Verbal aggression and neutrality in political interviews
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1. Introduction
The features of interviewers’ formal neutrality and impartiality in news interviews has changed dramatically since the 1950s, at which time interviewers employed deferential questioning to elicit ‘information, opinions and beliefs in a way that treated these as facts’ (Emmertsen 2007, 571). Interviewers today are increasingly adversarial. ‘Being adversarial ensures that the IE [interviewee] will be held accountable before the viewing public, and it also helps to generate lively discussions with maximum audience appeal’ (Clayman 2002, 1387). Interviewers are expected to be objective. Clayman and Heritage (2002) argue that attempting to achieve objectivity involves striking a balance between objectivity as impartiality (disinterested, neutral in their questioning, and respectful of perspectives and facts), and objectivity as adversarialness (challenging in an attempt to ‘...achieve factual accuracy and a balance of perspectives’).

The adversarial nature of news interviews makes them an interesting context via which to study verbal aggression. This analysis will focus on political interviews, as politicians in particular are ‘often depicted as slippery and evasive, even as downright deceitful: they are the sort of people who will not give a straight answer to a straight question’ (Bull 2003, 130).

Despite Goffman’s claim that a person ‘is disinclined to witness the defacement of others’ (1967, 10), and Brown and Levinson’s assertion that ‘... it is in general in every participant’s best interest to maintain each other’s face’ (1987, 61), it is evident that, in certain contexts, ‘displaying skills in formulating and sustaining disagreements is an interactional requirement’ and contributes to the interactants’ ‘positive self-presentation’ (Patrona, 2006, 2127). Political interviews are one such context. Although it is important to be (or at least appear) neutral, it is also beneficial to the reputation of the interviewer to appear skilled in debate, and a good performance for him or her is likely to involve successful face damage to the interviewee. However, adversarialness will always involve judgements about what is appropriate (Clayman & Heritage 2002), and, ‘although it is justified by some practitioners and a segment of public opinion as necessary for the pursuit of truth, it is increasingly perceived as inappropriately rude’ (Montgomery 2007, 212).
The purpose of this essay is to consider face-aggravation in the context of political interviews. It is first necessary to suggest what ‘face’ means, and what ‘appropriateness’ and ‘impoliteness’ are, and how they relate to the context of political interviews (see section 2). Section 3 outlines the data and methodology used. The analysis in section 4 explores the ways in which interviewers threaten the face of interviewees whilst employing strategies to protect their own face and their reputation as competent and impartial interviewers, which would be threatened if they seemed inappropriately aggressive. The analysis will also consider the ways in which interviewees issue and react to face threats. Section 5 considers how this study could have been improved, and the conclusions drawn from the essay are summarised in section 6.

2. Impoliteness

2.1 Face and Relational Work

Goffman defines ‘face’ as ‘the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself by the line others assume he has taken during a particular contact’; it is ‘an image of self delineated in terms of approved social attributes’(1967, 5). Brown and Levinson, drawing on Goffman’s notion of face, argued that face ‘consists of two specific kinds of desires (‘face wants’) attributed by interactants to one another’(1987, 13). Brown and Levinson’s interpretation includes the addition of ‘negative face’, ‘the desire to be unimpeded in one’s action’ (1987, 13). The concept of negative face introduces an aspect largely absent from Goffman’s concept; the want to be unimpeded has seemingly little to do with wanting a ‘positive social value’. If we impede others or in some other way distance ourselves, we may lose our positive social value, but that we have wants of autonomy does not directly affect our want for a positive image.

Some researchers call ‘into question whether such a clear distinction between positive and negative face is, in fact, a useful one’ (Harris 2001, 463). Bousfield (2008b) argues that the positive/negative face distinction is superfluous to understanding im/politeness. O’Driscoll, on the other hand, argues that ‘face dualism is just too valuable to be jettisoned’ (1996, 4).

There are (very broadly speaking) two interpretations of face. O’Driscoll (1996) argues that positive face is about coming together and belonging, whilst negative face concerns avoiding contact and separation. This is a departure from Goffman’s concept of face as an image of Self in relation to Others’ evaluations. ‘[H]is conceptualisation of face ultimately remains
firmly embedded in the cognition of individuals’ (Haugh and Bargiela-Chiappini, in press). Whilst Goffman’s face also ‘emerges in relations’, ‘the deictic centre is self’ (Ruhi, in press). Face, therefore, can be viewed as being more about the relationship between the interactants than about an individual’s self-image co-constructed by interactants. Arundale (in press) argues that ‘one is positioned to understand face as belonging to the dyad or social unit, and hence as “our connection and separation” or “our face”’. However, it is important to consider, not only the unique relationship created in an interaction, but the Self in interaction, and claims to positively evaluated attributes. Not only does impoliteness threaten face, it can demonstrate distance in a relationship. Utterances indicate ‘the degree of solidarity and friendship between interactants, and the relative status’ (Mills 2009, 1049). However, it is important to consider both relations and face because a threat to face does not necessarily entail relational distance. Take, by way of illustration, this real-life example: A male said to his female friend, ‘you have a great figure; I like a woman with a plump arse’. The female’s face was threatened because she did not like (what was, for the male, a positive) value of a ‘plump arse’ being attributed to her. However, she understood the intention was to compliment. Therefore, the relational work was connection rather than separation. This example also calls into question Goffman’s concept of face as a ‘positive’ social value (1967, 5). What is considered to be a positive social value will differ from one person to the next. Spencer-Oatey’s concept of ‘rapport’ is partly dependent on relational management, but influenced by ‘people’s transactional “wants” and the ways they are handled’ (2005, cited in Spencer-Oatey 2007, 647).

2.1.1 Rapport Management

For the purposes of this essay, whilst recognising that together interactants construct a unique relationship, a focus on self-image in interaction is important. Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) approach combines aspects of self-image as constructed in interaction with relational work, and seems to be the most adequate.

face is associated with personal/social value, and is concerned with people’s sense of worth, credibility, dignity, honour, reputation, competence and so on. Sociality rights, on the other hand, are concerned with personal/social entitlements, and reflect people’s concerns over fairness, consideration, social inclusion/exclusion and so on (Spencer-Oatey 2002, 540)
Spencer-Oatey’s model of rapport management incorporates both interpersonal relations and an individual’s face. Face has two interrelated aspects: quality face is concerned with personal qualities such as competence, abilities and appearance, and social identity face is concerned with social identities and roles such as valued customer, good friend and group leader (Spencer-Oatey 2002).

2.2 Appropriateness
Politic behaviour is ‘that behaviour, linguistic and non-linguistic, which the participants construct as being appropriate to the ongoing social interaction’ (Watts 2003, 21). So, politic behaviour is context-specific appropriate behaviour. As Watts (2003) and Locher and Watts (2008) state that impoliteness is non-politic, it would seem from their perspective that appropriate utterances can never be impolite. However, Culpeper points out that this poses a problem when considering contexts such as army recruit training ‘in which face-attacking discourse of some kind plays a central role, and thus might be said to be normal’ (2008, 29). Politic (and therefore appropriate) utterances for Locher and Watts are those which are unmarked, ‘i.e. not likely to evoke an evaluative comment’ (2008, 79). However, Bousfield (2007) argues that such intentionally face-aggravating utterances are marked, despite their appropriateness. As Culpeper argues ‘just because something is sanctioned does not mean impoliteness is neutralised for all participants’ (2008, 40).

2.3 Intentionality
As suggested above, both inappropriate behaviour and appropriate behaviour can be marked. Therefore, it is important to consider intentions as, in many contexts, including political interviews, intentions can decide whether or not an utterance is impolite. Unlike army recruit training, intentional face-aggravating behaviour is not appropriate in a political interview context. As the adversarial nature of the context implies, there is potential for much face-aggravation, but face-aggravation should not be the primary goal. Penman notes that ‘[w]hen we are engaged in discourse more than one purpose can be achieved at any point in time’ (1990, 16). These multiple goals can create ambiguity as to the main intention behind an utterance. Penman points out that ‘[n]ot only are messages inherently ambiguous, but they can be intentionally misleading’ (1990, 21-22). Therefore, interactants can intentionally create propositions that are ambiguous as to their intentions.
Goffman outlined ‘three levels of responsibility that a person may have for a threat to face’: accidental (‘unintended and unwitting’), intentional (‘maliciously and spitefully’) and incidental (‘these arise as an unplanned but sometimes anticipated by-product of action’) (1967, 14). Sometimes behaviour can be marked because of its intention. Culpeper notes that ‘research in social psychology has repeatedly shown that hostile or aggressive behaviours are considered more severe (particularly more marked for negative emotion), and are more likely to receive a strong response if they are considered intentional’ (2008, 32). Constructing an utterance as being intentionally face-damaging may affect the viewers’ appraisal of the interviewer’s behaviour. Interviewers may be accused of bias ‘even though they have avoided overt expressions and opinions’ (Greatbatch 1992, 271). It is possible for the interviewee to purposely construct the behaviour as too hostile, to threaten the interviewer’s face and/or to defend and/or enhance their own. This is a particularly important aspect of news interviews because, as Patrona (2006) notes, the primary recipients of talk are the mass viewer audiences, rather than the hearer to whom the utterances are addressed.

Archer (under review) has argued that Goffman’s (1967) categories do not always adequately capture the perpetration of potential face damage. There are instances that cannot be neatly placed into any of Goffman’s categories of face threat. As Archer argues, because of the multiple goals involved, it is often difficult to determine whether or not a particular instance of verbal aggression is incidental or intentional. The difficulties inferring intention accurately can be accommodated by Archer’s proposal for an intentionality scale which allows for an ambiguous-as-to-speaker-intent zone.

To conclude section 2, impoliteness in the context of a political interview occurs when a face threat is issued inappropriately with the primary intent of causing harm. However, the purpose of this essay is not to identify impoliteness as defined above; it is to consider the ways in which interviewers avoid the accusation of impolite behaviour.

3. Data and Methodology

3.1 Data

The data analysed is political interviews taken from BBC News, BBC Newsnight and Sky News. There was no systematic method involved in collecting the data, and the results are not intended to be representative.
The data has been transcribed using the stave method as it allows easier viewing of interruptions and instances of interactants speaking at the same time. The transcription conventions used can be found in Appendix A.

3.2 Methodology
As stated in section 2.3, indirectness can be utilised by interactants in pursuit of multiple goals. It is, therefore, necessary to consider how goals are achieved through implicature, and how they are construed through inference. Implicatures will be analysed in accordance with Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle, which proposes that there is a tacitly understood agreement between interlocutors to interact in a way which follows certain rules unless given an indication to the contrary. There are four categories of rules which form Grice’s (1975) maxims: Maxim of Quantity (make your contribution no more or less informative as is required for the current purposes of the exchange); Maxim of Quality (do not say what you believe to be false or that for which you lack adequate evidence); Maxim of Relation (be relevant); and Maxim of Manner (avoid ambiguity and obscurity of expression, be brief and orderly). Flouting occurs when the maxims are not adhered to in a way that makes the non-adherence so obvious that the hearer will know that an implicature has been generated. Violating maxims occurs when a speaker does not adhere to the rules in a manner which is intended to go unnoticed by the hearer.

Grice argues that ‘because speakers are rational individuals and share common goals, conversations are governed by a co-operative principle’ (Barron 2001, 15). Communication succeeds on the assumption that interlocutors are being cooperative. Therefore, if a speaker does not adhere to the maxims, we can assume that he or she is implying meaning. Maxims ‘generate inferences beyond the semantic content of the sentences uttered’ (Levinson 1983, 103).

Despite numerous criticisms of Grice’s (1975) Cooperative Principle (see Watts 2003; Harris 1995), it is considered, for the purposes of this analysis, the most adequate way of exploring implicatures. There is no space here to discuss at length the suggested failures in Grice’s account. It is, however, important to address the particularly relevant criticism that Grice’s theory ‘cannot handle unequal encounters which are clearly not cooperative and where the goals of participants conflict in quite obvious ways’ (Harris 1995, 120). As Davies observes,
problems in interpreting Grice’s theory ‘stem from the clash between Grice’s use of the term “cooperation” with a technical meaning, and the more general meaning of the word’ (Davies 2007, 2328). Interactants work together, even in their disagreements (Chilton 2004), because ‘one needs to be cooperative, in a linguistics sense, in order to communicate a lack of cooperation in a social sense’ (Bousfield 2008a, 29).

As stated in section 2.1.1, the data is also analysed in accordance with Spencer-Oatey’s (2002) concept of rapport management.

4. Multiple Goals in Political Interviews
As discussed in sections 1 and 2, verbal aggression is sanctioned in political interviews and is often considered necessary to maintain neutrality so long as it cannot be established that the primary intent is to threaten face. There is a tension in the behaviour of an interviewer because it is both in the interest of the interviewer’s career to threaten the face of an interviewee (Patrona 2006), and not to be deemed inappropriately aggressive (by the viewers). This tension manifests itself in indirect strategies for threatening the interviewee’s face, some of which are explored in the analysis below.

Bousfield defines off-record impoliteness as:

The use of strategies where the threat or damage to an interactant’s face is conveyed indirectly by way of an implicature [...] and can be cancelled [...] but where ‘...one attributable intention clearly outweighs any others’ (Culpeper 2005, 44), given the context in which it occurs (Bousfield 2008b, 138).

The problem with Goffman’s (1967) levels of responsibility is that one attributable intention does not always clearly outweigh any others. Penman points out that ‘[n]ot only are messages inherently ambiguous, but they can be intentionally misleading’ (1990, 21-22). Interactants can deliberately attempt to construct their utterances in a way that means there is not enough evidence to determine that the face threat is intentional thus impolite. But there may be too much evidence to reliably categorise it as incidental. Archer’s proposal for an intentionality scale aims to capture such incidents via an ‘ambiguous-as-to-speaker- intent zone’.
Interviewers can seek to clarify information given by interviewees in a way that challenges the interviewee. This is the case in extract 1 (which occurs immediately after a news report contextualising the interaction and establishes the interviewee’s stance on the current topic):

**Extract 1**

(S1 is the interviewer, S2 is the interviewee.)

1:S1: are you saying the ba- the governor of the bank of england doesn’t know what

S2:

2:S1: he’s talking about well

S2: no? . erm but they may be your words they’re not mine . what

3:S1: they’re not my words no I’m asking YOU whe-whether you think his analysis

S2: the governor said

4:S1: is correct

S2:

The interviewer is suggesting the position of the interviewee in a clarification-seeking question: ‘are you saying the [...] governor of the Bank of England doesn’t know what he’s talking about’. Hutchby calls these ‘formulations’ and there are two reasons that they are used by interviewers: for ‘packaging or repackaging the central point made in an interviewee’s turn for the benefit of the overhearing audience’ and ‘to construct a stronger or more contentious version of the interviewee’s stated position’ (2006, 129). The latter allows the interviewer to challenge the interviewee ‘without overtly taking up a position in his or her own right’ (Hutchby 2006, 129).

That the interviewer has asked the question indicates that there is reason to suggest that the interviewee has behaved in a way that makes the question relevant. ‘Because questions inevitably encode points of view and decisions about relevance they can never be strictly neutral’ (Clayman & Heritage 2002, 30). The interviewee then constructs the interviewer’s question as one that possibly expresses the interviewer’s opinion: ‘they may be your words they’re not mine’. It is clear that the interviewee is defending her social identity face as a respectable politician who would not be so disrespectful about the governor of the Bank of
England, and her quality face as a competent debater that will not have words ‘put in her mouth’. She makes clear that those words are not hers and implies that, as he chose those words, he must believe they are in some way relevant, and as the words did not come from her, the only relevance they can have is in S1’s opinion. She therefore attacks his face as a neutral interviewer. She has also implicitly defended her sociality rights: her right to choose her own words for answering and explaining, and not to have words implicitly attributed to her.

The interviewer then repackages what he asked as ‘I’m asking YOU whe-whether you think his analysis is correct’. This is clearly not what he asked. He is defending his face from the implicit accusation that he spoke inappropriately (threatening S2’s face rather than clarifying her position) by stating that what he asked is the equivalent to the less forceful question. He is now re-packaging what he said so that his question, which has a clear intent of establishing her position, does not contain the face threat. However, his claiming that his second question is equivalent to his first indicates that the two questions amount to the same thing. This implies: ‘If you don’t agree with him it is because you do not believe he knows what he’s talking about’.

In reaction to the face threat that he is stating his own subjective opinions, S1’s reformulated question defends his sociality rights and threatens S2’s. The stress on ‘YOU’ emphasises S2’s institutional role as an interviewee, and his as an interviewer; it is his interactional role that allows him to establish the opinions of interviewees, and S2’s role does not allow her the authority to involve S1’s possible opinions. The stress on ‘you’ also emphasises that he is not stating what he believes and is asking specifically what S2 believes.

**Extract 2**

(S1 is the interviewer. S2 is the interviewee.)

1:S1:
   S2: a few moments ago was a different website now I think we ought to

2:S1: right , now han-
   S2: get off. these TRIVIALITIES and asides and go to the main fact which is this..

3:S1: hang on no I wan- no no I wan- no I no I want the conven-the the convention is
S2: that a charity that a excuse me if I could if I could just finish a charity controlled

4:S1: I ask you some questions thank you very much
S2: by an extremist organisation has been funded by ed ball’s department and I

5:S1: I shall do in a second or two but let’s let let let’s
S2: think you should ask him about that thank you very much

6:S1: go on with a few of your other inaccuracies first shall we, why did you claim
S2:

7:S1: the schools hadn’t been inspected when they had been
S2:

As Bull observes, ‘interviewers often embed statements within questions’ (2003, 153). S1’s presupposition in staves 5-6: ‘let’s go on with a few of your other inaccuracies first’ presupposes that there are inaccuracies to go on with, and ‘other’ in particular presupposes that an inaccuracy has already been established. S2 has not admitted that he ever provided any inaccuracies. The proposition does not seem to seek any sort of answer. In fact, he asks a question immediately after, not permitting S2 to answer that criticism. S1 has threatened S2’s face by constructing him as someone who is inaccurate at best, who lies at worst. As there seems to be no function other than to inflict the face damage, it is arguably intentionally face-threatening and impolite.

The question in staves 6-7: ‘why did you claim the schools hadn’t been inspected when they had’, logically presupposes that a) he made the claim and b) the schools had been inspected. Penman (1990) makes a distinction between questions regarding the ‘facts’ and those relating to rationality of and motivation for actions. This question is clearly aimed at establishing the latter. It therefore threatens S2’s face as someone who does not make false claims. Nevertheless, it seems like an appropriate question, and one in which the face threat is incidental. S2, however, does not seem to think that it is an appropriate question as indicated by his utterance beginning in stave 1: ‘we ought to get off. these TRIVIALITIES and asides and go to the main fact’. If S1’s question is trivial, then it is inappropriate. If it is not a relevant question to ask, then it must have been asked with the intention of threatening face.
Culpeper (2005) ‘stresses that H – if s/he so desires – can deliberately construct behaviour that was not meant to offend as intentionally face-attacking’ (cited in Archer, under review). S2 constructs S1’s opening questions as inappropriate (hence, implying that this is not a legitimate part of his job) and therefore intentionally, rather than incidentally, face-attacking. In constructing S1’s question as trivial and as an attempt to threaten face, S2 has threatened S1’s face as a competent interviewer.

S2 is also threatening S1’s sociality rights in terms of the questions he is permitted to ask. Overt resistance to answering questions can be justified by questioning their fairness (Heritage and Clayman 2010). S2 claims his sociality rights: ‘if I could just finish’. S1 also claims his sociality rights and threatens those of S2: ‘the convention is I ask you some questions’. S1 is pointing out his institutional role; the norm is that interviewers ask questions for interviewees to answer. This also threatens S2’s face as a competent interviewee who is aware of and complies with conventions.

Interviewers can justify their questions and opinions by stating that the point of view is not theirs. Goffman (1981) distinguishes between the ‘animator’, the ‘author’ and the ‘principal’ of speech. The animator is the speaker, the author is ‘someone who has selected the sentiments that are being expressed and the words in which they are encoded’, and the principal is ‘someone whose position is established by the words that are spoken, someone whose beliefs have been told’ (Goffman 1981, 144). One way to justify a face threat is with a footing shift, which involves attributing the views to a third party: the principal. The footing device enables interviewers to make opinionated statements whilst maintaining a neutralistic posture (Clayman 1992). Justifying a question or statement by attributing them to a third party is a Self-directed strategy to protect Self’s face from threat, which more safely enables an other-directed strategy of face threat.

**Extract 3**

(S1 is the interviewer. S2 is the interviewee.)

1:S1: but it plays into the image doesn’t it. that er some people do have of you as

S2:

2:S1: a a party of thugs?

S2: well the image let’s face it is made to a large extent by the
3:S1: well th-
   S2: bbc. a a lady stopped me in the street the other day and she said . the bbc

4:S1: no no
   S2: question time . you shouldn’t even go on these things because . really it’s

5:S1:
   S2: not the bbc it’s the blatantly biased corporation you’re doing it again . let’s

6:S1: I-I’m I’m quo- I’m quoting other I’m quoting other
   S2: talk about POLICies . not about minor local things within a party . you can have

7:S1: politicians I’m quoting other politicians who
   S2: a go at any party but you only do it with us

8:S1: describe the bnp as a party of thugs er: . gordon brown . david cameron
   S2:

A negative interrogative is used. ‘Negative interrogatives are highly assertive and are in effect tilted in favor [sic] of a “yes” answer, so much so that recipients regularly treat them as if they were asserting a position rather than merely asking a question’ (Clayman 2002, 1391). The question of whether ‘it plays into the image doesn’t it . that er some people do have of you as a a party of thugs?’ is not addressed by the interviewee. He instead accuses the BBC, and by implication, the interviewer as being responsible for perpetuating this image; he says ‘you’re doing it again’, referring specifically to this interview. ‘Recipients of negative interrogatives also respond to them in ways that deny their status as questions’ (Heritage 2002, 1432). The restriction as to what answer is acceptable can be explained in terms of preference organisation; the ‘first turn constitutes a “slot” for the second and sets up an expectation about what this slot may properly contain’ (Silverman 1998, 98-99). The severe restrictions as to a preferred response threatens S2’s sociality rights by denying him the opportunity to fairly answer the question.
When S2 constructs this view as being that of the BBC, specifically accusing them of bias, the interviewer reacts by claiming neutrality through a footing shift. That she is quoting ‘other politicians’ was not explicitly stated before; she failed to protect her face, and now defends it against the threat to face as an unbiased, professional interviewer, belonging to a respectable corporation: a threat made by S2 in order to construct her question as intending to discredit him and his party, intentionally threatening his face, and therefore, as impolite.

Montgomery observes that ‘practices [of neutrality] include referring to the public or the audience on whose behalf the interviewer questions’ (Montgomery 2007, 213). In extract 4, this is explicitly done.

**Extract 4**

(S1 is the interviewer. S2 is the interviewee.)

1:S1: erm do you need I mean is it is it an extra burden upon you that you need to

S2:

2:S1: EAT . as an mp or wouldn’t you eat normally as a human being why do you

S2: <indistinct>

3:S1: need to claim money like that . and this is what people are wondering? . these

S2: <indistinct>

4:S1: are the emails that we’re getting here every day . every minute here at sky news

S2: I’ll I’ll explain <indistinct>

‘I mean is it is it an extra burden upon you that you need to EAT as an . MP’ implies a criticism that it is unreasonable to claim expenses for food. S1 is flouting the maxim of manner as, although he is seeking an explanation, he is not seeking a ‘yes/no’ answer. The threat is directed at S2’s face as a respectable and fair politician because it implicitly constructs her as someone who is greedy and unnecessarily takes tax-payers’ money. S1 justifies the question: ‘this is what people are wondering’. Therefore, as someone representing the public, he is claiming his sociality right to receive an explanation.
An increased level of aggressiveness in interviewing techniques can be interpreted as justified by the guidelines that programme arrangements should not prevent questions that audiences would reasonably expect to hear (Locher and Watts 2008). Justifying a face threat does not make it less face-threatening to the hearer. It does, however, defend the interviewer’s face from potential threat; it decreases the interviewee’s ability to attack on the basis of inappropriateness and it helps to lessen the possibility that the interviewer will damage his or her own face by seeming to behave inappropriately.

5. Limitations
Culpeper, Boufield and Wichmann argue that ‘[i]t is sometimes the prosody that makes an utterance impolite’ (2003, 1576). Considering tone would have undoubtedly made for a more accurate analysis. Nothing can be said in a toneless manner, and the tone can often determine whether or not an utterance is aggressive. Contempt and sarcasm frequently emerge in the tone of voice (McNair 2003). When studying institutional talk, in particular, ‘it is relevant to investigate how patterns emerge in the linguistic resources available to the speakers’ including prosodic (Benwell and Stockoe 2002, 430).

6. Conclusion
The purpose of this essay has been to consider verbal aggression and face aggravation in the context of political interviews. Verbal aggression is sanctioned and expected in this adversarial context as long as it is considered appropriate and in pursuit of neutrality.

The analysis considered strategies used by interviewers in an attempt to avoid face damage to Self, and explored some of the strategies interviewers utilise to justify their face-threatening behaviour and to avoid the appearance that the primary intent in their questions is to harm.

Following Goffman’s (1967) levels of responsibility, impoliteness in this context occurs when there is a primary intent to harm. The analysis showed that the ambiguity in propositions made it difficult to accurately assign intentions, which can be utilised by interviewers to construct their behaviour as appropriate, and by interviewees to construct the same behaviour as inappropriate. The analysis supports Archer’s (under review) claim that an intentionality scale to address the inadequacies in Goffman’s three categories in capturing all face-threatening behaviour is needed so that it can include an ambiguous-as-to-speaker-intent zone.
Appendix A

Transcription Conventions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Designation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>A question mark indicates rising intonation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>.</td>
<td>A full stop represents a pause of up to 0.5 seconds (each additional full stop represents 0.5 seconds each).</td>
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</tbody>
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**STRESS**  
**Capitals** indicate vocal emphasis or stress.

| :      | A colon indicates the prolongation of the immediately prior sound. |
| S#     | S followed by a number identifies a speaker in the extract (i.e. S1- speaker 1). |
| <indistinct> | Indicates a speaker’s utterance is indistinct. |
| -      | Indicates the utterance of the word is incomplete. |

References


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