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Using visual text analytics to examine broadcast interviewing

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ABSTRACT

Broadcast interview hosts are increasingly adopting hybrid forms of interview through the utilization of interview techniques from different genres within the one interview (Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011; Montgomery, 2008). Methods that can visually represent interviews in their entirety have the potential to assist in tracking and tracing genre shifts within a single interview. In this paper we examine traditional genres and hybrid forms of broadcast interviewing using a visual text analytic software Discursis (Angus et al., 2013, 2012a, 2012b). Discursis provides visual representations of whole interviews at-a-glance as well as the ability to focus into particular sections for closer analysis. Drawing on a corpus of 101 interviews from a single television program, this study examines if Discursis can meaningfully visually represent forms of interviewing genres (Montgomery, 2008) and highlight where shifting techniques (Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011) are used within a single interview.

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1. Introduction

Broadcast interviews have been the subject of study over some considerable time examining both news interviews (Bell and Van Leeuwen, 1994; Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Harris, 1991; Montgomery, 2008) as well as celebrity and talk show interviews (Hutchby, 2006; Tolson, 2006). These studies have ranged from the collection and analysis of large amounts of interviews and subject using content analysis approaches (Bull, 2008; Harris, 1991), through to examining the media interview (both news and non-news) as a locally produced, on-going, and participant negotiated formalized interactional event (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Tolson, 2006). Much of the analytic work treats the broadcast interview as being characterized as a continuous negotiation of both the interview content and the roles of the host and guest while they interact for the benefit of an 'overhearing audience' (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Heritage, 1985; Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Hutchby, 2006). While much of this work tends to treat the news interview as an archetypal institutional event with tacitly and sometimes overt oriented interactional practices, recent work has begun to explore in more detail the way contemporary media interviewing can be seen as having a number of distinct genres identifiable through observable sets of routine interactional characteristics (Hutchby, 2006; Montgomery, 2008). The

'accountability', 'experiential', 'expert', 'affiliate' and 'celebrity' (Tolson, 2006) genres now provide a widely accepted framework for the analysis of broadcast news interviews, with each having expected modes of interactional methods within the interview and overall goals for the interview. Furthermore, as (Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011) suggest, these genres may not be confined to particular institutionally defined settings but adopted and used at different stages of a developing story, or for different purposes according to the participants task at hand. Thus while interview genres continue to be used by scholars to explore the form and content of interviews, recent work which highlights the adoption of hybrid forms of interviewing within interviews suggests that interviewers are shifting interview techniques in order to achieve particular and specific interview tasks often within single interviews (Baum, 2005; Hutchby, 2006). This 'hybridization' of interview techniques and tools (Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011) both points to the continuing evolution of the broadcast interview but also presents a challenge for the analysis of this changing form of interaction.

On one hand for more larger focused discourse oriented work (Bull, 2008; Gnisci et al., 2013; Harris, 1991) the challenge arises from the fact that traditional analysis techniques tend to draw on the context as both shaping and revealing the institutional power asymmetries, modes of conduct and expected content of the interview. For this type of analysis the form and content of the interaction is a representation and manifestation of the wider socio-political institution at work. However by treating the

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interview as a stable institutional interactional event the analysis will tend to ignore hybrid forms of interviewing and hence the institutional oriented work of these hybrid forms orient to within a single interview. More close interactional focused analyses of media talk are commonly based on Conversation Analysis (CA) (Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Sacks, 1992; Sacks et al., 1974) where the nature of the analysis requires focus on a high level of detail by utilizing small extracts of the data taken from a whole interaction, and due to this level of detail the whole interaction is not able to be presented. Thus in terms of data presentation close text analysis is rarely able to present the whole transcript and even when this is possible it is difficult to get an overall at-a-glance sense of the interaction from which any extract is taken. In the context of hybrid techniques of interviewing which involve shifting interview styles throughout the same interview, it remains difficult to show where and how these shifts occur across the whole interview.

In this paper we explore the potential use of a Computer Aided Qualitative Discourse Analysis Software (CAQDAS) application ('Discursis') in complementing the detailed analytic techniques developed for the analysis of broadcast interview data. Discursis (Angus et al., 2013, 2012a, 2012b) is designed to provide a visual representation of text that enables an analyst to quickly overview an entire text and see-at-a-glance the turn-taking dynamics (who speaks when and for how long), the conceptual content of the text over time, and regions of conceptual coherence over short (turn-turn), medium (10–20 turn) and long (whole conversation) time scales. While Discursis can be used to provide an at-a-glance overview of a whole interaction it can also be used for locating and representing sections of interaction where participants engage in shared concepts, repeat their own content, or lack conceptual coherence. The visual text analytic tool is also designed to provide a telescopic ability moving from over-viewing the whole of interaction to then being able to focus in on deferent layers of detail to the level of the transcript in order to facilitate further fine grained detailed analysis of the interaction dynamics. An additional advantage of Discursis is its ability to process large sets of transcripts across a range of concepts without requiring pre-defined conceptual coding (see below). Previous research has applied Discursis in the analysis of a range of communication behaviors including doctor–patient interactions (Angus et al., 2012a, 2012b, 2012c), phone conversations, and aircraft transcripts (Angus et al., 2012b). Discursis has also been used to analyze and interpret the recurrence of conceptual content in two interviews conducted on the Australian TV talk show *Enough Rope* (Angus et al., 2012a, 2012b). These analyses demonstrated the utility of the tool for determining the global and local structure of interviews, though this did not include a study of the interviews within the wider context of the interview genre (Montgomery, 2008).

By adopting an approach similar to that of Ekström and Kroon Lundell (2011) in their examination of interview styles in *Aktuellt*, the current investigation aims to use Discursis to see if it is possible to map discursive interaction patterns in a variety of interviews observed within a single TV talk show. As suggested by Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011, the focus on one specific program encompassing a variety of interview styles provides a powerful strategy to deal with the complexity of the initial analysis by keeping important factors such as the host constant across observations (i.e., interviews). The format chosen for the current analyses is 101 episodes of the popular Australian evening interview program *Enough Rope* that was screened by the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) and hosted by Andrew Denton. Our aim is to explore if the broadcast interview genres identified in previous research (Montgomery, 2008) are identifiable and meaningfully visually represented using Discursis. While this particular aim is modest – examining if the text analysis software

is able to visually represent different pre-identified genres – the implications, if successful are significant, as this would provide a useful telescopic tool where interconnected layers of data can be represented and then focused on in more detail by the analyst. In order to do this we firstly introduce the work on broadcast interviewing and genres before then going onto the data used for this study and the methodology employed in using Discursis. Following this we examine the way Discursis visually represents the interviews and if these are able to be mapped onto different broadcast interview genres.

2. News interview genres

Traditional news interviews are a well-studied form of broadcast interview (Clayman and Heritage, 2002) in which the degree of interactional work, asymmetries of power and content are largely framed by a small number of interview genres (Ekström and Kroon Lundell, 2011). As Ekström (2002) states “Ultimately, it is by communicating within the framework of established genres, making use of a set of discursive and rhetorical techniques, that one can persuade the public that the news stories are neutral accounts, that the facts are facts, that reportage is truthful, that the experts are reliable, that investigative journalism is important, etc.” (p. 277). From the original focus on set piece news interviews (Clayman and Heritage, 2002) the identification of different interview genres has provided further frameworks in the analysis of interview talk (Drew and Heritage, 1992; Ekström, 2007; Hutchby, 2006; Tolson, 2006). In broad terms, broadcast interviews are distinguished as belonging to one of four categories: accountability, experiential, expert, or affiliated (Montgomery, 2008), with particular modes of conduct and interactional styles attached to each genre. In addition to these four conventional types of interviews, a common style of interviewing celebrities has also been identified (Tolson, 2006), in addition to the hybridization of multiple genres. The interactional characteristics of these forms of interview are discussed below.

2.1. Accountability interviews

In accountability interviews, interviewer questions are directed at the interviewee's responsibility or liability (Montgomery, 2008). Adversarial exchanges are not uncommon, as the interviewer is expected to hold the interviewee accountable as someone with an implied obligation to answer questions. In this type of interview, the audience tends to identify with the interviewer as their proxy. Rather than co-constructing content, the interviewer is expected to challenge the interviewee if there is reason to believe he or she is not providing a truthful account and to rephrase and repeat questions if the answers provided are not satisfactory.

2.2. Experiential interviews

Experiential interviews are characterized by co-operative interaction. The interviewee is “identified and addressed as an ordinary individual who has an entitlement to speak based upon a personal and particular connection with the news material, which the interview will provide an opportunity to develop” (Montgomery, 2008, p. 157). Such interviews invite the interviewees to state their personal beliefs, thoughts and feelings and to provide narratives of their experiences. In contrast to the accountability interview, experiential interview questions are often short and simple. Interviewee responses are rarely interrupted, interfered with or treated as unsatisfactory by the interviewer, at least not in a hostile way. It is rare for the interviewer to repeat a question, however some gentle probing and question

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