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What is This?

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'I like this interview; I get cakes and cats!': the effect of prior relationships on interview talk

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ABSTRACT Research interviews are a form of interaction jointly constructed by the interviewer and interviewee, what Silverman (2001: 104) calls 'interview-as-local-accomplishment'. From this perspective, interviews are an interpretative practice in which what is said is inextricably tied to where it is said, how it is said and, importantly, to whom it is said (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004). The relationship between interviewer and interviewee, then, is fundamental in research interviews. But what happens when the relationship between interviewer and interviewee is not only that of researcher-informant but also involves other roles such as colleague and friend? In this article we will show how prior relationships are invoked and made relevant by both parties during educational research interviews and how these prior relationships therefore contribute to the 'generation' (Baker, 2004: 163) of interview data.

KEYWORDS: *acquaintance interview, frame and footing, interview talk, prior relationships, research interview, teacher education*

Introduction

In the last 30 years, there has been a significant shift in how data collected through research interviews in the social sciences is regarded. Such interviews are no longer seen simply as a methodological tool for generating empirical data for analysis, but since Cicourel (1964) have increasingly become a focus of interest in themselves.

It has been recognized that interviews cannot be seen as objective accounts of the interviewee's reality, but rather, should be viewed as an interactional event in which interviewer and interviewee jointly construct meaning. Constructs such as the neutrality of the interviewer and the purity of knowledge have been critiqued in the literature (Gubrium and Holstein, 2002; Holstein and Gubrium, 2004; Rapley, 2001) as it has been recognized that the interviewer

plays an active role in creating meanings. In other words, 'Meaning is not merely elicited by apt questioning, nor simply transported through respondent replies; it is actively and communicatively assembled in the interview encounter' (Holstein and Gubrium, 2004: 141). This shift has led to linguistic analysis being used to deconstruct the interview event to show how meaning is constructed on a turn-by-turn basis (see for example Baker, 2002, 2004; Roulston, 2006; ten Have, 2004).

This recent interest in analysing interviews has focused both on interviewee talk (for example Nijohf, 1997; Olsen, 2006) and on interviewer talk (for example, Rapley, 2001, 2004; Roulston et al., 2001). It is widely acknowledged, for instance, that interviewees can take on different voices or roles 'depending on the way they situate themselves vis-a-vis a particular question and the person asking it' (Block, 2000: 760). Attention has also been paid to the roles and voices of the interviewer and the effects these may have on the way the interview data are 'generated' (Baker, 2004: 163). Nevertheless, the interest in the voice of the interviewer in the local accomplishment of the interview (Silverman, 2001: 104) has tended to focus on questions asked and the way in which these shape the interviewee's talk (see, for example, ten Have, 2004).

What is more, there is also growing interest in uncovering in detail and linguistically how interviewer and interviewee jointly construct the interview talk (Baker, 2002; Sarangi, 2004). However, there is little research that examines the effect that the interviewer and interviewee's prior experiences or relationships might have on this joint construction. Rapley (2001, 2004) and Roulston et al. (2001) are notable exceptions in this respect.

Through a detailed examination of the research interviewer's talk in an open-ended interview, Rapley (2001) shows that the interviewer works 'to locally produce himself as a "neutral" yet "encouraging" participant' (2001: 316). Through this positioning, however, the interviewer takes a stance vis-a-vis the interviewee and so controls 'the trajectory of the talk' and contributes to its content. In other words, the interviewer is truly active. Rapley (2004: 22) also explores the talk that is generated when the interviewer offers his own opinions and stories. In one of Rapley's (2004: 22) interviews, participants engage in mutual self-disclosure as they discuss their drug taking. The interviewer becomes a 'vocal collaborator in the interaction' offering personal narratives, ideas and opinions where 'relevant' (2004: 22).

While Rapley's analyses are helpful in terms of understanding how not only interviewees but also interviewers construct themselves in the local interactional context, he does not explore how the relationships between the participants are made salient in the interview except in terms of allowing self-disclosure to happen effortlessly. The data he presents (2004) show interviewers offering opinions and participants actively listening to each other's stories through backchannelling, but not jointly constructing them in terms of discussing shared experiences (although this kind of talk did take place in the

interview – Rapley, personal communication). In other words, although past experiences are made relevant, shared past experiences are not.

Roulston et al. (2001) look at the effect of what they call 'cocategorial incumbency', that is when interviewer and interviewee belong to the same group (in their study music teachers or language learners). Their analysis of interview data shows how the interviewer, because of her 'knowledge and understanding regarding the topic of inquiry' (2001: 748) can lead the interviewee to produce a certain type of talk, in their case around complaints. Although shared knowledge and understanding are central to Roulston et al.'s analysis, they do not at any point mention prior relationships or how these might also generate data.

Another feature that is missing from current research into interviews as research sites is the contribution that prior relationships can play on developing rapport. Even those writers who write about the effects that friendship and good relationships have on the interview (see for example, Coffey, 1999) assume that such relationships are formed as a result of the participants meeting through the research process. Again, with the exception of Rapley (2004), to our knowledge no writer has focused on rapport talk which may come about as a result of the fact that the interviewer and interviewee already know each other, as friends or colleagues for example, before the research is undertaken. Yet, it would seem that such a situation is not unusual, at least in the educational settings with which we are familiar.

The discussion presented so far has shown that interest in interviews has been two-fold. First of all, there has been a theoretical and philosophical debate about the epistemological and ontological underpinnings of the data created in these interviews (Atkinson and Silverman, 1997; Cicourel, 1964; Miller and Glassner, 2004; Mishler, 1986). Second, researchers have drawn on this debate to analyse interview talk, showing how participants work together to construct meaning (Baker, 2004; Sarangi, 2004) and how prior experience can affect data generation (Rapley, 2001, 2004; Roulston et al., 2001). There is also a third strand emerging, where the interview is used as a stimulus for researcher reflexivity (for example, Ellis and Berger, 2003), an approach which is becoming increasingly important in ethnographic accounts (Davies, 2007).

This article will introduce a fourth strand to research discourses around interviews, which we will call 'acquaintance interviews'. These are semi-structured interviews (Robson, 2002: 270) in an ethnographic research culture in which the researcher is an insider (Davies, 2007) and in which the interviewer and interviewee have a prior relationship. A Goffmanian framework will be used to uncover how these relationships are made salient in the interviews we conducted for our own research. It will be shown how, on a turn-by-turn basis, data are generated as these relationships are made relevant by the participants. Data are not seen as resource (content) but as topic (reflecting a reality which is jointly constructed), and rooted, therefore, in 'judgement, circumstance, prejudice and desire' (Maclure, 1993: 374). We attempt to follow Rapley's advice to:

> analyse what actually happened – how your interaction produced that trajectory of talk, how specific versions of reality are co-constructed, how specific identities, discourses and narratives are produced. (Rapley, 2004: 16)

By deconstructing jointly constructed interviews in terms of pre-existing roles, we will show how prior relationships can be made relevant in the interview by both parties and so have a vital input into data generation.

Research relationships

Although researchers interested in the social science research interview as the unit of analysis tend not to differentiate between the relationships that are found in the social science interview, there are in fact a number of different interviewer-interviewee relationships. In larger scale research projects, interviews tend to be conducted by research assistants whose role is to carry out large numbers of interviews with subjects with whom they have no previous relationship. In these interviews, the interviewers try to construct their position as 'neutral' in the interview so as to allow the interviewee the opportunity to pursue his/her own interests. As already stated above, the neutral interviewer has been strongly critiqued in the literature (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991; Rapley, 2001), yet social science continues to rely on data derived from such interviews as 'data-as-resource' (Rapley, 2001: 304), that is, 'reflecting the interviewees' reality outside the interview' (2001: 304).

Other social science interviews, particularly ethnographic interviews, are conducted between participant observer researchers and those who have been or who are the subjects of the research (Creese, 2005; Rampton, 2006). In these cases, the research interview often combines with other methods of data collection, for example, fieldnotes and recordings and transcriptions, in order to offer a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). In some cases, the interviewer will share insights from the other data with the interviewee in order to elicit a further perspective on the data (see Richards, 2003, 2006). As the researcher will have spent time at the research site, he/she may have developed a strong relationship with the participants (Creese, 2005; Duff, 2002). However, this relationship will have developed as a result of the research, rather than being previous to the research.

The relationship that is pertinent here comes from a slightly different tradition. Sometimes called 'native' in the literature (Davies, 2007), the researcher belongs or has belonged to the community which he/she is researching (Motzafi-Haller, 1997; Panourgia, 1995, cited in Davies, 2007: 182–3). However, in our acquaintance interviews the relationship goes one step further in that the participants also have prior relationships which have evolved through contexts other than research. Researchers and researched in acquaintance interviews can be friends, colleagues, family, or associates, for example.

Before moving on to exploring the data from our acquaintance interviews, the research contexts from which these data are drawn will be briefly introduced.

Settings, participants, data

The data presented in this article were collected for two different educational studies. The first looked at feedback on teaching practice. The informants were all teacher trainers on a pre-service certificate course for teaching English as a foreign language to adults. The second looked at the beliefs about learning and teaching of a group of experienced teachers in teaching English as a foreign language. In both studies interview data were collected alongside other data such as fieldnotes, observations and recordings. All the interviews were semi-structured and audio recorded and transcribed. In both studies the researcher was also the interviewer.

In terms of relationships, the researcher in the first study knew the two interviewees as friends and colleagues, and, at one point, she had also had managerial responsibilities for them. At the time of the interviews, however, she was no longer working in the same institution. The researcher in the second study had a variety of relationships with the interviewees: some were colleagues, some colleagues and friends and some had also been fellow students in the past. Moreover, the relationships changed during the data collection as the researcher changed jobs, leaving the institution where one informant taught and joining an institution where another worked. In other words, both researchers had a range of relationships with the interviewees and were not meeting them for the first time in the research interview.

Theoretical framework

The framework that informs the analysis presented below draws on Goffman's work and in particular on the concepts of frames and footing (1974, 1981).

Goffman (1974: 247) argues that:

> Given their understanding of what it is that is going on, individuals fit their actions to this understanding and ordinarily find that the ongoing world supports this fitting. These organisational premises – sustained by both mind and in activity – I call the frame of the activity.

This notion of frame provides an extremely useful construct to analyse how and why talk in the acquaintance interview unfolds in various ways and along various trajectories as participants readjust their actions to fit what they believe is 'going on'. What is more, it will be argued that acquaintance interviews in particular often exhibit features of 'overlapping framings' (1974: 162) as participants simultaneously engage in different activities within the overarching frame of the interview. So the interview frame is not a rigid framework with an a priori set of features and characteristics, but rather, when participants 'do an interview' they orientate to a set of ideas of what an interview is and how it is conducted. In other words, a frame provides 'principles of organization which govern the subjective meaning we assign to social events' (Lemert and Branaman, 1997: lxxiv).

Goffman's notion of footing will also be used in this analysis. Footing refers to participants':

> Alignment, or set, or stance, or posture, or projected self ... held across a strip of behaviour ... A change of footing implies a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance. (Goffman, 1981: 128)

Using the notion of footing in a linguistic microanalysis of interview data enables the creation of a nuanced and detailed description of how participants align themselves in acquaintance interviews. Changes in footing in particular help in understanding how participants are aligning to frames or orienting to new ones as the talk progresses.

Having introduced the locus of interest and the theoretical framework, we now turn to presenting our data and analysis.

Interview data and analysis

NEGOTIATING THE INTERVIEW FRAME

ten Have (2004: 58) points out that interviews are, 'based on an asymmetrical distribution of interactional jobs'. So the interviewer asks questions and responds to answers which the interviewee gives. People who are used to different relationships (for example, friends/colleagues) and therefore, different participation structures (Martin-Jones and Heller, 1996) where the talk is often symmetrical, may need to negotiate this asymmetry so that the business of 'doing the interview' is able to proceed smoothly.

The data revealed a number of episodes where the interviewer and the interviewee appeared to orient to this asymmetrical relationship. One of the ways in which the participants negotiated the on-going asymmetries and concomitant face work was by creating solidarity (Brown and Levinson, 1987). Both participants achieved this, for example, by explicitly drawing attention to their roles and particularly to their strangeness within the context of other current and previous relationships.

In the first extract, Sue (the interviewer) and Linda (the interviewee)[1] are good friends who have worked together for many years. They also did their postgraduate studies together. Leading up to the data presented in Extract 1, Sue and Linda have been chatting about the interviews Sue has carried out so far in her research. The extract begins with Sue moving to start the interview:

Extract 1

1	Sue	umm I just wanted to pick up start off by picking up one point from last
2		time =
3	Linda	= are you supposed to do that pre chat
4		((*joint laughter*))
5	Sue	I don't know
6	Linda	go on

In line 1, Sue begins the interview by referring to a previous interview she has conducted with Linda, a metacomment which suggests that Sue is speaking from an institutional script (Sarangi, 2004). Linda's interruption (line 3) is a change in footing (Goffman, 1981) as instead of answering the question, she asks her own question, thus beginning a brief insertion sequence which moves the discussion away from the interview frame. Linda's question is subversive in two senses: first it undermines the normal power relationship of the interview by taking control of the speaking turns at the precise point where Sue, the interviewer, has made an agenda move in pre-announcing the first question. Moreover, although Linda uses the phrase 'pre chat', thereby positioning this talk outside the main activity of the interview, the question still appears to challenge the appropriateness of such talk in an interview context and, by implication, Sue's competence as an interviewer. However, Linda's turn produces joint laughter (line 4), rather than embarrassed silence, suggesting that what could be considered subversive is experienced as supportive. In other words, the prior relationship of friendship means that Linda's turn is interpreted by Sue as a gentle tease rather than a challenge. Sue admits her inexperience (line 5) and thereby colludes with Linda's apparent undermining of the interview. Linda then gives Sue permission to continue the interview ('go on').

In this short extract, Linda seems to challenge Sue in her role as interviewer in three ways: by interrupting, by questioning and by giving permission to continue. We would argue such moves are potentially face threatening to the interviewer in interviews where no prior relationship exists. However, as a prior relationship does exist between the participants, the overall effect of this sequence is to reduce the asymmetrical distance which the interview frame sets up and to affirm solidarity between them, as shown by the joint laughter.

Something similar happens in the following extract, where Fiona (the interviewer) and Ned (the interviewee) had been colleagues for a number of years and were also friends:

Extract 2

1	Fiona	um () this is the same question really
2	Ned:	is it
3	Fiona	but I'm going to ask it anyway because I'm very inexperienced at this
4		*((laughs))* I'm not sure what you're supposed to do at this point
5		*((joint laughter))*

Sarangi (2004) shows that interviewers orientate to what he calls 'the institutional frame' by offering metacomment such as 'this is a bit repetitive' and 'you've probably already answered it'. It could be argued here that Fiona is similarly orienting to the accomplishment of the interview when she states, 'this is the same question really' (line 1). However, Fiona also draws attention to her inexperience as an interviewer (line 3), which we would argue is less likely in research interviews where participants have no prior relationship.

By foregrounding her novice status and lack of confidence, Fiona seems to be trying to reduce the distance between her and Ned. This appears to be sanctioned by Ned when he joins in laughing with Fiona at her predicament (line 5) and the disclosure sets the scene for the interview.

The interaction in both these extracts demonstrates the delicate negotiation between participants as they ease into the interview frame. In both extracts interactional norms of interviewing are breached and both parties collude in this infringement. Although not explicit in the data presented, we would suggest that these two extracts show how roles of interviewer and interviewee become 'laminated' (Roberts and Sarangi, 1999) on to the existing friendship relationships between participants as the participants work hard to maintain the relevance of the previous relationship in the on-going talk. Indeed, both of us recall feeling slightly uncomfortable performing the role of interviewer, both because we were new to the researcher role but also because the roles placed us in a dominant position in contrast with some pre-existing relationships. By distancing themselves from the institutional roles, both participants are effectively interpellating themselves as colleagues and friends who for the purpose of the interview activity are assuming the roles of interviewer and interviewee. The following extracts provide further warrant for this initial interpretation.

FRAME SHIFTING

In the next extract, Ned and Fiona have been talking about how Ned organized his feedback, who initiated topics and how timing was handled:

Extract 3

```
 1   Ned      well I mean that I might () before, I probably used to say 'what do you think
 2            was good about your lesson?' or 'talk us through your lesson?' or
 3            that kind of thing. I mean I still do do that but (..) I'm maybe more inclined
 4            to come up with things that I've thought about the lesson, or if I think
 5                              [
 6   Fiona                      like what?
 7   Ned      no, I don't really (()) I mean I don't know how () I'd be interested to
 8            know what I do with that, 'cause I don't know whether it's fairly equal
 9   Fiona    ((laughs))
10   Fiona    oh, so would you like me to watch out for that when I observe, 'cause I can
11            I mean I'm very happy to do that as well, I mean I don't just have to
12            what I'm interested in
13                [
14   Ned          yeah, no, it would be good to have some feedback on it, yeah
15   Fiona    yeah, but if you tell me, I'm not going to tell you, you tell me what you
             want
16            me to look for and I can do that at the same time very happily
17   Ned      yeah
```

In line 7, Ned questions whether he distributes time equally between trainees and in line 8 he implicitly invites Fiona's assistance by saying, 'I'd be interested

to know what I do'. Fiona, instead of continuing with her interview agenda, changes footing (Goffman, 1981), slipping from her interview role to her professional role. She categorizes herself (Baker 2002, 2004; Freebody, 2003) as a peer observer through offering to collect data to address Ned's concern when she next observes his feedback ('I can watch out for that').

Ned, however, takes Fiona's suggestion that she can observe on Ned's behalf (line 10) as an offer of 'feedback' (line 14), an act which, in the culture of teacher training, entails an evaluative element as well as a descriptive one. In doing so, he categorizes Fiona as mentor, a role she previously fulfilled when Ned was training to be a trainer. At line 15, Fiona resists this categorization by asserting that Ned should set the observation agenda – a practice typical of peer observation, which takes a much less evaluative approach. At the same time, she reasserts her researcher role by explicitly stating that she will perform the two roles 'at the same time very happily' (line 16). This interpretation is corroborated by fieldnotes written after the interview in which Fiona notes:

> Interesting re: my role. Ned interested in what I would say about his feedback but actually I am not there to 'evaluate' him! ... I offered to look out for anything he wanted me to observe and feedback on this. Must say, feel a little uncomfortable doing so.

This extract shows that where prior relationships exist, interviewer and interviewee may find themselves engaged in complex negotiations concerning which relationship is salient to the discourse at a particular point in the interview. These negotiations reveal much about how the participants see themselves and each other; such revelations would not be possible without the prior history that interviewer and interviewee share.

The next extract also shows how frames can shift over very few turns as different aspects of the participants' relationship are made salient. The participants are talking about how Linda decides what to teach, which is part of Sue's research agenda. Linda indirectly refers to a professional episode where she had left some teaching materials she had prepared for Sue to check. Sue had left comments on the materials but Linda had not found them in time for her lesson:

Extract 4

1	Sue	right right () so so how do you feel about preparing your own materials
2		about preparing something
3	Linda	well I like preparing my own materials I would rather do that all the time if
4		we had time
5		*((joint laughter))*
6	Linda	I enjoy it actually
7	Sue	yeah it's just a question of time as usual that you can't
8	Linda	yes and also photocopying and credibility and everything like that
9	Sue	*((rising tone))* credibility of your own materials

10	Linda	um well students like to have a textbook don't they they think we're doing
11		this book ...and if it's a dispensa or something done by you they think uh
12		((*joint laughter*))
13	Linda	it's got misprints in it
14		((*joint laughter*))
15	Linda	oh look she forgot to mix them up
16		((*joint laughter*))
17	Sue	(yeah that was the pharmacy) I'd written it on you didn't see the notes I'd
18		written did you in time
19	Linda	no
20	Sue	cos I'd actually written mix these up
21	Linda	no no so I said ha ha ha (we've got to write) (unint.))you might have
22		noticed (unint.) they laughed because I told them there would be some
23		mistakes in it and they didn't mind and I mean they did the exercise
24		anyway because it wasn't obvious oh and then this morning ((*laughing*)) I
25		did an exercise on the OHP for the first years and it was a b c and about
26		six out of the eight questions the answer was b

In line 1, Sue asks a question which is part of her research agenda and Linda responds (lines 3 and 4). Her use of the inclusive pronoun 'we' seems to evoke some aspect of shared knowledge or understanding as this represents a shift from 'I', which she uses in the first part of her response. The joint laughter in line 5 would seem to confirm this sharedness. In line 6, Linda comments again on her attitude to writing materials, which Sue responds to, but instead of taking up Linda's pronoun 'we' she chooses to use the generic pronoun 'you', perhaps indicating that this is a common issue in language teaching. So, while the talk seems for the most part to be orientating to the interview frame, there are points at which the prior relationship as teaching colleagues is invoked and made salient.

Lines 8 and 9 are also in the interview frame. In lines 10–11, Linda again makes an appeal to shared professional knowledge firstly with her question, 'don't they' and then with her reference to 'dispensa' (an Italian terms for a set of photocopied, teacher-prepared materials). Laughter at line 12 again shows alignment (Soilevuo Grønnerød, 2004) and Linda expands on the dissatisfaction with dispensa through suggesting they contain misprints. More laughter at line 14 indicates further shared understanding, relating to the job of teaching English in Italy in general.

Footing in this extract is particularly interesting. Although by line 15, it can be argued that Linda and Sue have changed footing, now aligning to past, shared experiences, rather than to answering questions about materials preparation in general, the change is managed incrementally throughout this section of talk. Materials are salient to Linda and Sue's professional lives as well as to the interview and so the talk from lines 1–14 straddles both frames. However, as the talk moves from the general, 'preparing your own materials', to the particular, 'she forgot to mix them up', the participants' orientation

moves from the institutional, interview frame to a, 'lifeworld' frame (Roberts and Sarangi, 1999) where personal experiences are invoked and discussed. It is Linda's contribution at line 15 that finally manages this change in footing as she refers to a particular dispensa (materials for teaching English to pharmacists) as the meaning of the pronouns 'she' and 'them' are only retrievable by reference to the participants' shared collegiate knowledge. From lines 15 to 21, the talk resembles conversation rather than interview talk and it seems clear that the interview frame has been suspended while Linda and Sue reminisce about a professional episode to which they were both party.

From line 21 the frame begins to shift again as Linda concludes the discussion of the specific shared episode of the pharmacy materials. In line 24, Linda's 'oh' signals another change in footing as she introduces a new piece of information with which Sue is not familiar. This information, concerning an exercise on the overhead projector, picks up the earlier topic of the credibility of teacher-prepared materials (line 8) and effectively returns the talk to the interview frame.

The extract below, which comes a little later in the same interview, also features delicate and complex frame shifting on the part of the interviewer and interviewee. The talk has turned to discussing exercises from a book on developing academic reading skills (Readings for Research) which the two participants co-wrote. Sue is still attempting to elicit how Linda decides what to teach, which is part of her research agenda, and Linda responds by referring to a particular exercise that she had used in her class. In her first turn, Sue asks for clarification:

Extract 5

```
 1  Sue    is that one out the book?
 2  Linda  no it's one I made up this morning to practise
 3                                      [
 4  Sue                                       oh right
 5  Linda  inferring=
 6  Sue    =oh right=
 7  Linda  =cos I (.) you know appunto having to adapt Readings for Research=
 8  Sue    =cos it's too difficult=
 9  Linda  =plus we did techniques of inferring what do you need and all that .hh
10         and then I picked out some more words that strangely enough we
11         hadn't picked out ((laughs))
12  Sue    oh no ((laughs))
13  Linda  I know cos I mean it's so difficult for them the book
14                                              [
15  Sue                                           yeah yeah
16  Linda  so there's lots of sco:pe ((laughing)) (got about) ten words in one
17         paragraph you know too high density really for anybody to ((laughing))
18         possibly infer but never mind ((laughs))
19  Sue    oh dear what a disaster
20  Linda  ((laughs))
```

21	Sue	how disastrous our book
22	Linda	((*laughs*)) well ((*laughs*)) well actually I mean I would quite like I would
23		really like to write a a more a more basic one it really would be useful

This extract shows how the participants, through their joint construction of talk, again gradually change alignment from interviewer/interviewee, to colleagues and co-authors. As in Extract 4, Sue's first question carries the interview forward in terms of the research agenda. However, in referring to 'the book', Sue also aligns herself with Linda as her co-author. In fact, this is the first mention of the co-authored book but Sue is confident that Linda can retrieve her meaning despite not naming it. In lines 2–6, the structure of the talk is recognizable as interview talk, with the interviewee responding to the question and the interviewer offering back-channelling responses.

In line 7, Linda continues her response to the initial question. However, with her 'you know appunto', she is also aligning herself with Sue as co-author by appealing to their shared knowledge ('appunto', an Italian word, has a meaning similar to 'precisely' in English). The participants are still orienting to the interview frame but it can be seen at this point that they are also invoking their professional relationship. In other words, the professional frame laminates onto the interview frame.

Line 8 is particularly significant in this stretch of discourse. Sue's comment ''cos it's too difficult' not only constitutes an evaluation (generally considered inappropriate in interviewer talk) but is also latched onto Linda's answer and completes it, that is, the questioner becomes the answerer. What is more, there is also an assumption of shared knowledge, that Sue's belief that the jointly-authored book is too difficult will be shared by Linda. Finally, Sue's comment is an indirect criticism of the authors – herself and Linda. Sue is able to make this criticism because of her previous professional relationship with Linda; otherwise, a criticism of the interviewee could be inappropriate. Sue, with this utterance, takes up two alignments – one to the interview and one to the relationship, although at this point it seems that the relational aspect of the talk is more important for her.

Linda, on the other hand, seems to want to complete her answer to the interview question (line 9). Nevertheless, her answer also responds to Sue's call on their joint-author status when she uses the 'we' pronoun (line 10) and then goes on to provide an example of how the book is too difficult, thereby aligning herself with Sue's initial criticism. Linda, then, seems to laminate her interviewee and co-author roles effortlessly.

Linda's turn ends with laughter, which Sue shares. Linda then takes up another turn at the Transition Relevance Point (Sacks et al., 1974), where another interview question might be expected (line13). From here, the participation structure changes, as Sue appears to have relinquished her interviewer role and instead of asking questions, she offers a series of evaluative comments related to the much maligned book (lines 19 and 21). Sue's use of the inclusive

pronoun 'our' in line 21 when she says 'how disastrous our book' more strongly invokes the participants' prior relationship, than has been the case so far and further underlines the shift in frame.

Linda's final comment, that she would like to write 'a more basic book' (lines 22–3), responds to Sue's frame shift as she takes up the topic of book authorship but links this to her teaching needs ('it would be really useful') and to Sue's original question in Extract 4, 'how do you feel about preparing your own materials?'.

What is interesting in this extract is the way in which the interviewer appears to be happy to change footing to react to comment rather than to initiate it by asking questions, and so, from her perspective, moves away from the interview frame. However, the interviewee is able to sustain both frames simultaneously, by continuing to answer the initial question while at the same time acknowledging aspects of shared professional knowledge which the interviewer first introduced (line 1 and Extract 4).

COMPLEXITY IN ACQUAINTANCE INTERVIEWS

The data show the complexity of interviews as both participants negotiate and show sensitivity to and awareness of changes of footing within different frames. Although changes in frame and footing and lamination within frames can be seen in routine interviews, in acquaintance interviews these aspects tend to be more extreme as the participants need to work harder to reconcile their diverse identities. This point is illustrated in Extract 6; Fiona is interviewing another informant, May. The interview takes place at May's home, a place Fiona has visited on previous occasions for social events:

Extract 6

1	Fiona	yes if you could change, oh sorry, *((phone starts ringing))* anything about
2		your feedback style what would you change
3	May	well I think you know the answer to that *((laughs))*
4.	Fiona	okay *((laughs))*
5	May	I'm sorry I think that's my phone and nobody ever rings me I do apologise
6	Fiona	no no that's fine that's fine I'll have another cake I like this interview I
7		get cakes cakes and cats.
8		*((May answers phone))*
9	May	sorry *((May sits down))* what was the () oh yes, what would I change about
10		my, erm, feedback style erm () well, as I said I'd like to be able to be a little
11		bit more circumspect about some issues I think.erm

The extract begins in interview frame, with Fiona asking an interview question, which requires May to negatively self evaluate. As such, the question can be seen as a threat to May's positive face (Brown and Levinson, 1987). May's response in line 3 is interactionally complex. Wooffitt and Widdicombe (2006: 43) point out that:

> Turns at talk – including turns in interview talk – are designed to perform specific kinds of action to achieve particular interactional ends, and are designed for the specific recipient or audience they target.

Looked at from this perspective, May's turn can be seen to perform multiple actions. First, it acknowledges the face-threat implicit in Fiona's question in that it does not constitute a direct response, the preferred second part in a two part question and answer adjacency pair (Pomerantz, 1984). Second, May is effectively challenging the legitimacy of the original question by pointing out that Fiona, her friend and colleague, already knows the answer. Finally, she shifts the responsibility for the answer back to Fiona by invoking shared knowledge. The laughter, started by May and continued in Fiona's agreement in line 4, indicates alignment between the two parties and thereby serves to reduce the level of threat to the faces of both participants that this part of the interaction generates (Locher, 2004).

At this point, May apologizes for the interruption caused by the phone ringing. In line 8, May goes to answer the phone and thereby changes frame. Choosing to answer the phone rather than ignore it and continue with the interview could be construed by Fiona as a threat to her face. Fiona, however, accepts May's apology ('no no that's fine') and then draws attention to the informal nature of the context when she says, 'I'll have another cake I like this interview I get cakes and cats'. The presence of 'cakes and cats' provides Fiona with a set of resources which she uses to downplay the significance of the interruption and hence the potential threat to her face. What is more, these resources enable Fiona to change footing and align with May's new frame.

May with her turn in line 9, returns to the interview frame not only by physically sitting down in her 'interview seat', but also by taking up Fiona's initial question and offering an explicit answer. What is particularly interesting is that, as noted in some of the other extracts presented here, it is the interviewee who appears to be most strongly oriented to 'doing' the interview as it is May who ensures that a full answer to the question is given (and hence recorded) without any prompt from Fiona. This may be because she wants to ensure that Fiona has understood her initial answer in the way she intended: the power and norms of the interview situation are such that answers need to be 'on-record'.

As in Extract 5, this extract also demonstrates how participants in acquaintance interviews are able to orientate to different roles, and move with various degrees of grace between them.

Discussion

The analysis offered above suggests some initial observations concerning acquaintance interviews. First of all, acquaintance interviews seem to form a subset of social science research interviews. Although they share a number of features with social science interviews in general and ethnographic interviews in particular, there are some significant differences.

A key difference is that debates around the neutrality of the interviewer are of little relevance to this kind of interview. Although the interviewer may be influenced by the literature which argues for a non-biased, facilitative approach (for example, Ackroyd and Hughes, 1992; Weiss, 1994, cited in Rapley, 2004), once in the interview context, such an approach becomes unlikely because the interviewers and interviewees share a history. The literature concerning rapport building (see for example, Rubin and Rubin, 1995) also becomes problematic.

What is also significant in acquaintance interviews is the way in which the participants have to negotiate their new identities as interviewer and interviewee. From our data, this would seem to be more difficult for the interviewer than for the interviewee. Extracts 1 and 2 both show how the interviewers downplay their expertise as interviewers through highlighting their lack of skill and confidence. Extracts 5 and 6, on the other hand, show how interviewees appear to orient to the interview frame even when the interviewer may have changed footing to align to a different relationship (for example, friends). One reason for the difficulty interviewers may have in negotiating the new relationship is that the interviewer can feel uncomfortable with an asymmetrical relationship which requires her to control the interaction, at the same time as announcing her 'institutional' role as researcher. The interviewee, on the other hand, is cast as being an expert whose opinion is sought and who can help his/her friend: there is less at stake.

Another key difference is that the shared worlds of the participants can be invoked and made relevant by either interviewer or interviewee and used as a resource to co-construct the interview. In Extract 5, the shared experience of co-authoring a course book becomes the topic of conversation in a way that is not strictly relevant to the research concerns of the interviewer. In Extract 6, the participants' shared understanding of the feedback style of the interviewee is used to downplay a potentially face threatening act avoiding the need to provide an explicit description of this style.

Acquaintance interviews also seem to be characterized by a variety of interaction patterns between interviewer and interviewee. Empathetic comments abound and the question and answer sequence is often abandoned in favour of a more conversational style of interaction (see Extract 5). While some of these features may be shared by interviews in which participants engage in mutual self-disclosure (Rapley, 2004), what marks these interviews out as different is the joint and on-going construction of shared knowledge and experiences, rather than each participant recounting their individual narratives.

Although all interviews potentially involve the invocation of other identities (see Soilevuo Grønnerød, 2004), our data show that such identity work is particularly complex in acquaintance interviews. What is more, the work that the participants engage in to achieve the task at hand (i.e. the interview) shows how powerful the identities of interviewer and interviewee can be and how they eventually override other identities the participants bring with them.

Thus acquaintance interviews represent an 'extreme case' which provides a perspicuous setting in which to observe the norms that are implicit in interviews and which constrain and enable the interaction that takes place (Rapley, personal communication).

Conclusion

Our analysis has shown that, because the participants in acquaintance interviews frequently invoke prior relationships – most often implicitly, but at times explicitly – data in these interviews are generated in a particular way. These data might not be available to researchers who do not share similar backgrounds with their informants. We do not suggest that these data are in any way more valid (or invalid) than data collected in more traditional interview settings. Nevertheless, acquaintance interviews do allow researchers access to resources that are not always available in more traditional social sciences interviews.

As with all research interviews, interviewers in acquaintance interviews need to be aware of and make explicit the part that prior relationships play in the process of data generation. As Scheurich (1995: 249, cited in Roulston et al., 2001: 768) maintains, it is important for interviewers to '"highlight the baggage" they bring to the interview'. A focus on reflexivity is already considered integral to the research process in ethnographic research interviews where ethnographers demonstrate this through describing how interviewees' accounts affect the researcher's thoughts and feelings (see Ellis and Berger, 2003, for a detailed account of this approach to reflexivity in interview research). We would suggest that this reflexivity be extended to the analysis of the construction of the interview itself and to a consideration of how the data is generated as a result of previous relationships.

NOTES

1. Interviewees have been given pseudonyms throughout.

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