

## “SO YOU’RE SAYING”: THE INTERROGATION OF JORDAN PETERSON

 Barry Pennock-Speck

IULMA, Universitat de València, Spain

**Abstract:** *In this article, I analyse the infamous Cathy Newman interview with Jordan Peterson on the 16th of January 2018 and subsequent viewer comments on Channel 4's YouTube channel. My first hypothesis is that Newman's frequent attribution of statements to Peterson using the now notorious "so you are saying" gambit (YSG) is what triggered outrage among Peterson's followers, which, in turn, generated media interest. My second hypothesis is that the interview is best understood as a series of Face threats by Newman on Peterson using the YSG. To ascertain if my hypotheses are true, I performed corpus linguistic analyses on the interview and comments to provide objective descriptions of both. Episodes in which the YSG were used were identified and analysed using Goffman's (1967) Facework approach. My analysis shows that the YSG was indeed a salient feature of the interviewer's discourse and was used to attack the interviewee's Face.*

**Keywords:** *rhetoric, move, step, strategy, discourse, metadiscourse.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Cathy Newman's interview with the Canadian psychologist Jordan Peterson, which aired on the 16th of January 2018 on *Channel 4 News* in the UK, is one of the most notorious television encounters in recent years and brought Newman, a prominent television journalist, considerable criticism from many of Peterson's followers. The interview was uploaded to *YouTube* on the same day, and by the first of February 2020, it had generated a total of 137,241 comments. Moreover, several major newspapers dedicated articles to the interview, and it sparked innumerable tweets as well as hundreds of memes, most of which include Newman's now famous phrase, "so you're saying". The confrontation with Peterson catapulted Newman into the international limelight but made her, according to a *Channel 4* spokesman, "the target of unwarranted and unacceptable misogynistic abuse and threats"<sup>1</sup>. Although Peterson himself already had a large following on *YouTube*, which on that date numbered 2.51 million subscribers (01/02/2020), and a Twitter following of 1.3 million, the interview enhanced his public profile even further. Without a doubt, this has more to do with his controversial political views than his professional status as a psychologist. According to Dorian Lynskey (2018), writing in *The Guardian*, Jordan Peterson is the idol of those who oppose liberals and feminists, and embodies, as he puts it, the alt-right "without the sieg heils and the white ethnostate". Nevertheless, for many of his followers, he is simply the voice of "common sense".

After watching the interview several times and reading many of the *YouTube* comments, I arrived at the hypothesis that the adversarial style of the interviewer (IR), especially Newman's frequent attribution of statements to the interviewee (IE), is what triggered outrage among the IE's followers, which, in turn, generated further interest in the media. My second hypothesis is that the struggle in the interview is best understood as a series of face threats by Newman towards Jordan Peterson in which she uses the phrase "so you are saying" to attribute problematic statements to him. In order to ascertain if my hypotheses are correct, I first performed various corpus linguistic analyses on the interview itself and the *YouTube* comments to provide objective descriptions of both. I then identified episodes in which the "so you are saying" gambit (YSG) was used and analysed them using a facework approach based on Goffman (1967). This approach reveals how face may not only be maintained, defended and enhanced, but also attacked. It is thus particularly suited to shedding light on political interviews in which two participants, in this case, co-construct an interaction through competitive rather than cooperative behaviour.

<sup>1</sup> The Independent, 20/01/2018.

**To cite this article:** Pennock-Speck, B. (2021). "So you're saying": the interrogation of Jordan Peterson". *Revista de Lingüística y Lenguas Aplicadas*, 16, 161-173. <https://doi.org/10.4995/rlyla.2021.14618>

**Correspondence author:** Barry.Pennock@uv.es



## 2. THE NATURE OF THE POLITICAL NEWS INTERVIEW

The political news interview within the Anglo-American tradition involves journalists interrogating politicians regarding their ideas, actions and policies. According to Robin Day, one of the first British practitioners of a more aggressive interviewing style, the journalist's job is to stop politicians converting "what should be a dialogue into a monologue" (Day, 1989: 106). The rationale behind this view of political interviews is that journalists carry out a public service by obliging politicians to explain themselves to the audience. Thus, they feel empowered to use an adversarial tone (Bull, 2012). There is a long tradition of combative IRs in both the UK and the USA. Apart from Robin Day, the most famous among them are, in the UK, Piers Morgan, Jeremy Paxman, Stephen Sackur and in the USA, Tucker Carlson, Anderson Cooper, Shawn Hannity, Bill O'Reilly. Relatively recently, a type of highly confrontational TV programming that combines news and information with entertainment (Rivers and Ross, 2018: 60) has emerged. Guests invited to these shows expect to be subject to "hard-hitting" interviews. According to Lloyd (2004 cited in Bull, 2012: 70), this tendency has been taken to extremes and currently the press is perceived as being openly hostile to politicians. Nevertheless, as Rendle-Short (2007: 387) points out, there are limits to how adversarial IRs can be –being too aggressive might make them seem less objective. In this sense, IRs can be antagonistic, but they are supposed to maintain at least an appearance of neutrality (see Clayman, 1988, Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Tolson, 2012).

The tension between an adversarial style, coupled with the need for neutrality, tends to shape the rhetorical features of adversarial political interviews. IRs generally ask questions, with or without interrogative syntax (Tolson, 2012: 46). A recent tendency is for questions to encapsulate stances, opinions and attitudes (Harris, 1986). According to Clayman (1988), to achieve this, journalists often preface a question with a statement (1988: 476); mention a recent occurrence to "establish the relevance" of the question (1988: 477) or cite statements attributed to third parties (1988: 482).

Due to the adversarial nature of political interviews, interruptions are frequent (Beattie, 1982) but, unlike ordinary conversation, there are very few instances of backchanneling (Heritage, 1985; Rendle-Short, 2007) as even a filler such as "mmm" might be construed as non-neutral behaviour on the part of the IR.

## 3. THE ANALYSIS OF FACE IN POLITICAL INTERVIEWS

Jucker (1986) is the first to employ Brown and Levinson's (1976) notions of face in the analysis of political interviews. He argues that politicians strive to maintain or enhance positive face in interviews of this type. He states that negative face is of negligible importance as the IE has consented to be questioned, and thus, the distinction positive/negative is effectively redundant in this context. Jucker (1986: 77-78), unlike most of the researchers on political interviews, describes the dominant tone in political interviews as "friendly" and "lacking any aggressiveness".

Though Jucker was the first who employed facework to analyse political interviews, by far the most active researcher in this field is Peter Bull (Bull, Elliot, Palmer and Walker, 1996; Elliot and Bull, 1996; Bull and Elliot, 1998; Bull, 2012, 2019). In order to analyse the role of face in political interviews, Bull et al. (1996) propose 19 categories, based on what they call "their face-threatening properties" (see also Elliot and Bull, 1996; Bull and Elliot, 1998). These categories are "grouped into three superordinate categories of face which politicians must defend –their own personal face, the face of the party they represent, and face in relation to supporting or not supporting significant others" (Bull, et al., 1996: 267). However, these categories seem to describe the consequences of not handling a face threat well rather than embodying a face threat itself. For example, "Creating/confirming a negative statement or impression about personal competence" or "Failing to present a positive image of self if offered the opportunity" (Bull, et al., 1996: 267). Therefore, I would argue that this approach does not provide "... an effective means of analysing face-threatening aspects of questions in political interviews" (Bull, et al., 1996: 274) but rather instances of how politicians can lose face.

Bull (2012), unlike Jucker (1986), states categorically that face aggravation constitutes the norm in political interviews. However, his choice of Brown and Levinson's (1987) framework throughout his research is unusual as he admits that their main concern is "essentially with facework as a form of politeness" (Bull, 2012: 84). In other publications, Bull and his co-authors (Elliot and Bull, 1996; Bull and Elliot, 1998; Bull and Fetzer, 2010; Bull, 2012, 2019) do mention researchers who incorporate notions of face aggression such as Goffman (1955/1967); Culpeper (1996, 2005); Culpeper, Bousfield and Wichmann (2003). Moreover, in his latest publication (Bull, 2019: 13), he goes so far as to say that "impoliteness" is "central to the interaction that takes place" in political interviews. Despite this, he makes no attempt to employ the above authors' insights in a systematic way.

#### 4. A GOFFMANIAN APPROACH TO AGGRESSIVE FACEWORK IN POLITICAL INTERVIEWS

Goffman's (1967) concepts of face and facework cover both face aggression and the mitigation of face threats. In this sense, this approach is superior to Brown and Levinson's (1987), which, unsurprisingly, has a "conceptual bias" towards the politeness pole in human communication (Eelen, 2001: 87) and was never designed to tackle deliberate face threats (Locher and Watts, 2005). Another advantage of the terms "face" and "facework" is that they are more neutral than the word "politeness", whose "everyday meaning constantly distorts discussion" (Holmes & Schnurr, 2005, 124). The same criticism applies to its antonym "impoliteness", as used by Culpeper (2011).

In what follows, I will provide an overview of Goffman (1967), which I will contrast with Brown and Levinson's approach (1987). Goffman (1967 [1955]: 5) defines face as: "the positive social value a person effectively claims for himself" (sic). However, he does not split face into positive or negative poles as Brown and Levinson (1987) do, nor are the terms "positive" or "negative" employed in reference to face threats. Brown and Levinson's (1987: 66) negative face threat, i.e., encroaching on someone's personal space, and positive face threat (1987:66), i.e., not giving a person the attention he/she desires, are different kinds of threat. I would argue, nonetheless, that there is no need to divide face threats into negative and positive as they both ultimately threaten a person's face or "positive social value", which is usually given the name "self-esteem" or "self-worth" by psychologists. With respect to political interviews, the positive/negative dichotomy is even more redundant. As we have already seen, Jucker (1986) downgrades the importance of negative face threats as IEs willingly subject themselves to interrogation. Perhaps, for this reason, Bull (2019 and elsewhere) rarely mentions threats of this type. In other words, threats directed at the IE's self-esteem are of much more consequence in political interviews than their right not to be imposed upon by the IR.

Regarding the concept of facework, although the strategies used to carry it out are varied, Goffman (1967) defines it simply as the actions, both physical and verbal, taken by a person to make whatever he/she is doing consistent with face. Goffman divides facework into two main types: deference and demeanour. While deference refers to the facework done to maintain, protect or enhance the face of others, the function of demeanour is principally to defend, maintain or enhance the speaker's face. Demeanour is expressed through the clothes one wears, one's deportment and bearing and more abstract qualities such as "discretion, sincerity, modesty, sportsmanship [sic], command of speech and physical movements, self-control, poise under pressure, and so forth" (Goffman, 1967 [1956]: 77). Craig, Tracy & Spisak (1986: 459) emphasise that "speaker-oriented facework strategies are often difficult to distinguish from normal social behavior". This is not surprising as being well-demeaned, presenting oneself as a competent member of society (Craig, Tracy & Spisak, 1986: 459-460), is to bend to society's norms. Watts' (2003: 11) definition of "politic", that is, "the [i]nguistic behaviour which is perceived to be appropriate to the social constraints of the ongoing interaction", is similar to Goffman's definition of demeanour.

Deference (Goffman, 1967 [1955]), which serves mainly to protect other's face, is implemented through two sets of behaviours. The first, "avoidance rituals",<sup>2</sup> are similar to Brown and Levinson's (1987) negative face strategies and comprise acts that minimize imposition, such as hedging, avoiding or glossing over sensitive topics or ignoring other people's embarrassing behaviour. The second, "presentation rituals", a precursor to Brown and Levinson's (1987) positive face strategies, are acts "through which the individual makes specific attestations to recipients concerning how he regards them and how he will treat them in the on-coming interaction" (Goffman, 1967 [1956]: 71). Avoidance and presentation strategies embrace the full range of speech acts such as compliments, requests, apologies and also paralinguistic features such as intonation, loudness and voice quality. Finally, they include non-verbal acts such as smiles, laughter or physical gestures, namely winks, bowing, averting eye contact. Although deference is mainly directed at the other or others present in an interaction, and demeanour focuses on the speaker, they overlap frequently, according to Goffman (1967 [1956]: 491). In other words, "proper demeanor can well be a form of deference to others" and vice-versa (Telles, 1980: 328). As Goffman (1967) offers no terminology regarding facework, I have coined several terms that cover face protection and face enhancement: *Face Protecting Presentation Strategies* (FPPSs), such as hedging; *Face Enhancing Presentation Strategies* (FEPSs), such as compliments; *Face Protecting Avoidance Strategies* (FPASs), such as changing to a less contentious topic; *Face Enhancing Avoidance Strategies* (FEASs), such as averting gaze in some cultures. Regarding demeanour, being well demeaned may be understood as deference towards the other (FEAS) while, at the same time, protecting the self's face (FPPS).

Regarding face aggression, Goffman (1967 [1955]) is the first to suggest that facework can be used deliberately to create face threats. He describes one type of face aggression as "making points" (1967 [1955]: 24), where a "threat will be willfully introduced for what can be safely gained by it". Goffman (1967/1955: 14) distinguishes threats of this type from deliberate insults and threats caused by "faux pax and gaffes". The person attempting to make points does so to enhance his/her face by introducing information that is favourable to the speaker, unfavourable to the others and to show that "he (sic) can handle himself (sic) better than his (sic) adversaries"

<sup>2</sup> The term "strategies" is employed instead of Goffman's (1967) term "rituals".

(1967/1955: 25). However, if the target of the remark makes a successful "riposte", there is always a risk that the initiator might lose face.

As in the case of protective and enhancing strategies, Goffman (1967/1955) does not offer terminology for face aggression. To fill this gap, I coined two terms; the first is *Face-Threatening Presentation Strategies* (FTPS), which include, among others, physically encroaching on someone's personal space, asking leading questions, using ironic and sarcastic remarks, and insults. The second term is *Face-Threatening Avoidance Strategies* (FTAS), and includes ignoring someone's presence, not giving someone credit or praise for what they have done, being poorly demeaned in someone's presence, etc.

## 5. METHODOLOGY, ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

I performed several corpus analyses using the *AntConc* (8.5.15) concordancing tool to provide an objective, quantitative analysis of both the comments on the interview in *YouTube* and the interview itself. Firstly, I carried out a word count of the *YouTube* comments to shed light on the size of this corpus. Regarding the interview, to ascertain whether there was an imbalance regarding the weight of the participants' interventions, I ran three word counts to determine the total number of words in the whole interview and the number of words uttered by the IR and IE, respectively. Next, I applied a grammatical-word stop-list, which eliminates function words from the word list in order to identify the most frequent lexical words as these provide a general idea of what a chunk of discourse is "about". This was followed by an analysis of N-grams, that is, "frequently occurring contiguous words that constitute a phrase or pattern of use" (Greaves and Warren, 2010: 213). Finally, I ran a keyword analysis using the online *SketchEngine* software, which highlights words that are "significantly frequent" (Evison, 2010: 127) compared to a larger reference corpus, in this case, the *English Web 2013 Sample* reference corpus.

The facework analysis of the interaction in the interview was implemented using Goffman's approach in order to identify, among other things, episodes in which face threats occur. Due to the frequency of the N-grams "you're saying", "so you're saying" and "what you are saying" in both the interview itself and the viewers' comments, and the fact that they were flagged as problematic in many of the latter, the facework analysis focused on these phrases, alongside the episodes they were embedded in.

### 5.1 Quantitative analysis of the YouTube comments on the interview

A corpus-linguistics analysis of six months' of viewer comments<sup>3</sup> was executed using *AntConc*. The number of word tokens was found to be 255,578, divided into 20,215 word types. The most frequent lexical words in the comments were as follows:

Table 1: Lexical words in order of frequency.

1	1726	saying
2	1401	jordan
3	1334	women
4	1266	woman
5	1110	peterson
6	1040	like
7	1015	cathy
8	920	interview
9	792	men
10	643	interviewer

The corpus analysis shows that the most common lexical word is "saying" (1,726), followed by "women", "woman", and words referring to Jordan Peterson and Cathy Newman. After "saying", the most common verbs are "think" (441), "trying" (435), "said/say/says" (410/405/312) and "listen/listening" (399/297). The verb "think" (441) serves mostly to introduce the opinions of the viewers and "said" and "say/s" mainly to introduce quotes and to paraphrase what was said. On the other hand, the vast majority of the instances of "trying" refer to the IR's efforts to "manipulate", "put words in [the IR's] mouth", "catch [the IR] out", "make [the IR] look bad", etc. Regarding "listen", many point out that the IR simply does not listen to the IE. With respect to insults, "idiot" (147) and "dumb" (132) are all directed at the IR. The intensifier "fucking" (132) accompanies other words to insult the IE and, on considerably fewer occasions, to praise the IE.

<sup>3</sup> Viewers' comments on the *YouTube*, these were downloaded on the 29<sup>th</sup> of January, 2020 at 17.45 and included the previous six months' of comments.

Regarding evaluative adjectives, the corpus analysis indicates that the most common is "good" (308<sup>4</sup>) and all instances referred to the IE. The word "stupid" (298) was only used to describe the IR. One of the most frequent collocations, referring to the IR, is "stupid woman". The comments overwhelming either criticise the IR or praise the IE. The IR is criticised for putting words in the IE's mouth, not listening and doing a bad job as an interviewer. The IE is praised for his intelligence and patience.

A search for N-grams appearing a minimum of 40 times and with at least four members produced seventeen N-grams. This analysis backs up the results from the word list and shows that fourteen of the seventeen N-grams are: "so you're saying", and variants thereof, while the remaining three are variations of the phrase "put words in his mouth".

The single-keyword analysis (Table 2), which identifies words that are significantly more frequent in this corpus than in the general corpus, highlights the importance of the participants as twelve of the first thirty keywords, refer to the IR and IE and their roles "interviewer" and "interviewee". Four of the keywords refer disparagingly to the IR as a "feminazi", "dumb", "leftist" and "unprofessional". The words "strawman" and "generalization" also refer pejoratively to the IR's interviewing style, while both "Lol" and "Wow" are directed almost exclusively at the IR in a derogatory way. Two of the keywords refer to actual words in the interview, "gotcha" and "SAYING". The words, "gotcha/Gotcha" refer to a crucial moment in the interview when the IR is lost for words: "I'm just trying, I'm just trying to work that out". The IR retorts with the interjections: "Ha, gotcha!" to which the IR replies fatalistically: "You have got me! You have got me you!". The remaining six keywords refer to the topics covered in the interview, "feminist", "lobster", "feminism", "agreeable", "disagreeable", "agreeableness".

Table 2: Keywords: single-word.

1	Cathy	11	SAYING	21	agreeable
2	Peterson	12	lobster	22	leftist
3	interviewer	13	JBP	23	generalization
4	Newman	14	Wow	24	interviewee
5	gotcha	15	peterson	25	feminazi
6	JP	16	feminism	26	dumb
7	Jordan	17	Lol	27	disagreeable
8	cathy	18	strawman	28	Jordon
9	Gotcha	19	newman	29	agreeableness
10	feminist	20	sexist	30	unprofessional

The multi-word keywords (table 3) tell a similar story to their single-word counterparts. Several phrases refer to the key topics of the interview: "the gender pay gap", "equal pay", "equal outcome" and "group identity". However, the most salient phrases direct criticism towards the IR: "terrible interviewer", "stupid woman", "horrible interviewer", "bad interviewer", "fucking idiot". Other phrases, such as "toxic femininity" and "own agenda" are also directed at the IR. The phrase "drinking game" is used to criticise the IR's use of "so you're saying" and variants in comments such as "Best drinking game... take a shot everytime (sic) Cathy says 'so you're saying'".

Table 3: Keywords: multi-word.

1	pay gap	16	intelligent conversation
2	gender pay	17	horrible interviewer
3	gender pay gap	18	awful interviewer
4	clinical psychologist	19	bad interviewer
5	whole interview	20	toxic femininity
6	terrible interviewer	21	fucking idiot
7	wage gap	22	perfect example
8	same job	23	equal outcome
9	drinking game	24	jordan peterson
10	equal pay	25	good interviewer
11	high quality position	26	comment section
12	quality position	27	intelligent person
13	entire interview	28	good interview
14	stupid woman	29	own agenda
15	cathy newman	30	group identity

<sup>4</sup> Refers to the number of hits.

## 5.2 Quantitative analysis of the interview

After transcribing and proofing the interview obtained from *YouTube*, the whole exchange was saved as a .txt document. The contribution of each participant were then copied and pasted into two separate.txt documents. Word lists were then obtained for the three documents using *AntConc*. The word count for the IE was 4225 compared to the IR's 2550 (see Table 4). The results are roughly what one would expect as an IR's questions are normally shorter than an IE's answers given that the onus would be on the IE to argue his case. Regarding type/token ratio, the difference is minimal, that is, Peterson's is 4,757 compared to Newman's 4,619. The difference might be ascribed, once more, to the fact that an IE's answers must be reasoned, which would require a greater range of words.

Table 4: Words tokens, word types and percentages.

	Word tokens	Word types	Percentage
Whole exchange	6775	1117	100%
Jordan Peterson	4225	888	62.38%
Cathy Newman	2550	552	37.62%

Using *AntConc*'s stop-list function, lists of the most common lexical words used by the IR and IE –down to a minimum of ten instances– were obtained. The results (see Table 5) suggest that the conversation revolved around issues concerning gender and the pay gap. The lemma "say", represented by "saying", "say", and "said", also looms large. This coincides with the results for the comments. Out of 55 instances of this lemma, 35 are uttered to quote the IE's words or the words she attributes to him.

Table 5: Most frequent content words.

Jordan Peterson		Cathy Newman	
women	35	women	42
men	25	saying	35
saying	17	men	27
say	23	pay	21
people	15	mean	17
said	14	say	13
think	12	Right	13
example	10	want	13
		gap	11
		top	11
		people	10

Further insights into the interview were collected using a keyword search, which provides a useful overview of the topics tackled in the interview, that is, the pay gap between men and women, represented by the words "equal", "equality", "Footsie", "gender", "gap", "men", "traits", "women", "equal pay", "pay rise", "percent pay gap", "top Footsie", "typical women", and the IE's research, evidenced by the words "agreeable", "agreeableness", "conscientiousness", "multivariate", "Scandinavia", "average IQ", "multivariate analysis". Other topics, such as the discussion on transphobia are represented by the words "Mao", "transphobic", "Chairman Mao", and hierarchy in society by the word "lobster".

Table 6: Keywords: single and multi-word.

Single-Words		Multi-Words	
1	Mao	1	pay gap
2	conscientiousnes	2	same job
3	agreeable	3	multivariate analysis
4	Pinochet	4	equal pay
5	Scandinavia	5	pay rise
6	Footsie	6	top Footsie
7	lobster	7	percent pay gap
8	multivariate	8	average IQ
9	transphobic	9	Chairman Mao
10	agreeableness	10	typical woman

The N-Gram<sup>5</sup> analysis of the whole text shows that all seven N-grams include the lemma “say”. The N-grams “you’re saying that”, “so you’re saying” are uttered exclusively by the IR. On the other hand, the denials, “I’m not saying”, “I didn’t say”, “didn’t say that”, “I didn’t say that”, and the seven occurrences of “I’m saying that” are uttered by the IE to respond to the IR. These results show convincingly that the interview is adversarial.

Table 7: N-grams.

Order	Frequency	Range	N-gram
1	10	1	I’m not saying
2	8	1	You’re saying that
3	7	1	I didn’t say
4	7	1	I’m saying that
5	6	1	Didn’t say that
6	6	1	I didn’t say that
7	6	1	so you’re saying

## 6. FACEWORK ANALYSIS

The corpus analysis of the viewers’ comments and of the interview both clearly point to the salience of those episodes in which the IR attributes words or ideas to the IE. The continual use of “you are saying” and versions of this phrase by the IR can be interpreted as a strategy to attack the IE’s ideas, which is tantamount to attacking his face. As such, they constitute clear FTPSs (Face-Threatening Presentation Strategies). I have identified eighteen episodes within which the IR employs YSGs (“so you are saying” gambit) –a total of twenty-four times. The IE generally replies to these with FPPSs (Face Protecting Presentation Strategies).

The first YSG (example 1) occurs almost three minutes into the interview when the IR suggests that the IE is defending the status quo, which she previously described as divisive, making it, by implication, a clear FTPS. The IE counters this statement with the FPPS that he is simply making an observation:

1 <IR> But does it bother you that your audience is predominantly male? Does that, isn’t, isn’t that a bit divisive?  
 <IE> No, I don’t think so, I mean, it’s no more divisive than the fact that *YouTube* is primarily male and *Tumblr* is primarily female.  
 <IR> That’s pretty divisive, isn’t it?  
 <IE> Well but *Tumblr* is primarily female  
 <IR> Right, you’re just saying that’s the way it is. (2:42)  
 <IE> I’m not saying anything. it’s just an observation that that’s the way it is ...

Example 2 springs from a previous question by the IR: “What’s in it for women though?” regarding what women have to gain from the IE’s work with young men. At this stage, it is unclear whether this is an FTPS or simply a question. However, through the YSG, the IR implies that the IE thinks that “women have some sort of duty to help fix the crisis of masculinity”. This might constitute an FTPS as the IR seems to be implying that the IE is suggesting that women have an obligation to help men. The IE’s FPPS is that it is in women’s interest to help men if they want competent, powerful partners:

2 <IR> So you’re saying women have some sort of duty to sort of help fix the crisis of masculinity?  
 <IE> It depends on what they want (...) women want, deeply, want men who are competent and powerful. (3:13)

In example 3, the IR continues with another YSG in which she claims that the IE’s research has found that “women are unhappy dominating men”. This stems from an earlier exchange in which the IE argues that, although it is a “suboptimal solution”, some women in impaired relationships may find satisfaction dominating a weak male partner. The IE categorically rejects the YSG; “I didn’t say they were unhappy dominating men”, which shows that he regards it as face-threatening. Such a strong denial can also be construed as an FTPS vis-à-vis the IR. This episode ends with a further FPPS in which the IE states that dominating men was “a bad long-term solution”:

<sup>5</sup> Four-member, minimum frequency of six.

3 <IR> Right. So, you've, you're saying, you've done your research and women are unhappy dominating men.  
<IE> I didn't say they were unhappy dominating men.  
<IR> You  
<IE> I said it was a bad long-term solution <4:34>

The IR then turns to the glass-ceiling theme (example 4) and employs the YSG twice to accuse the IE of defending a status quo that stops women getting to the top of their professions (FTPS), to which the IE replies (FPPS) that there are multiple reasons for this situation:

4 <IR> But you're saying basically it doesn't matter if women aren't getting to the top, you're saying well, that's just a fact of life, they're not necessarily going to get to the top.  
<IE> I'm not saying it doesn't matter. No, I'm not saying it doesn't matter either.  
<IR> You're saying it's a fact of life  
<IE> I'm saying there are multiple reasons for it. (6:25)

Before the exchange in example 5, the IE describes one reason why women do not get to the top and are, therefore, paid less, namely that they are statistically more agreeable than men and that people with this particular trait earn less. Through a YSG, the IR suggests the IE is actually saying that women are "too agreeable" to get a pay rise (FTPS). In response, the IE stresses that agreeableness is just one component of the equation (FPPS):

5 <IR> So you're saying that by and large women are too agreeable to get the pay rises they deserve.  
<IE> I'm s (sic), no, I'm saying that that's one component of a multivariate equation that predicts a salary. (7:40)

In example 6, the YSG is used to imply, once more, that the IE is saying that women get paid less because they are more agreeable. The IE reiterates that it is one of the reasons for the pay gap (FPPS). By apparently ignoring the IE's previous reply, the IR carries out an FTPS:

6 <IR> I mean the pay gap between men and women exists. You're saying it's not because of gender, it's because women are too agreeable to ask for pay rises.  
<IE> It's one of the reasons. (8:38)

Through another YSG, the IR insinuates (example 7) that the IE is proposing that the pay gap should not be eliminated if it is at the cost of men to which he replies (FPPS) that it could be at the cost of a lot of things. Here the FTPS consists of accusing the IE of openly defending men over women:

7 <IR> And you're saying if it's at the cost of men. (9:44)  
<IE> You can't, you can't. Oh, there's all sorts of things that it could be at the cost of it could even be at the cost of women's own interests.

The next two YSGs (example 8) are clear FTPSs. In the first, the IR implies that the IE says that having to choose a career over children makes women unhappy, which he categorically denies having said. In the second, she states that at the beginning [of the programme], he had said that choosing between a career or children made women miserable, to which he replies that he actually said that having weak partners makes women miserable, an FPPS.

8 <IR> But why shouldn't women have the right to choose not to have children or the right to choose those demanding careers?  
<IE> They do, they can. Yeah, that's fine.  
<IR> But you're saying that makes them unhappy, by and large.  
<IE> I'm saying that, that. No, I'm not saying that. I'm, I, and I, I actually haven't said that so far in the programme.  
<IR> You're saying it makes them miserable. At the beginning. (10:22)  
<IE> No. I said what was making them miserable was having part (sic), was having weak partners. That makes them miserable.

Through the YSG in example 9, the IR suggests that the IE believes that women who have children are vulnerable. This is one of the few cases in which he agrees with her:

9 <IR> Okay. You say women become more vulnerable when they have children. (11:17)  
<IE> Oh, yes.

In example 10, the IE talks about the sacrifices some men make to get to the top. Through a YSG, the IR states that the IE thinks women are more sensible than men for not making these sacrifices. Once more, the IE agrees with her, at least in part:

10 <IE> And they're willing to work 70 or 80 hours a week, non-stop, specialised at one thing to get to the top.  
<IR> So you saying women are just more sensible, they don't want that because it's not a nice life.  
<IE> I'm saying that's part of it definitely. (12:50)

In example 11, the IR uses the YSG three times in quick succession to make her point that the IE's position is that equality of outcome between men and women is not possible. Her emphatic use of the word "really" in the last YSG suggests his answers are insincere, which is a clear FTPS. The IE's FPPS is that equality of outcome is impossible, whereas equality of opportunity is optimal:

11 <IR> Right, so you're saying that anyone who believes in equality, whether you call them feminists, call them whatever you want to call them, should basically give up because it ain't gonna happen? (14:12)  
<IE> Only if they're aiming at equality of outcome  
<IR> So you're saying give people equality op (sic) of opportunity, that's fine?  
<IE> It's not only fine, it's eminently desirable for everyone, for individuals and for society.  
<IR> But still women aren't gonna make it, that's what you're REALLY saying.  
<IE> It depends on your measurement techniques. They're doing just fine in medicine.

In example 12, the YSG gambit is used three times to threaten the IE's face. The confrontation comes to a head with a series of FTPSs through which the IR accuses the IE of suggesting that women are never going to make it, that attempting to get to the top will make them miserable, and that being successful is ultimately undesirable. After offering several FPPSs, he accuses her of not listening, that is, of misinterpreting his words and describes what she is saying as silly, which is a clear FTPS:

12 <IR> because a lot of people listening to you will just say, I mean are we going back to the dark ages here?  
<IE> That's because you're actually not listening, you're just projecting what they think.  
<IR> I'm listening very carefully and I'm hearing you basically saying women need to just accept they're never gonna make it on equal terms, equal outcomes, is what how you defined it. (15:23)  
<IE> No, I didn't say that. I said that equal. <laughs>  
<IR> If it was a young woman watching that, I would go, well I might as well just go and play with my Cindy dolls and give up trying at school because I'm not going to get the top job I want because there's someone sitting there saying it's not possible, it's not desirable, it's going to make you miserable.  
<IE> I didn't say that. I said that, I said that equal outcomes aren't desirable, that's what I said. It's a, it's a bad, it's a bad social goal <laughing bemused tone>. I didn't say that women shouldn't be striving for the top or anything like that </laughing bemused tone> because I don't believe that for a second.  
<IR> Yeah, it's not desirable striving for the top but you're gonna put all those hurdles in their way as has been in their way for centuries and that's fine, you're saying that's fine.  
<IE> No, no, no, <laughing tone> I think, I really think that's silly </laughing tone>  
<IR> The patriarchal system is just fine.  
<IE> I do, I think that's silly.

In example 13, the IR employs a YSG to imply that the IE is saying that women have to become men to succeed, to which the IE replies (FPPS) that having certain masculine traits would be helpful:

13 <IR> [women] Basically have to wear the trousers in your view. They have to sort of become men to succeed, is what you're saying.  
<IE> Well.  
<IR> I've had to fight to succeed, therefore I'm an honorary man.  
<IE> Well, if they're going c (sic), if they're gonna compete against men, certainly masculine traits are going to be helpful. (17:05)

In example 14, the IR uses a YSG twice to accuse the IE of stating that women are not intelligent enough to run big companies and that "intelligence and conscientiousness were by implication not female traits". These FTTPs are countered by several denials and FPPSs:

14 <IR> So you're saying, you're saying that women aren't intelligent enough to run these top companies?  
<19:37>  
<IE> No, I didn't say that at all!  
<IR> You said that, ehm, female traits don't predict success, intelligence and conscientiousness do.  
<IE> I didn't say that intelligence wasn't, I didn't say that intelligence and conscientiousness weren't female traits.  
<IR> Well, you were saying that intelligence and conscientiousness were by implication not female traits.  
<IE> No! No! I'm not saying that. I'm not saying that at all! There's.  
<IR> I mean, that's very dangerous territory. Are women less intelligent than men, by and large?  
<IE> No! No, they're not, no, the a (sic) data on that's pretty clear. The average IQ for a woman and the average IQ for a man is identical.

The conversation then turns to gender identity (example 15). Through a YSG, the IR accuses the IE of comparing transgender people with Chairman Mao (FTPS). He retorts that he refers only to transgender activists (FPPS):

15 <IR> Yes, but you're saying that someone who's trying to work out their gender identity who may well have struggled with that, had quite a tough time over the years, you're comparing them with, you know, Chairman Mao (...) (23:59)  
<IE> No doubt they've struggled with it. No, just the activists, just the activists.

In example 16, the IR then employs a YSG to suggest that the IE thinks that trans activists could cause millions of deaths (FTPS). He denies this, but states that the philosophy "that drives their utterances" has already led to the death of millions (FPPS):

16 <IR> You're saying that trans activists could lead to the deaths of millions of people, what .... (24:59)  
<IE> No, I'm saying that the philosophy that drives their utterances is the same philosophy that already has driven us to the deaths of millions of people.

The IR then changes the topic abruptly and her YSG suggests that the IE believes that society should be organised in the same way that lobsters organise themselves (Example 17). The suddenness of the change in topic and what seems, prima facie, a radical statement has the hallmarks of an FTTPS. His FPPS consists of him pointing out the connections between animal and human organisation:

17 <IR> Let me just get it straight, you're saying that we should organize our societies along the lines of the lobsters. (27:08)  
<IE> I'm saying that it's inevitable that there will be continuity in the way that animals and human beings organize, organize their structures.

Finally, in example 18, the YSG suggests that, according to the IE, we cannot help doing certain things because we are hardwired to do them. The FTTPS is constituted by the insinuation that the IE believes that human societies can be somehow organised the same way that lobsters organise theirs without any caveats. His FPPS is that there is some similarity between the way humans and animals organise themselves. However, using a gaming analogy, he argues that, within the rules of a game, we have a certain freedom of action:

18 <IR> So you're saying like the lobsters we're hardwired as men and women to do certain things, to sort of run along tram lines and there's nothing we can do about it. (27:49)  
<IE> No! I'm not saying there's nothing we can do about it because it's like a, in a chess game, right? there's lots of things that you can do, although you can't break the rules of the chess game and continue to play chess.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS

The corpus linguistics analysis of the viewers' comments, especially the keyword analysis, clearly shows that a great number of those who watched the interview were angered by the IR's interviewing style –in particular, the use of the "so you are saying" gambit. These results support my first hypothesis, namely, that Newman's style is adversarial. Moreover, many of those who commented on the interview did interpret her repetitive use of the YSG as a strategy to put words into the IE's mouth. The N-gram results from the analysis of the interview itself show that this gambit was indeed used very frequently by the IR. This backs up my second hypothesis that it was a salient feature of the IR's discourse and worthy of analysis.

From the facework analysis and the results presented above, it is clear that the YSG can be construed as an attack on the IE's face by attacking his ideas, which also corroborates my second hypothesis. The fact that the gambit is repeated so often makes the antagonistic tone of the interview even more patent. The results of the corpus linguistics analysis on the viewers' comments show that the YSG is interpreted by many as being rude or unfair. I would argue, however, that the IR's use of the YSG is not impolite, but it is designed to put the IE on the defensive and get him to concede that he has an anti-feminist agenda. Attempting to use an IE's words against him/her is quite common in adversarial interviews and could be described as part of an interviewer's job. From the comments, it seems that the cumulative effect of the YSG is what is perceived as impolite by viewers (see the "drinking game" metaphor). However, while the IE himself acknowledges the adversarial tone of the interview when he says: "you're certainly willing to risk offending me in the pursuit of truth", he also recognises the IR's right to be adversarial when he goes on to say: "you're doing what you should do, which is digging a bit to see what the hell's going on".

I contend that Goffman's concepts of face and facework are much better suited to the analysis of political interviews than an (im)politeness approach. In this sense, an interview can be seen, following Goffman's (1967) view of "making points", as a serious game in which one participant makes a remark (FTPS), which may then be parried through a riposte (FPPS). If the IR is successful, that is, if his/her question puts the IE on the spot, his/her face will be enhanced and the IE will lose face to a greater or lesser extent. However, a successful reply can enhance the IE's face and damage that of the IR. This can be most clearly seen in the "gotcha" episode above, when the IE's response leaves the IR speechless, representing a clear loss of face for her.

Goffman's (1967) psychologically-based view of face is also well suited to an antagonistic activity such as the political interview. In this interview, it is patently clear that both participants have an agenda and, although it is true that, in the political interview, discourse is co-constructed by both participants, it is not done in a collaborative way, but through FTPSs and FPPSs. In the case of this interview, the YSG is employed aggressively by the IR to attempt to get the upper hand and impose her point of view in the interview, but her efforts are vigorously contested by the IE.

As the recent elections in the US have shown, the way political interviews, like the one in this study, are conducted has become a contentious issue among laypersons and political pundits. The analysis of clashes between journalists and politicians is, therefore, an important task in the field of pragmatics and beyond. Hopefully, this article will have made a modest contribution.

## REFERENCES

- Beattie, G.W. (1982). "Turn-taking and interruptions in political interviews-Margaret Thatcher and Jim Callaghan compared and contrasted." *Semiotica*, 39, 93-114. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1982.39.1-2.93>
- Brown, P. & Levinson, S.C. (1987). *Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511813085>
- Bousefield, D.E. (2008). *Impoliteness in Interaction*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing.
- Bull, P. (2012). "Watch dogs or guard dogs? Adversarial discourse in political journalism." In L N. Berlin & A. Fetzer (eds.) *Dialogue in Politics*. John Benjamins Publishing Company, 69-87. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ds.18.07bul>

- Bull, P. (2019). "The construction of political journalism: A microanalytic approach." *Discourse, Context & Media*, 27, 7-14. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2018.02.004>
- Bull, P.E. & Elliot, J. (1998). "Level of threat: A means of assessing interviewer toughness and neutrality." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 17/2, 220-244. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X980172005>
- Bull, P.E. & Fetzer, A. (2010). "Face, facework and political discourse." *Revue Internationale de Psychologie Sociale*, 2/3, 155-185.
- Bull, P.E., Elliott, J., Palmer, D., & Walker, L. (1996). "Why politicians are three-faced: The face model of political interviews." *British Journal of Social Psychology*, 35, 267-284. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1996.tb01097.x>
- Clayman, S.E. (1988). "Displaying neutrality in television news interviews." *Social Problems*, 35/4, 474-492. <https://doi.org/10.2307/800598>
- Clayman, S.E. & Heritage, J. (2002). *The News Interview*. New York: Cambridge University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511613623>
- Craig, R.T., Tracy, K. & Spisak, F. (1986). "The discourse of requests: Assessment of a politeness approach." *Human Communication Research*, 12/4, 437-468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2958.1986.tb00087.x>
- Culpeper, J. (1996). "Towards an anatomy of impoliteness." *Journal of Pragmatics*, 25, 349-367. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(95\)00014-3](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(95)00014-3)
- Culpeper, J. (2005). "Impoliteness and entertainment in the television quiz show: The Weakest Link." *Journal of Politeness Research: Language, Behaviour, Culture*, 1, 35-72. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.35>
- Culpeper, J. (2011). *Impoliteness: Using Language to Cause Offence*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Culpeper, J. Bousfield, D. E. & Wichmann, A. (2003). "Impoliteness revisited: With special reference to dynamic and prosodic aspects." *Journal of Pragmatics*, 35/10-11: 1545-1579. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166\(02\)00118-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0378-2166(02)00118-2)
- Day, R. (1989) *Grand Inquisitor: Memoirs*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson Ltd.
- Eelen, G. (2001) *A Critique of Politeness Theories*. Manchester: St. Jerome's Press.
- Elliott, J., & Bull, P.E. (1996). "A question of threat: Face threats in questions posed during televised political interviews." *Journal of Community and Applied Social Psychology*, 6, 49-72. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-1298\(199602\)6:1%3C49::AID-CASP355%3E3.0.CO;2-H](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-1298(199602)6:1%3C49::AID-CASP355%3E3.0.CO;2-H)
- Evison, J. (2010). "What are the basics of analyzing corpus?" In: McCarthy, M. & A. O'Keefe (eds.) *The Routledge handbook of Corpus Linguistics*. London/New York: Routledge, 122-135.
- Goffman, E. (1955). "On Face-work. An analysis of ritual elements in social interaction." *Psychiatry: Journal for the Study of Interpersonal Processes*, 18/3, 213-31. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00332747.1955.11023008>
- Goffman, E. (1956). "The nature of deference and demeanor." *American Anthropologist*, 58, 473-502. <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.1956.58.3.02a00070>
- Goffman, E. (1967). *Interaction Ritual: Essays on Face to Face Behaviour*. New York: Garden City.
- Greatbatch, D. (1998) Conversation analysis: Neutralism in British news interviews. In: Bell, A. & P. Garrett (eds.) *Approaches to Media Discourse*. Blackwell, Oxford. Harris, 63-185.
- Greaves, C., & Warren, M. (2010) What can a corpus tell us about multi-word units? In: O'Keefe, A. & M. McCarthy (eds.) *The Routledge Handbook of Corpus Linguistics*. London and New York: Routledge, 212-226. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203856949-16>
- Harris, S. (1986). "Interviewers' questions in broadcast interviews." In: Wilson, J. & B. K. Crow (eds.) *Belfast Working Papers in Language and Linguistics, Vol. 8*. Jordanstown: University of Ulster, 50-85.
- Heritage, J. (1985). "Analyzing news interviews: Aspects of the production of talk for an overhearing audience." In T. A. van Dijk (ed.) *Handbook of Discourse Analysis*. London: Academic Press, 95-117.
- Heritage, J. & Greatbatch, D. (1991). "On the institutional character of institutional talk: the case of news interviews." In: Boden, D. & D. H. Zimmerman (eds.) *Talk and Social Structure: Studies in Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis*. Cambridge: Polity Press, pp. 93-137.
- Holmes, J. & Schnurr, S. (2005). "Politeness, Humor and Gender in the Workplace: Negotiating Norms and Identifying Contestation." *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1/1, 121-49.
- Jucker, A. (1986). *News Interviews: A Pragmalinguistic Analysis*. Amsterdam: Gieben. <https://doi.org/10.1075/pb.vii.4>
- Leech, G. (1983). *Principles of Pragmatics*. London: Longman.
- Lloyd, J. (2004). *What the media are doing to our politics*. London: Constable and Robinson.
- Locher, M.A. & Watts, R.J. (2005). "Politeness Theory and Relational Work." *Journal of Politeness Research*, 1/1, 9-33. <https://doi.org/10.1515/jplr.2005.1.1.9>

- Lynskey, D. (2018). "How dangerous is Jordan B Peterson, the rightwing professor who 'hit a hornet's nest'?" *The Guardian*, 18<sup>th</sup> February.
- Penman, R. (1990). "Facework and Politeness: Multiple Goals in Courtroom Discourse." *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*, 9/1, 15-38. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261927X9091002>
- Rendle-Short, J. (2007). "Neutralism and adversarial challenges in the political news interview." *Discourse & Communication*, 1/4, 387-406. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1750481307082205>
- Sharman, J. & Pasha-Robinson, L (2018). "Cathy Newman: Channel 4 calls in security experts following 'vicious abuse' over Jordan Peterson interview." *The Independent*. 20<sup>th</sup> January.
- Spencer-Oatey, H. (2007). "Theories of identity and the analysis of face." *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39, 639-56. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.12.004>
- Telles, J.L. (1980). "The social nature of demeanor." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 21/3, 321-334.
- Tolson, A. (2012). "'You'll need a miracle to win this election' (J. Paxman 2005): Interviewer assertiveness in UK general elections 1983-2010." *Discourse, Context & Media*, 1, 45-53. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.dcm.2012.05.003>
- Watts, R.J. (2003). *Politeness*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.