our collected data. Through descriptive and crosstabs analysis by SPSS 20.0, we get Table 2 and Figure 1.

Table 2: Different Syntactical Forms of Questioning in Dialogue, Yang Lan One on One and Lu Yu You Yue.

| | | Interview Programs | | | Total |
|------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|---------------|
| | | Dialogue | Yang Lan One on One | Lu Yu You Yue | |
| Different Forms of Questions | Yes/no Questions | 71 36.8% | 46 46.0% | 285 62.8% | 402 53.8% |
| | Wh-Questions | 106 54.9% | 46 46.0% | 155 34.1% | 307 41.1% |
| | Alternative Questions | 7 3.6% | 2 2.0% | 12 2.6% | 21 2.8% |
| | Tag questions | 9 4.7% | 6 6.0% | 2 0.4% | 17 2.3% |
| Total | | 193 100.0% | 100 100.0% | 454 100.0% | 747 100.0% |

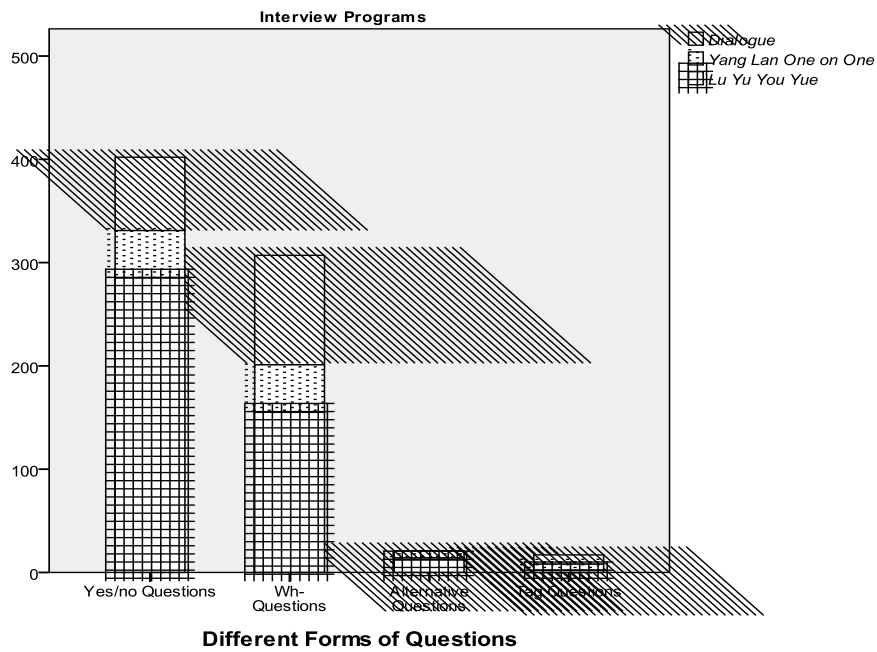


Figure 1: Different Forms of Questions Occuring in *Dialogue*, *Yang Lan One on One* and *Lu Yu You Yue*.

From the above table and figure, we find that: out of a total of 747 pieces of questions, 53.8% of the questions are in the form of yes/no questions and 41.1% of yes/no questions, both of which enjoy an overwhelmingly alarming frequency in these three interview programs, compared with that of alternative questions (2.8%) and tag questions (2.3%). In terms of each TV interview program, these two syntactical also take up the majority of the total questions in each TV interview program: in collected *Dialogue episodes*, 36.8% of its questions are yes/no questions and 54.9% are wh-questions (compared with alternative questions 3.6% and tag questions 4.7%); in collected *Yang Lan One on One* episodes, both yes/no questions and wh-questions constitute 46.0% of its total questions (compared with alternative questions 2.0% and tag questions 6.0%); in collected *Lu Yu You Yue* episodes, 62.8% of its questions are yes/no questions and 34.1% are wh-questions (compared with alternative questions 2.6% and tag questions 0.4%). Therefore, we arrive at the conclusion that in these TV interview programs, the vast majority of questioning utterances are made by these two syntactical forms: yes/no questions and wh-questions.

The findings well reflect the nature of institutional talk. Institutional talk is exclusively task-oriented, which is its most remarkable difference from daily conversation. The so-called task orientation means that hosts are supposed to fulfil the main task of requesting information in the course of interviews. Since wh- and yes/no questions are bound to elicit or check information as answers, they are frequently framed and applied by hosts in TV interview programs. For example: (Abbreviations: AUX, auxiliary word; PRT, particle; NOM, nominalizer (de))

Example 1

Yang Lan: hen duo ren bang ni zai shu zhe, ni yi jing pai le 100 duo bu dian ying, 60 ji zhang zhuan ji, jiu shi bu ke xiang xiang ni de duo chan, wei shen me hui ke yi yi ge ren zhe yang chi xu bu duan di, ji shi ni an de gong zuo xia lai?

Why AUX can on you own so persisted in, more than a decade NOM work AUX?

Why can you persist in working for more than a decade on you own?

(wh-question)

Liu Dehua: ye mei you xiang guo hui pai na me duo...shi yin wei zhou run fa.

Yang Lan: zhou run fa?

Chow Yun Fat?

(Yes/no question)

Liu Dehua: dui.

English Translation:

Yang Lan: Many people find it extremely unimaginable that you have been so productive, that you have played roles in more than 100 films and have made more than 60 albums! Why can you persist in working for more than a decade on you own?

Liu Dehua: I didn't think that I can make it...It's all because of Chow Yun Fat.

Yang Lan: Chow Yun Fat?

Liu Dehua: Yes.

An Extract from *Yang Lan One on One: Liu Dehua*

This stretch of talk appears at the beginning of the interview and the wh-question in the above acts as opening the conversation, which aims at seeking information; while the yes/no question in the above functions plays as checking the information. These two forms of questions are main forms in interviews, which means that the host tends to utter his/her questioning mainly in these two forms to fulfill his/her communicative needs.

Usually, the host will choose simple forms of questions to utter his/her questioning. However, sometimes they will prefer to use wh-questions with pre-sequences to accomplish different communicative tasks. During the analysis of these 747 pieces of questioning, the author finds that wh-questions with pre-sequences often appear in these three interview programs. Look at Table 3.

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Wh-questions with Pre-sequences.

| Questions Forms | Interview Programs | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Wh-questions with Pre-sequences | <i>Dialogue</i> | 30 | 31.3% | 96 | 12.9% |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 17 | 17.7% | | |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 49 | 51.0% | | |
| Total | | | | 747 | 100 |

Wh-questions with pre-sequences usually embody either functions such as background information introduction, which can be defined as a preface to the question. For example,

Example 2

Lu Yu: dui ni ying xiang zhi shen de san ge ren. Yi ge jiao ni ying yu, ling yi ge ba on you an influence so strong NOM three persons.

One taught you English, the other one PRT. Three persons are a strong influence on you. One taught you English, the other one ni yin ru mei shu de ling yu, di san ge jiao ni shen me? you into arts NOM the field, the third person taught you what?

led you into the field of arts, what did the third person teach you?

Zhao Baogang: di san ge ren bi jiao you yi si, wo gei ni jiang yi ge gu shi...

English Translation:

Lu Yu: Three persons are a strong influence on you. One taught you English, the other one led you into the field of arts, what did the third person teach you?

Zhao Baogang: The third one is more interesting, I'll tell you a story...

An Extract from *Lu Yu You Yue: Zhao Baogang*

The above example is extracted from the middle of the interview when the host began to change the topic. Before uttering her questioning, the host introduced some background information that she had obtained before the interview to the audience and then naturally moved on to a new topic by questioning to seek further information from the guest.

Meanwhile, wh-questions with pre-sequences can also serve as a premise of the host's questioning. For example:

Example 3

Host: nin yi zhi qiang diao zhe ge ji qing, bao kuo zai xi an chang wo men ye kan dao zhe me duo de ren, you have emphasized this passion, include on the scene we also find so many NOM people. You have emphasized this passion, on the scene we also find that so many people, ji hu shi jiu cheng zuo you de xi an chang guan zhong dou xuan ze le ji qing zuo wei yi ge almost AUX 90% or so NOM the scene audience all choose AUX passion as a almost 90% or so of the audience on the scene all choose passion as a fei chang zhong yao de yaosu. Kao zhe ji qing, women shi bu shi jiu ke yi bu duan di very important NOM element.

By passion, we AUX can constantly NOM very important element.

By passion, can we constantly zou xiang chuang ye de cheng gong?

walk to business starting NOM success? walk to the success of business starting?

English Translation:

Host: You have emphasized this passion, on the scene we also find so many people, almost 90% or so of the audience on the scene all choose passion as a a very important element. By passion, can we constantly walk to the success of business starting?

An Extract from *Dialogue: College Students' Business Starting Classes*

In the above example, we can observe that in the pre-sequences, the host mentioned that the guest and the audience gave high priority on passion before uttering his questioning. This serves as the premise of his following questioning. Objective information introduction can act as a useful strategy to lead a question, for it is always characteristic of objectiveness and impartiality, which can greatly impress audiences. Thus, questioning pre-framed with natural information introduction sequences

can well exert its practical pragmatic power. That is, information eliciting and other communicative goals.

To sum up, in this part, the syntactical formulation of the host’s questioning in TV interview programs is carried out, which displays the variety of forms of questions applied by the hosts in TV interview programs. Pragmatic functions of questioning in TV interview programs will then be explored in the following part.

3.2 Pragmatic Functions of Questioning in TV Interview Programs

TV interviews are task-driven, whose main function is to request information in Question-Answer Format. But this doesn’t mean that it consists this single pragmatic function. As a special speech act, the dynamic questioning in TV interview programs can fulfill various pragmatic functions in specific contexts as well as accomplish certain communicative needs.

Kearsley suggests four different types of questions’ functions: echoic, epistemic, expressive and social control as illustrated in Figure 2 [23]:

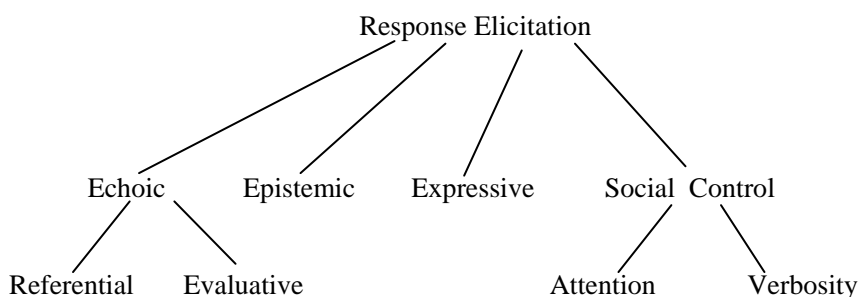


Figure 2: Kearsley (1976) ’s Categorization of Questioning Functions.

Based on this figure, the functions of questioning can be summarized as: 1) asking for repetition or confirmation of an utterance; 2) gathering contextual information; 3) establishing the addressee’s knowledge of the answer; 4) conveying attitudinal information; 5) taking over the direction of the conversation; 6) sustaining the conversation and avoiding the embarrassing silences.

The institutionalized TV interview is a special type of discourse; therefore, the host’s questioning in TV interviews should not only have something in common with ordinary talk but also contain something distinctive owing to its specialty.

According to Mey (2001), “linguistic functions of use are best studied in situations where people interact normally, using language in situations where people interact normally, using language face to face”(p.10) [24], the present study is carried out by analyzing naturally occurring data collected from interview programs. And functions of questioning in TV interview programs turn out to mainly include: 1) controlling topics and turns; 2) seeking and checking information; 3) accomplishing some non-questioning actions, such as position taking, sympathy arousing, challenging, etc. The number and the percentage of each function are displayed inTable 4-5 and Figure 3.

The above figure and graph are obtained through descriptive and crosstabs analysis conducted with the help of SPSS 20.0, which directly show the frequency of each function realized in hosts’ questioning in TV interview programs. It should be pointed out that in the same stretch of talk, functions of the host’s questioning may overlap, which may contain more than one function. Therefore, primary functions of the host’s questioning will all be identified. The functioning process of the host’s questioning will then be explained in the following part.

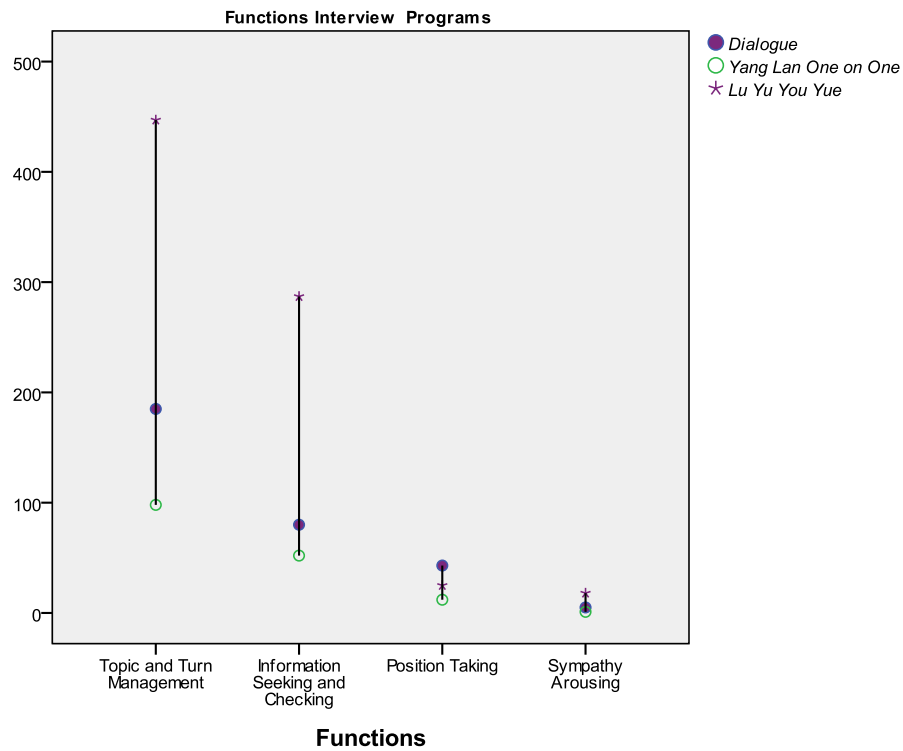


Figure 3: Frequency of Pragmatic Functions of Questioning in TV Interview Programs

Table 4: Frequency of Pragmatic Functions of Questioning in TV Interview Programs.

| Functions | Interview Programs | Frequency | Percentage | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------|------------|-----------|------------|
| Topic and Turn Management | <i>Dialogue</i> | 185 | 25.3% | 730 | 59.3% |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 98 | 13.4% | | |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 447 | 61.2% | | |
| Information Seeking and Checking | <i>Dialogue</i> | 80 | 19.1% | 419 | 34.4% |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 52 | 12.4% | | |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 287 | 68.5% | | |
| Position Taking | <i>Dialogue</i> | 43 | 53.8% | 80 | 6.5% |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 12 | 15.0% | | |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 25 | 31.2% | | |
| Sympathy Arousing | <i>Dialogue</i> | 5 | 20.8% | 24 | 19.5% |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 1 | 4.2% | | |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 18 | 75.0% | | |
| Total | | | | 1231 | 100% |

Table 5: Frequency of Topic Initiating, Maintaining and Shifting in Questioning in TV Interview Programs.

| | | Frequency of Topic Initiation | Frequency of Topic Maintenance | Frequency of Topic Shift | Total of Topic Management |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| Interview Programs | <i>Dialogue</i> | 22.5% | 43.6% | 33.9% | 185 |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 12.0% | 53.0% | 35.0% | 98 |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 14.7% | 52.7% | 32.6% | 447 |

3.2.1 Topic and Turn Management

Topic and turn management contains three aspects: topic initiating, maintaining and shifting. Since the interview is usually task-oriented, the host tends to make full preparation for topics expected to discuss in programs. Basically, they will be very meticulous about ways on how to begin, extend or end a conversation. Usually, questioning is their prioritized pragmatic strategy and device. The host's questioning acts as topic management indicates the institutional power the host is endowed with, which plays an important part on pushing the conversation to move on. Look at Example 4.

Example 4

Host: nin hao, duan xi an sheng, huan ying nin lai dao dui hua xian chang. Wo men zai kan zhe 1000 duo nian qian mei lun mei huan de zhe ge jian zhu, tong shi ye kan dao jin fei xi bi de zhe kuai tu di, nin shi tu sheng tu zhang de xi'an ren, wo bu zhi dao nin de xin zhong hui bu hui you zhe yang de yi zhong qiang lie de zhen han?

I don't know you NOM heart will have such a strong NOM shock?

I don't know whether you (suppose) this is such a strong shock to you in your heart?

Duan Xiannian: wo fei chang zhen han, yin wei wo cong xiao sheng huo zai zhe ge di fang, hen zao jiu dui da ming gong hen yang yang. name xi an zai you you wo lai shi jian jian she da ming gong guo jia yi zhi gong yuan.

Host: zai zhe kuai tu di shang zhen de ke yi chong xian li shi de hui huang ma?

AUX the land really will revive history NOM glory PRT?

Will the land really revive the glory of history?

Duan Xiannian: na ying gai shi, jiu shi wo men ming nian yao jian cheng de da ming gong guo jia yi zhi gong yuan, shi jie shang de you ren, wo men guo nei de you ren, dou hui bei wo men da ming gong guo jia yi zhi suo zhen han.

English Translation:

Host: Mr. Duan, welcome to our studio. Just now we have seen the video of the magnificent building built more than 1000 years ago and tremendous progress your hometown has made. You are born and brought up here, a native in Xi'an. I don't know whether you (suppose) this is such a strong shock to you in your heart?

Duan Xiannian: I do feel extremely shocked. I have been living here since I was a child. I have admired Daming Palace very much long ago. And now I'm appointed to build Daming Palace National Ruins Park.

Host: Will the land really revive the glory of history?

Duan Xiannian: It certainly will. Tours from home and abroad will be shocked by our Daming Palace National Ruins Park.

An Extract from Dialogue: Culture Business worth Ten Billion Yuan

At the beginning of the interview, a short video of the history of Xi'an was played on the big screen in the studio as background introduction to the interview. After it was finished, the host began to utter his questioning to start the conversation with the interviewee. In his first questioning, he asked about the guest's true feeling for the introduction of the history of his hometown in the video. Such way of questioning is very common at the beginning of an interview. And then, on hearing the guest's answer, the host presented the main topic of the interview—Xi'an's reconstruction of historical sites via questioning. This indicates the formal beginning of the whole program. The following is another example displaying the host's questioning function of topic initiation. For example:

Example 5

Yang Lan: hen duo ren bang ni zai shu zhe, ni yi jing pai le 100 duo bu dian ying, 60 ji zhang zhuan ji, jiu shi bu ke xiang xiang ni de duo chan, wei shen me hui ke yi yi ge ren zhe yang chi xu bu duan di, ji shi nian de gong zuo xia lai?

Why AUX can on you own so persisted in, more than a decade NOM work AUX ?

Why can you persist in working for more than a decade on you own?

(wh-question)

Liu Dehua: ye mei you xiang guo hui pai na me duo... shi yin wei zhou run fa.

Yang Lan: zhou run fa?

Chow Yun Fat?

(Yes/no question)

Liu Dehua: dui.

English Translation:

Yang Lan: Many people find it extremely unimaginable that you have been so productive, that you have played roles in more than 100 films and have made more than 60 albums! Why can you persist in working for more than a decade on you own?

Liu Dehua: I didn't think that I can make it...It's all because of Chow Yun Fat.

Yang Lan: Chow Yun Fat?

Liu Dehua: Yes.

An Extract from *Yang Lan One on One: Liu Dehua*

In Example 5, the host initiated the topic by questioning in the form of wh-questions with pre-sequences. Before her questioning, she mentioned the large number of films and albums that the guest has ever produced. This is done for the purpose of introducing the guest's background information as well as showing the host's great surprise and admiration. And then, the host initiated the topic through wh-questions with pre-sequences, which serves as eliciting information from the interviewee about the reasons for his outstanding achievements. It should be pointed out that the host is also entitled to initiate a second topic during the conversation. Look at Example 6.

Example 6

Yang Lan: dan shi, jing guo xi an sheng hao xiang meyou liu xia shen me yi chan?

But, Mr. Jingguo seemed to not leave some legacy?

But, Mr. Jingguo didn't seem to leave some legacy?

Zhang Xiaoyan: ta shen me dou mei you liu xia...

English Translation:

Yang Lan: But, Mr. Jingguo didn't seem to leave some legacy?

Zhang Xiaoyan: No, he left nothing...

An Extract from *Yang Lan One On One: Zhang Xiaoyan*

In the second part of the adjacent pair prior to Example 6, the guest made a long and detailed narration of his family history and people's misunderstanding on his returning to the mainland to mourn his ancestors. When he talked of the gossip that it had been widely rumored that he was doing that just for his father's money, the host cut him short with her questioning to inform him that she knew that Mr. Jiang Jingguo didn't leave any legacy. And then the guest stressed that his father didn't leave something valuable, which serves as a second topic and an addition to the main topic in the stretch of talk. The guest's further statement and explanation, instead of simply answering "yes" or "no" to the host's questioning, indicated that he treated the host's questioning as a fact instead of interrogation checking for the information. It is obvious that the host's questioning here aims at neither making a claim nor pursuing some confirmation, for it just leads to the guest's further description relevant to the main topic in the interview, which is mainly concerned about the interviewee's father and him. Therefore, it indeed acts as a second topic initiation, which is seen as

one of the key components constituting the whole interview story. Here, when the host exerts her institutional power, the guest responded actively and illustrated more details as the host expected. The two speakers' harmonious cooperation helps accomplish this second topic discussion.

Meanwhile, questioning can also function as topic maintaining and shifting.

Example 7

Yang Lan: ni wei shen me bu ziji qu zuo daoyan ne?

you why not self AUX become a director PRT?

Why don't you become a director yourself?

(Question1)

Hen duo yan yan dao hou lai dou shi zi ji qu zuo dao yan.

Liu Dehua: wo you zhe ge meng xiang.

Yang Lan: wo ting shuo ni zui zao chu dao de shi hou, shi xiang zi ji zuo dao yan?

I learned you early your debut NOM time, AUX want self be a director?

I learned that you wanted to be a director yourself early in your debut?

(Question2)

Liu Dehua: wo ben lai can jia xun lian ban shi dao yan de na ge bu fen. Ran hou jie guo, jiu shi san ge yue, wu ge yue zhi hou, wo men de guan li, wo men xun lian ban de na xie lao shi shuo, ni ke yi dang yan yuan.

Yang Lan: ji ran you zhe yang yi ge meng xiang, wei shen me bu zhao ji hui ba ta shi xian ne?

why not find an opportunity AUX it come true PRT?

why not find an opportunity to make it come true?

(Question3)

Ying gai shuo ni yao xian zai yao ju ben you ju ben, yao ban di you ban di, yao qian you qian.

Liu Dehua: wo dao xian zai hai mei you xiang dao yige.....

English Translation:

Yang Lan: Why don't you become a director yourself? Since many actors turn into directors later on...

Liu Dehua: I once had the dream.

Yang Lan: I learned that you wanted to be a director yourself early in your debut?

Liu Dehua: I was in the training class of directors. But three or five months later, our teacher in the class told me that I could be a qualified actor.

Yang Lan: Since you have such a dream, why not find an opportunity to make it come true? Since you have these resources needed: script, people and money.

Liu Dehua: I haven't thought of one (that could...)

An Extract from *Yang Lan One On One*: Liu

Dehua

In Example 7, the host uttered three questions, which performs functions of topic initiating, shifting and maintaining respectively. The host's first questioning utterance is obviously to bring a new topic into the conversation. However, the guest did not answer it but just stated that he had had a dream. Based on the word "dream" in the previous turn, in the first part of the second adjacent pair, the host uttered her second questioning about the guest's original dream as a film director, which, therefore, is regarded as topic shifting. As Gruber (2001) puts it, to form a focus shifting question, "one discussant picks an element of the previous turn, which, although it was mentioned, was not in its topic focus, and makes it the topic of the following stretch of talk." [25] Question 2 is exactly in perfect accordance with this procedure. The main questioning of this stretch of talk is obviously about the reason why the guest didn't want to direct films himself. But while the host uttered the second questioning, the emphasis was placed on checking the host's hearsay about the guest's original dream

of becoming a director. The guest's following statement is to make an explanation to the second questioning. This is an instance of the host's topic shifting. Then Question 3 provides evidence for her sticking to the first questioning, which is therefore seen as topic maintaining. The main topic of this stretch of talk is why the guest did not want to be a film director, but the guest moved to another topic by talking his original dream, which then led the host to switch her questioning to ask the guest to offer details about his dream. After the guest's illustration of his original dream, the host rephrased her questioning to ask for the reason again. Thus, here Question 3 functions as the device of topic maintenance.

To sum up, questioning can function as devices of topic initiating, maintaining as well as shifting.

Naturally, we can conclude that questioning can play the role of topic management in TV interview programs.

3.2.2 Information Seeking and Checking

Table 6: Frequency of Information Seeking and Checking in Questioning in TV Interview Programs.

| | | Frequency of Information Checking | Frequency of Information seeking | Total of Informational Functions |
|--------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Interview Programs | <i>Dialogue</i> | 54.8% | 45.2% | 80 |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 46.0% | 54.0% | 52 |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 34.1% | 65.9% | 287 |

In interview programs, questions are set to ask for information, just in line with Churchill (1978)'s claim that all questions are technically requests for information in interview[26]. Therefore, the central function of questioning is performing the communicative needs for information, which contains information seeking and checking. Look at Example 8.

Example 8

Host: nin suo chang dao de di tan sheng huo fang shi, yi ding jiu shi ni gang cai ti dao de zhao xun zai jing ji fa zhan he huan jing bao hu zhi jian de yi zhong ping heng. na ni neng bu neng gao su da jia, nin ge ren de sheng huo zhuang tai zhong, jiu jing you na xie shi shu yu di tan de sheng huo fang shi? on earth have what AUX belongs to low carbon NOM living way? what on earht belongs to low carbon way of living?

Blair (then the Britain prime minister): This is simple, but I was not sure several years ago.

English Translation:

Host: The low carbon way of living you propose must be one kind of balance between economic development and environmental protection you just mentioned. Then, can you tell everyone, what on earht belongs to low carbon way of living?

Blair: This is simple, but I was not sure several years ago.

An Extract from *Dialogue: Promoting Low Carbon Way of Living to the Utmost*

Seeking information is the main function among the host's all pieces of questioning in TV interviews. In Example 8, the host was probing information concerning low carbon way of living and economy. The host's questioning here acts as requesting information about low carbon ways of living in the guest's everyday life, so as to obtain further information about the guest's attitudes and actions on choosing a low carbon way of living. Thus, the host can focus on the main topic of the interview as well as extend the conversation for more details. Meanwhile, questioning can act as checking information from many respects. Look at Example 9.

Example 9

Yang Lan: wo de chang zheng dui wu li you ge pang hong, ting shuo ni dasuan zai jieshu qian Wu gong li ba ta gei kaichu le?
(I) hear ni wanted AUX finished before five kilometres AUX him AUX dismiss PRT?
I hear you wanted to dismiss him five kilometers before it finished?

Cui Yongyuan: shi, yin wei you yi dian shi jian, wo te bie fan gan ta...

English Translation:

Yang Lan: There is a guy nicknamed Pang Hong in *My Long March*. I hear you wanted to dismiss him five kilometers before it finished?

Cui Yongyuan: Yes. Indeed, once I extremely disliked him.

An Extract from *Yang Lan One on One: Cui Yongyuan: On the Way of New March*

The host's questioning is obviously designed to check the information she has obtained indirectly, to pursue confirmation or verification from the guest. As is said previously, as the presenter of an interview, the host is obliged to be alert on information seeking and checking as possible as he/she could. In the above example, the host mentioned an unhappy event occurring during the new long march promoted by the guest. Since the information was gained indirectly, the host raised the question, expecting the guest to verify it. Information checking includes many respects, such as, checking related information acquired indirectly as the above example shows, verifying information the guest just mentioned in previous answers, confirming the host's suppose from the guest's last answer, etc. Look at Example 10 for an illustration.

Example 10

Host: suo yi wo men xiang xin, dui yu nin er yan, wei lai de ri zi yi ding hui ba wen hua chan ye jin xing So we believe, as for you, future NOM days will AUX AUX culture industry proceed dao di, shi zhe yang ma? to the utmost, is this true PRT?

So we believe, as for you, you will proceed to promot the culture industry industry proceed to the utmost in the future, is this true?

Duan Xiannian: shi.

English Translation:

Host: So we believe, as for you, you will proceed to promot the culture industry industry proceed to the utmost in the future, is this true?

Duan Xiannian: Yes.

An Extract from *Dialogue: Culture Business Worth Ten Billion Yuan*

Different from Example 9, questioning contained in Example 10 is used to check the host's assumption, which is based on the interaction with the guest prior to the question, so as to let the audience get to know about the guest's future plan. And the guest simply replied with "yes", which apparently displayed his agreement and confirmed the host's guess.

Example 11

Host: ni zui chu chuang ye de shi hou shi duo shao qian?

Li Lingling: wo'men 10 wan kuai qian, dan shi.....

Host: 10 wan kuai qian?

Li Lingling: er qie 10 wan kuai qian shi zai bu dao yi nian de shi jian li mian, ye shi cha bu duo quan bu yong guang...

English Translation:

Host: How much money you got when starting your business?

Li Lingling: one hundred thousand yuan, however...

Host: one hundred thousand yuan?

Li Lingling: And this sum of money was almost spent in less than a year...

An Extract from *Dialogue: Li Lingling*

The underlined questioning in Example 11 reflects the host's expression of his great surprise. Prior to the underlined questioning, the guest told the host that she just got one hundred thousand RMB to start her business. And the host interrupted her by uttering his questioning indicating that it was so incredible. The guest then did not answer the question directly but narrated that such a small sum of money was almost spent in less than a year, so as a reconfirmation to the host's questioning. Such kind of information checking can also be seen as an emphasis on what the guest has just illustrated and to make the audience understand the difficulties the guest has had in initiating her business.

Example 12

Host: hen duo ren dou gao su wo, xian zai zai shang hai yao kan zhou li bo de yan chu te bie nan, dan shi wo jue de jin tian zan men zuo le Dui hua, wo lai zhao ni mai piao, shi bu shi te bie rong yi le?

I come to ask you (to help us) buy tickets, AUX extremely easy PRT?

Will it be extremely easy if I come to ask you to help us buy tickets?

(Question 1)

Wang Zhongwei: ye bu yi ding.

Host: Ye bu yi ding a?

Not sure PRT?

Not sure?

(Question 2)

Wang Zhongwei: bu yi ding, bu yi ding, yin wei you ren tuo wo mai guo piao, wo ye fei le hao da de jin.

Host: shi ma?

Is PRT?

Is that true?

(Question 3)

Wang Zhongwei: zhende shi ruci.

Host: kanlai zhege shichang shi feichang di huobao.

English Translation:

Host: Many people told me that it's very difficult to watch Zhou Libo's live performance in Shanghai.

But I figure, after we make this interview together, Will it be extremely easy if I come to ask you to help us buy tickets?

Wang Zhongwei: I'm not sure.

Host: Not sure?

Wang Zhongwei: I'm not sure, indeed, for I once took great pains to buy a ticket for someone.

Host: Is that true?

Wang Zhongwei: It's absolutely true.

Host: It seems very popular.

An Extract from *Dialogue: Wang Zhongwei*

In Example 12, three questioning utterances were articulated by the host. Just like questioning in Example 11, the host's first questioning here is designed to check his speculation. However, the guest denied his speculation, which greatly aroused the host's surprise and disbelief expressed in the form of questioning. Question 2 and 3 are both used to convey the host's surprise as well as to check the information. Finally, the host believed what the host has said and ended the topic in this stretch of talk by showing his conclusion.

3.2.3 Position Taking

Table 7: Frequency of Disagreement and Challenging Indicated in Questioning in TV Interview Programs.

| | | Frequency of Disagreement | Frequency of Challenging | Total of Position Taking |
|--------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Interview Programs | <i>Dialogue</i> | 88.4% | 11.6% | 43 |
| | <i>Lu Yu You Yue</i> | 83.3% | 16.7% | 12 |
| | <i>Yang Lan One on One</i> | 92.0% | 8.0% | 25 |

Neutrality is one of the remarkable features of interview programs, which requests that the hosts should be, like other journalists, objective and unbiased in their communication with the guest. This means that they should not show their personal opinions and ideas in the interviewing process, nor should they make statements or judgment on an interviewee's stated opinions or behavior, even though sometimes they may differ in their standpoints. Clayman & Heritage (2002) studies the practices of TV news interviews in which neutrality is claimed to be the backdrop for discussion[27]. They specifically examines the following issues: embedding statements within questions and attributing statements to the third party. To show their neutral stance in interview programs, the host will usually articulate questioning in the communication instead of declarative, imperative and other sentence pattern, for apparently the former sounds less sure, controversial and offending than the latter. Sometimes, they will utter their questioning with the third party tone by beginning their questioning with "people say/think/believe/suppose..." to show their neutrality in the interview. However, many of their questions do indicate their agreement, disagreement or rejection of the guests' stated opinions or behaviors. That is, questioning can be used by the host to display his real thought or opinion. It does not ask for information from the guest but conveys it to him/her instead. For example, their questioning will fulfill their purposes in an indirect and mild way. Such as strengthening a standpoint, showing disagreement, challenging an opinion, criticizing a behavior, joking, etc. Look at the following example.

Example 13

Yang Lan: she me jiao fu za de zhe pi ren dou guo qu le?

What mean sophisticated NOM the group of people all be gone AUX?

What (do you) mean that the group of sophisticated people has all been gone?

jiu ni fu za le?

Only you sophisticated AUX?

Only you are sophisticated?

Cui Yongyuan: dui, jiu xiang wo zhe me fu za de, zhe me fu shi ji su de zhe pi ren dou side cha bu duo le...

English Translation:

Yang Lan: What (do you) mean that the group of sophisticated people has all been gone? Only you are sophisticated?

Cui Yongyuan: Yes, sophisticated people like me, this cynical group of people, have mostly died...

An Extract from *Dialogue: Cui Yongyuan: On the Way of New March*

The underlined question can be interpreted as the interviewer's disagreement and refutation to the guest's opinion expressed in the previous turn. The guest supposed that the sophisticated people of his generation will all be gone some time in the future (here, he might mean "people with wisdom" by uttering "sophisticated"). Obviously, the host didn't think so, who conveyed her disagreement and refuted her opinions by means of the two underlined pieces of questioning in the above example. The second part of the adjacency pair is a standard answer to the form of yes/no questions. The guest says

“yes” and then makes an explanation to why he thought they would be the past. Therefore, the host’s questioning acts as indicating the host’s stance and position.

Example 14

Lu Yu: wo hai jue de dao yan ying gai shi te bie ji qing de na zhong, yuan lai mei you zhe me ji qing?

It turns out not so passionate?

It turns out that (you are) not so passionate?

(Question 1)

Wang Jiawei: xian zai bu shi hen ji qing ma?

Lu Yu: ni xian zai zhe yang jiu suan hen ji qing a?

you now this suppose very passionate PRT?

Now you suppose this very passionate?

(Question 2)

Wang Jiawei: qi shi wo shu yu qing xu gao di qi fu bu da de ren...

English Translation:

Lu Yu: I suppose that directors should be passionate. It turns out that (you are) not so passionate?

Wang Jiawei: Now I’m passionate, don’t you feel?

Lu Yu: Now you suppose this very passionate?

Wang Jiawei: In fact, I’m a person with calm temperament.

An Extract from *Lu Yu You Yue: Another Kind of Cinema*

Question 1 in the above example shows the host’s negative reflection to the guest’s answer in his answer prior to this question. In prior turn, the guest stated that his passion in directing the film is as same as now in the studio, which therefore triggered the host’s resistance at once by questioning. The premise in the guest’s utterance is that he believed himself passionate while directing films, which was in conflict with the host’s conceptualization on passion. The host immediately showed her disagreement by questioning. However, the guest didn’t answer the question. Instead, he used a rhetorical question to express that he is passionate now, which was again denied by the host by another question. The host’s disagreement was reinforced and strengthened by her second questioning right after the guest’s reaction. The second part of the adjacency pair here is obviously by no means a standard answer of “yes” or “no” to the yes/no question form, but is replaced by the guest’s explanation which shows his distinct understanding on passion. Therefore, in the above examples, the two questioning utterances emphasize the host’s disagreement and argument against the guest’s claim.

Example 15

Yang Lan: ru guo shuo yi ge qian guo min dang de mi shu zhang hai busuan

Zheng zhi ren wu if, let’s say, a former Kuomintang NOM chief secretary AUX

not count a political figure If, let’s say, a former chief secretary of Kuomintang cann’t

count (as) a political figure, de hua, shui hai shi zheng zhi ren wu?

AUX, who AUX a political figure?

who else can be counted as a political figure?

Zhang Xiaoyan: zhe ye bu shi wo xiang yao de, dan shi qi zhong you hen fu za de zheng zhi yin su.

English Translation:

Yang Lan: If, let’s say, a former chief secretary of Kuomintang cann’t count (as) a political figure,

who else can be counted as a political figure?

Zhang Xiaoyan: This is not what I want, but there are some complicated political factors in it.

An Extract from *Yang Lan One on One: Zhang Xiaoyan*

In the guest’s claim prior to this adjacent pair, the guest claimed that he was not a political figure. However, the host absolutely couldn’t accept this statement, who indicated her doubt in her

questioning above. Here, it functions as a kind of challenge to the guest's claim. She used "who can be regarded as a political figure if you are not" to strengthen the verbal force of her challenging.

3.2.4 Sympathy Arousing

Questioning as sympathy arousing often appears in discussing environmental protection or other serious issues. This kind of questioning is devoted to seeking a common psychological ground shared by the participants. To be specific, it will be used to invoke the emotion of sympathy and compassion from the hearers, attracting their attention, concern, involvement or pursuing their approval and agreement. For example,

Example 16

Host: qishi, wo xiang dui yu bei chuan zhong xue de lao shi lai shuo, In fact, I suppose as for Beichuan Middle School NOM teachers.

In fact, I suppose, as for teachers from Beichuan Middle School, ta men de ya li hui fei chang da, bing bu jin jin lai zi yu gong zuo shang de ya li, their pressure will be great, not only come from work AUX NOM pressures, their pressure will be great, which not only comes from work, ke neng zi ji qing gan shang, xin li shang de zhe xie ya li, tongyang mei shi mei ke dou he ta men maybe self emotionally, mentally NOM these pressures, too constantly all AUX them maybe they are all constantly accompanied by these pressures, too, emotionally and mentally, xiang ban, shi zhe yang ma? accompanied by, is this (true) PRT? is this true?

Sai Shaoqi: shi, you zhe ge shi shi, dan shi wo shuo guo de, di zhen zai qiang, ta zhen bu kua wo men bei chuan zhong xue shi sheng de zhge yi zhi he jing shen, wo men yi ding hui chong xin zhan qi lai.

English Translation:

Host: In fact, I suppose, as for teachers from Beichuan Middle School, their pressure will be great, which not only comes from work. maybe they are all constantly accompanied by these pressures, too, emotionally and mentally, is that true?

Sai Shaoqi: Yes. It is true. But just as I said once before, the earthquake could not quack our willingness, strength or spirits no matter how mighty it seems. We will stand up once again.

An Extract from *Dialogue: With Teachers and Students from Beichuan Middle School*

As is mentioned above, questioning as sympathy arousing usually comes out in talking about serious topics such as disasters like earthquake, mine tragedy, landslide, etc. and the cause for the public good. Therefore, here the host used a lot of pre-sequences before uttering his questioning, thus making his questioning sound more persuasive, appealing and impressive. Particularly, the host often outpours his/her sincere sympathy for those difficulties guests have ever confronted, which will greatly shock the audience and arouse their great concern and compassion.

4. Conclusion

By collecting and analyzing the naturally occurring data produced in interviews, the study conducts a profound discussion about questioning in TV interview programs in great details. Based on the above analysis, the study comes up with the following conclusions:

Firstly, in TV interview programs, the host mainly chooses yes/no questions and wh-questions to request or check information. According to our analysis through SPSS 20.0, yes/no question and wh-question take up 53.8% and 41% respectively of the questions collected in this study, which means that hosts in these TV interview programs mainly select these two kinds of syntactical forms of

questions to fulfill their interview tasks——information eliciting or checking. Thus, the statistical results will reflect the task orientation of this kind of institutional talk.

Secondly, from the pragmatic perspective, questioning is a special speech act and language use, which is dynamic and active and which can fulfill various pragmatic functions in specific contexts. The computational analysis finds that questioning in TV interview programs mainly realizes topic and turn managing, information eliciting and checking, position taking and sympathy arousing. It is due to questioning that the host in TV interview programs can satisfy his/her communicative needs and expectation, which thereupon makes the whole interview practice proceed smoothly and harmoniously along with the program's established orientation and trajectories. Therefore, questioning can serve as a practical pragmatic strategy and practice applied in TV interview programs.

In conclusion, through SPSS 20.0, the statistical analysis on pragmatic questioning in TV interview programs directly displays main questioning's syntactical forms and pragmatic functions it fulfills in the course of interviewing. This may not only shed some light on theoretical and practical research on question and questioning, but also inform and inspire questioning research in various local institutional settings, such as classroom setting, medical setting, courtroom setting, etc. Besides, since interview conversation is a face-to-face communication, the study of questioning in interview conversations may help to improve language users' communicative competence through appropriate use of questioning strategies. It can also provide some clue on the relationship between language and social, cultural and psychological contextual components, which will be our study focus in the future.

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Abbreviations: AUX, auxiliary word; PRT, particle; NOM, nominalizer (de).