

## BROADCAST TALK: THE TALK STRATEGIES

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### Abstract

In broadcast, message is the penultimate product, and language is one of the medium that carries meanings across to the audience. Therefore, a broadcaster uses language as his tool of trade, strategising to maximise the impact of his message. However, different forms of broadcast programmes have different framework, and calls for different types of talk strategies. This paper poses an approach towards defining language use in broadcast; one that looks at the generic construct behind the types of broadcast programmes, the content and talk goals. Derived from an eclectic mix of three different models of defining talk programmes, this paper attempts to describe the talk strategies of a talk programme produced in English by a television station in Malaysia, TV3. In the analysis, the writer has found that the talk strategies include roles and identities adopted by the hosts, and how the talk is structured into the programme framework.

### The nature of broadcast

*The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English* (1995) describes broadcast as a television or radio programme, and a broadcaster as someone whose job it is to speak on radio or television programmes. In other words, whether the domain is radio or television, the tool that the broadcaster uses to disseminate information is the language he uses. This paper suggests an approach towards understanding language use of the broadcaster, one that looks at the avenues through which the message is disseminated, its domains and the environment that produces it.

In the domains of broadcast, there are different types of output for different goals and purposes (see Table 1). Radio and television are both classed under broadcast because both use airwaves to send out the programmes. However, there is an intrinsic difference between the two in terms of the types of output that each is capable of. Radio is auditory – emphasising the aural-oral aspect, while television has an added element – the visuals that accompany the audio outputs. A high number of visuals accompany news broadcasts, talk shows, documentaries or broadcast of special events on television.



Domain	Output	
	Channel	Types of output
Radio	Audio	News, DJ talk, talk shows, interviews, music charts, drama, sports commentary, advertisements, etc
Television	Audio-visual	News, talk shows, interviews, documentary, magazines, sitcoms, drama, sports commentary, advertisements, etc

**Table 1: Types of Broadcast**

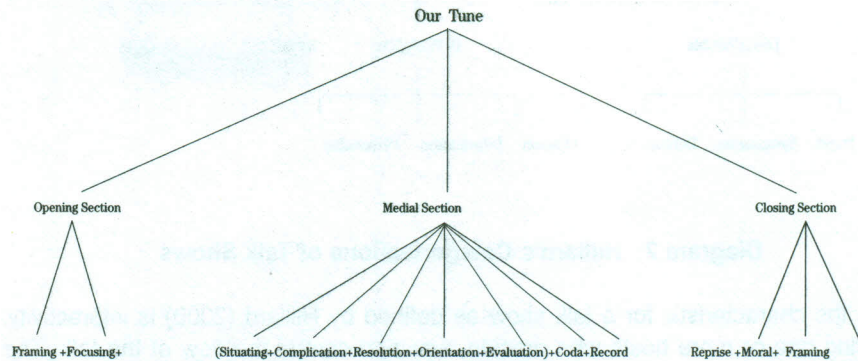
Although the primary goal of broadcast is to provide information, there is however, another goal - as a source of entertainment. This goal, often hidden in types of broadcast outputs that purport to disseminate information, is nevertheless present, and often achieved through the ways the message is presented; i.e., through the format of the presentation, in the selections of codes used in the construction of the media text, and in the selection of language. As Scannel expresses it, "the burden of responsibility is thus on the broadcasters to understand the conditions of reception and to express that understanding in language intended to be recognised as oriented to those conditions" (1991:3). This is seen in the generic constructs of the type of media outputs. It is the format that determines and moulds the approach and the selection of language use. Therefore, the obvious issue here is: how does the generic construct define and construct language selection in media generated texts? In this paper, the discussion will be limited to one type of communication via the conventional audio-visual channel, which is a talk show aired on television. I will illustrate how these constructs shape the language use in a talk show, *Face to Face*, which was produced in English by a local television, TV3 in 1996.

#### Generic constructs

In analysing *Face to Face* as a television talk programme we have to look at the generic construct behind it. This would take into account the framework and the parameters most programme producers adopt and abide by when they produce a particular media output. In analysing media related outputs, it is the macro-structure of the texts that need to be examined. In the case of broadcast, it is the discursive strategies employed in the dissemination of the information. For instance, Montgomery (1991) in his analysis of *Our Tune*, a DJ talk show aired over BBC Radio 1, equates the structure of the DJ talk to a narrative. Adopting Labov's (1972) narrative



analysis of personal experiences, he categorises the DJ talk under bounded units (the opening, medial, and closing sections) whose identities are based on their linguistic properties and their role in the overall text (see Diagram 1). It is significant to note that in Montgomery's (1991) analysis, he defined the DJ talk programme as a genre of broadcast talk, and identified the DJ's discursive practices as a version of oral narratives of personal experiences.

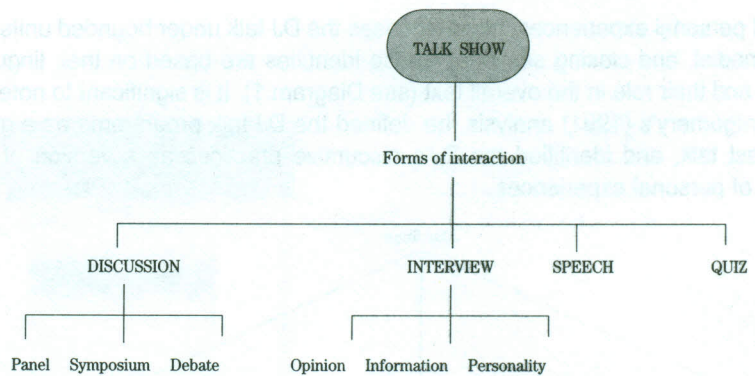


**Diagram 1: Summary of Discursive Practices in *Our Tune***

In his study however, Montgomery (1991) acknowledged the presence of the institutional conventions of broadcast and the environment that bounds the DJ talk programme. These constructs differ for different programme types, and have a strong influence on the way the host presents his talk. They are genre specific and they control how the broadcasters align their talk behaviours. This paper proposes stepping back to the drawing board to the institutional conventions and concepts behind a talk programme produced for television. In constructing the generic format of a talk programme, several descriptions are referred to.

### 1. Robert Hilliard

According to Hilliard (2000), talk shows (or talk programmes) whether meant for radio or television, include the element of talk; i.e., there is a host or hostess who dominates the talk show, and it presumes the presence of guests. Talk shows include interviews, discussions and speeches, all of which are classified according to three parameters: content, approach and guest. Each category is subdivided according to the content and the way themes are treated. For instance, discussions are subdivided into panel, symposium or debate. Interviews are divided according to the content of the talk, the talk goals and the types of guests, and whether it is opinion, information or personality interviews. Diagram 2 illustrates a classification of the different types of talk shows.



**Diagram 2: Hilliard's Categorisations of Talk Shows**

Thus, the characteristic for a talk show as defined by Hilliard (2000) is interactivity, requiring one or more hosts who preside over and control the flow of the talk. The types of interaction that go on in the show mandate the organization of talk in terms of the selection of topics, guests, and procedures for talk.

## 2. Asiah Sarji

Under Asiah Sarji's (pers.com) working definition, a talk show is "any form of programme in which at least 70% of the broadcast includes elements of *discussion*" (translation and italics mine). Her selection criteria suggest the presence of some form of interactive talk, which is aimed at the development of a chosen topic:

- a. It should be a presentation having its own attraction; defined in terms of topic choice, manner of presentation, selection of guests, etc.
- b. It is a deliberate bringing together of two or more parties for the purpose of talk.
- c. It should have a host who is the centre of the show and who is in control of the situation.
- d. It has within it talk elements of interview.
- e. It may occur with or without audience participation.
- f. It may or may not contain a mix of other genres, like music or performance.

Asiah Sarji's criteria are based on one consideration: her use of the terms "discussion" and "talk" would make sense if we bear in mind the interpretation of 'interactive' talk, as one that assumes the presence of a second party. The presence of interviews suggests that elicitation modes are used. In interviewing, questions are the syntactic forms for elicitations. The logic behind questions, according to Stenstrom (1994:92),



lies in the assumption that "questions ask for information or confirmation and expect to be answered". Stano and Reinsch (1982: 5) described a specific interview as "a communicative episode involving a small number of people who have specific roles, conscious and limited roles, and a restricted content focus". Thus, in talk shows, eliciting is a communicative tool that is used by the host to control and direct the information flow during the talk show.

### 3. Akiba Cohen

The role of interviewing as a communicative tool in talk shows has been studied by Akiba Cohen (1987) who analysed recorded television programmes that contained interviews. He deduced a method of defining the type of television programme according to six "attributes" (1987: 31 - 32) that describe the interview profile of a particular type of television programme:

- a. *The function of the interview*
  - The function is either to inform or to entertain, or a blend of both.
- b. *The prominence of the interview*
  - This refers to the extent to which the interview is a prominent part of the program.
- c. *The number of interviews and interviewees*
  - The number of individual interviews in the program, and the number of individuals figuring in the interview would specify the type of programme.
- d. *The length of the interview*
  - This refers to the duration of the interview as it is presented on television.
- e. *The degree of formality of the interview*
  - The degree of formality of the interview situation as it is presented on the screen is an indication of the type of show.
- f. *The homogeneity of interview types*
  - Most programmes are classified by the kinds of people who appear in the interview, i.e., in terms of social categories, e.g., politicians, show business people, athletes, etc.

Different permutations of these attributes, which Cohen termed as interview "profiles" (1987: 32) would define the type of interview programme. The typical pattern for an interview in a talk show whose function is informational is a long interview, which should last the whole programme (see Table 2). The number of interviewers and interviewees is small. Since the function is informational, there is a moderate degree of formality and the kinds of people who are invited to the interview come from various groups and categories.

PARAMETERS	PROFILE	TALK SHOW Akiba Cohen (1987)
A. Function of interview		information
B. Prominence of interview		whole programme
C. Number of interviewer & interviewees		a few
D. Length of interview		long
E. Degree of formality		moderately formal
F. Homogeneity of interview type		all different

**Table 2: Talk Show Interview Profile**

#### The institutional background in broadcast talk

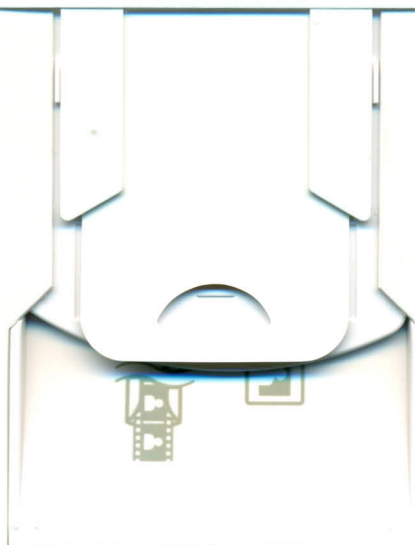
It is clear from the various descriptions that television talk shows are constructed around the word "talk". At this point, it is pertinent to ask what constitutes talk. Levinson defined talk as an occurrence in which "two or more participants freely alternate in speaking ... outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms and the like" (1983: 284). Giddens (1987: 99) puts it succinctly as "the casual exchange of conversation in the settings of day-to-day life". But what is the relationship between these definitions and the simulated talk that takes place on screen? The answer lies in the fact that the television screen is an imitation of real life. Talk that occurs on screen is a simulated version of "the casual exchange of conversation" - the free alternation in speaking that is natural in our day-to-day life. Talk that is produced on television exists in real time; the act of speaking and the act



of hearing occur at the same moment. The authors of the talk in the studio speak as if the viewers are the physical audience in front of them, and the studio setting simulates real-life offices or sitting rooms. The resulting talk that is produced imitates the naturalness of "the casual exchange of conversation" defined by Giddens (1987). The only difference is that it is deliberately produced within a specific environment. Since talk on television is studio originated, i.e., it is produced within an institutional setting, it is bound by the institutional conventions. Labelled as *broadcast talk* (Scannel, 1991:1), it is also meant for public viewing. Therefore its inherent quality is the element of interaction, i.e., "what people do when speaking in face-to-face encounters" (van Dijk 1987: 32). Broadcasters often assume that there is a receiver, and frame their talk as if they are interacting with their audience. This feature is discussed in Montgomery's (1988) work on the monologues of the radio DJ. His interpretation of the monologues as (interactive) talk with the turn-taking suspended in the talk is the key factor in defining talk in broadcast. His description of the DJ's monologue as a thing of many 'voices' addressed to many 'audiences' suggests that monologues do have interactive properties. Thus, broadcast talk - even those that have interview components with guests in the studio - invariably includes a hidden interactive quality - hidden because although the audience's response to the DJ's talk is suspended, it is presumed to be present.

Broadcast talk has a "double articulation" (Scannel, 1991: 1): it is a communicative interaction between participants in the show, yet it is also transactional in the sense that it is intended for and designed to be heard by "overhearers" - i.e. unseen viewers outside the talk encounter (Heritage, 1985: 99; Bell, 1991: 91). Secondly, there is an inherent communicative intentionality in the language used in talk programmes, i.e. it is message orientated. The object of talk programmes is the exchange of information; and therefore encounters between talk host(s) and the participants are arranged towards this end. "Talk", according to Giddens (1987), "is the basic medium of focused encounters and conversation is the prototype of exchange of utterances involved in talk" (in Scannel, 1991: 6). This type of conversational talk is simulated and designed around specific broadcast goals specifically for an unseen audience. Therefore, the casual conversationalized talk is a medium for such messages.

Since broadcast talk is also a presentation for the public, and whatever is uttered is addressed specifically to the viewer, the conversationalised talk also helps to give it an illusion of intimacy as if spatial distance does not exist. This illusion of rapport between the speaker and the viewer is further enhanced by the fact that the viewers do see the speaker as he/she speaks. This has significance in the study in terms of how the talk is structured to cater to the multiple levels of audience: the immediate listener who is the interviewee, the listener who is not at that moment the focus of the interview, but is also one of the interviewees; the viewer who is not the participant, and the viewer who is the caller. Because talk in a talk show is purpose-driven, the goals





of a talk show are usually intrinsically woven into the conversations. This in turn affects the way the discourse is structured; certain background information or events pertaining to the topic are usually elided as it is assumed that the viewers would have knowledge of them. Normally, events which are current and directly related to the topic are foregrounded while detailed explanations or background information leading to the events under discussion are considered not relevant to the purpose of the talk and are therefore, elided. Since broadcast talk is usually related to current events, news value is given prominence. The ways in which information is elipted or foregrounded have significance in terms of a description of the type of discourse found in a talk show.

As talk on television is produced for the public, the studio as the venue for such talk has socialising potentials. Although the studio is a private place, it operates within the public domain. It is a discursive site where the terms of social interaction and discursive practice are set and maintained, deciding how events are to be represented, identities and roles assigned to both participants and the audience. These forms of social interaction are embedded in the form and structure of the discourse dictated by the generic conventions of the programme. This includes control of the content, style and duration of the talk. For instance, the generic conventions of talk shows would specify what kind of topics to select, the approach taken, and talk format chosen; how it shall begin and end, who the participants are, which parts they shall take and when.

A major concern in television production is the way in which the message contained within the talk can be expressed, i.e., through the organization of the encounters; and how these encounters can best be manipulated by selecting the appropriate choices of talk formats in terms of number of interactants - either single individuals or groups; the manner of presentation, for instance, whether to have interviews, symposiums, or discussions or a blend of two or more of these to suit the purpose of the programme. The manipulations of topics are deliberated around events that have occurred recently - the newsworthy aspects are foregrounded. This can be seen in the following selected episodes of *Face to Face* (see Table 3).

#### **The generic constructs in *Face to Face***

In *Face to Face*, the institutional conventions of broadcast can be seen in the organisation of the programme, the goals of the talk and in the policy of the station.

##### *a. The physical organisation of the programme*

Based on Hilliard's (2000) and Asiah Sarji's (pers.com) descriptions, there are two types of talk profiles for *Face to Face* - panel discussions and personality interviews.



### Profile 1: Panel discussion

Episode 28/8/96

Sub-category	:	Information Interview, with some elements of discussion.
Topic Area	:	Social and current affairs with an economic perspective on "The Roles and Responsibilities Faced by Malaysian Women".
Talk Content	:	Direct factual material and arguments advanced in furtherance of a cause i.e., to uplift the role of women.
Approach	:	Elicitation of information, with elements of an exchange of information regarding the challenges that women face; the aim is to discuss issues; solutions may be suggested or implied in the talk.
Participants	:	i) compere ii) guests - 2 experts and a civil service personnel iii) call-in participants There was no studio audience
Talk Venue	:	Studio
Inserts	:	None used
Broadcast	:	Live
Duration	:	30 mins

### Profile 2: Personality interview

Episode 6/2/97

Sub-category	:	Personality interview
Topic Area	:	What makes the personality's designs an outstanding success - "Batik Designs for the Festive Occasion"
Talk Content	:	Historical background; what influences his designs: the outfits the designer has created for the festive season.
Approach	:	Elicitation of information of human interest; the aim is to probe for personal attitudes and beliefs that influence the designer's creations
Participants	:	i) compere ii) guest - A Batik Designer Call-in participants not included There was no studio audience
Inserts	:	Models parading the outfits made by the designer
Talk Venue	:	The sponsor hotel for the occasion - a makeshift catwalk was constructed for the occasion
Broadcast	:	Live
Duration	:	15 mins

The talk format selected for *Face to Face* matches the concepts of the interview format specified by Cohen (1987:32). Both the panel discussion and the personality interviews follow the permutations for an information-specific interview, which took the whole of each allocated session, where the prominence is placed on the interview and the register is moderately formal. Table 3 compares the interview profile in *Face to Face* with Cohen's permutations.

PROFILE PARAMETERS	TALK SHOW Akiba Cohen (1987)	FACE TO FACE ( All Formats )
A. Function of interview	information	information & entertainment
B. Prominence of interview	whole programme	whole programme
C. Number of interviewers & interviewees	few	few - 1-3 interviewees and 1 interviewer
D. Length of interview	long	long (30 minutes)
E. Degree of formality	moderately formal	moderately formal
F. Homogeneity of interview type	all different	all different

**Table 3 : Comparison of Talk Show Profiles**

*b. Topics and guests*

Topic choice is related to the viewing behaviours of the target audience. Bearing in mind that *Face to Face* was aired during mid-morning on weekdays, the group of potential viewers tends to be housewives and senior citizens who are at home. This is a mixed group comprising people from a wide range of social and educational background. Therefore, the most acceptable criteria for topic selection would be the news value, i.e., the value of recency as the events referred to would be current and in the audience's minds.

The topic selection in any broadcast programme in Malaysia is not free from agenda settings. They tend towards a socio-political intention to inform and to educate. Therefore national events would influence topic choices. The overall aim of the selection was to make the audience aware of certain social issues in Malaysia; and to persuade the audience towards desirable social attitudes or behaviours (see Table 4). For instance, in the 28/8/96 episode, the topic *The challenges and responsibilities* faced by Malaysian women was chosen because of the value of recency in connection with the Women's Day celebration in Malaysia. In another episode, the topic, *A Special Edition*, referred to a rare occasion where two ethnic festive celebrations occurred within the same period. Therefore, the station took the opportunity to discuss the double celebration by combining talks on the cultural aspects of the celebrations. Each



topic was selected with specific social agendas in mind, based on issues that arose, or on a current event that had political implications in terms of a desired social-cultural end. For instance, in episode 28/8/96 the agenda seemed to be to change the social attitudes towards women in line with recent economic changes; while the 6/2/97 episode had an agenda to promote racial tolerance through understanding and acceptance of each ethnic group's cultural practices.

EPISODES /TOPICS	RELATED EVENTS / INTERESTS	TYPE OF GUESTS
<p><b>28/8/96</b>  <b>Challenges and Responsibilities of Malaysian women</b></p> <p>Hidden Agenda            That social attitudes have to change with the economic changes</p>	<p>In conjunction with Women's day celebration in Malaysia.</p> <p><i>Talk Goals:</i>  <i>To inform the public that the attitudes of Malaysian men towards women have yet to move with the times.</i></p>	<p><i>Two Sociologists, A Social Worker in the Civil Service</i></p>
<p><b>4/9/96</b>  <b>Entertainment Outlets</b></p> <p>Hidden Agenda            To defend the authority's actions from a moral point of view.</p>	<p>The Selangor State Government's decision not to renew the licenses of entertainment outlets in the state.</p> <p><i>Talk Goals</i>  <i>To inform the public that the current move has not solved the existing problems</i></p>	<p>Educationist, Member of a Youth Movement, Video Arcade operator</p>
<p><b>6/2/97</b>  <b>Special Edition</b>            - Predictions            - Batik designs            - Songs for Hari Raya            - Festive fares/Cultural Performance</p> <p>Hidden Agenda            Promoting racial tolerance through understanding and acceptance of different cultural practices</p>	<p>On the festive occasion of the combined Chinese New Year and Hari Raya celebrations, each session on a different aspect of the celebrations.</p> <p><i>Talk Goals</i>  <i>To raise awareness of the different social practices of the 2 ethnic groups</i></p>	<p>Geomancist, Fashion Designer, Singer, Hotelier, 'Kompang' Group, Lion Dance Group,</p>

Table 4 : Topic Selection and Related Events

Guests must also pass the credibility test. They are selected based on their representativeness and their relation to the event that generates the topic being chosen:

- i. Their expertise in their fields to which the topic discussion belongs;
- ii. They have certain authoritative value by virtue of their position, or of being one of those involved in the activity or event talked about; or
- iii. They are there by nature of their public persona, and are 'news-makers' by virtue of their professional status.

The credulity of the audience is directly related to the guests' social roles and identities and what they represent in terms of the topic of the talk. For instance, in the 28/8/96 episode, in the interview on *The challenges and responsibilities faced by Malaysian women*, the guests selected included both men and women, suggesting that the views from both sexes were represented. The selection of two female sociologists and a male policy implementer in the agricultural sector implied that the talk had pragmatic value. The fact that the policy implementer was a male was a plus factor in the talk as it underlined the authority's efforts in emphasising the increasing role of women. The inclusion of a policy implementer in the agricultural sector was a deliberate move to provide assurance to the audience that there was some awareness of what was happening at the administrative and policy levels, and that the matter was being studied. Table 4 illustrates the link between topic selection, guests, the events and the hidden agendas.

#### Talk strategies in *Face to Face*

Although the physical format of the programme describes and shapes the output in terms of the procedures for talk, the agendas and the expected outcome, we must not forget that 'talk' is the key element in any talk show. Since the host has directive control of the talk, it is the strategies he employs, the personas he adopts and the kind of linguistic devices he uses in eliciting the information and how he presents this information that becomes the focal point of any talk programme. In the following discussion, I will illustrate these strategies from *Face to Face*.

##### a. Roles played by the talk hosts

In Asiah Sarji's (pers.com) definition, the talk host "must be in control of the situation". In *Face to Face*, this is seen in the directive control, which is deliberated through the linguistic tools the host utilizes in the following areas of talk:

- The opening and closing
- Setting agendas
- Introducing guests and call-in participants
- Maintaining and facilitating discussions



i. The opening and closing

The opening talk normally includes setting the agenda for the talk. This is done either directly by introducing the topics, or indirectly through mention of the social identities of the guest(s). The opening introduction has transactional uses (see Extract 1):

- It fixes the discussion in terms of location and time;
- It is a linguistic device linking the guests with the topic and the news;
- It socially aligns the viewers with the guests by grouping them together.

In the closing of the discussion the host normally does the following:

- signs off the talk session;
- summarises the talk;
- thanks the guests; and
- indicates what would come on next – this is significantly obvious when the host closes for commercial breaks or when he closes one talk session before he goes on to another session.

**Extract 1**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Opening and closing*

*Functions*

*Opening the discussion*

Good morning. Welcome to Face to Face.  
But for now, in conjunction with ...

*Greetings*  
*Background information*  
*(the news)*

And now, in last year's Beijing conference ...  
Now, er-recently, National Unity ...  
And we have in the studio to discuss this today,

*Introducing guests*  
*(Setting agenda)*

on my left, Dr. Husna Sulaiman...  
Welcome to the programme.  
OK, Prof., I'll start off with you.

*Indicating the starter*

*Closing the discussion*

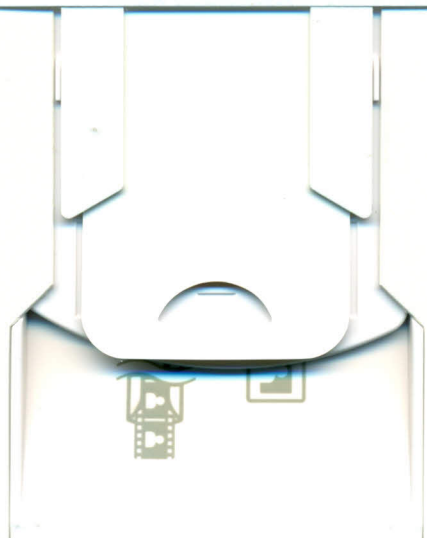
I'm sorry we're out of time.  
We know there're a couple of things we haven't touched on yet.  
Again, thank you for appearing on Face to Face, and I think as we have all come to one conclusion here  
OK, when we come back, we'll all meet with all-girl-group, Tiddas.  
So we'll see you in just a minute.

*Signing-off for break*  
  
*Thanking guests*  
  
*Summarising the talk*  
  
*Indicating what comes on next*

*Closing the interview*

Um-hm. Right. OK. We're out of time.  
Thank you very much for appearing on the programme.  
We wish you all the best. Thank you.  
Don't go away in just a moment, but for the viewers...

*Signing-off the programme*  
  
*Thanking guests*  
  
*Indicating what comes on next*



ii. Introducing guests and callers

Introductions are minimised and formulaic (Maynard, 1982, 1984; in Clayman, 1991), containing person-descriptions with descriptive items. These are in Face to Face: the guests' names (1), their social status (2), their professional designation (3) and their place of work (3a). The introduction also includes the guests' seating position (4) and a cordial expression of appreciation cum greeting (5). These elements are illustrated in the following extract.

**Extract 2**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Opening and closing*

*Functions*

And we have in the studio to discuss this topic today,	(4) (2,3) (1) (3a)	(1) <i>guest name</i>
on my left, Dr. Husna from the Faculty of Human	(3a) (5)	(2) <i>social status</i>
Biology, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, Welcome,	(4) (2) (1)	(3) <i>professional designation</i>
And in the middle, Encik Samsuddin Mohamad Salleh,	(2,3)	(3a) <i>organisation they work for</i>
Master Trainer, Gender Sensitization Programme for	(3a) (5)	
the Department of Agriculture. Welcome, and		(4) <i>guest's seating position</i>
(2,3) (2,3) (1) (3a)		(5) <i>greetings</i>
Professor Dr. Rokiah Taib, Arts and Social Science	(3a) (5)	
Faculty, Universiti Malaya, welcome to the programme.		

Introductions are social devices that provide information to the viewers. They give credibility to the speakers by attaching social, economic or political labels to them (see Extract 2). These labels may take the form of descriptions of their social status (2), professional designation, or the institution or organisation they are associated with (3). These establish the guests' areas of expertise. Since guests are selected based on their area of knowledge related to the topic, their descriptors also cue the viewers to the expectations of what perspective the talk would take. In the extract above, on the topic of *The challenges and responsibilities faced by Malaysian women*, Dr. Husna's perspective would be from a Human Biologist point of view while Prof. Dr. Rokiah would be expected to touch on the social aspects of man-woman relationships. Encik Samsuddin could, on the other hand, be expected to state the views upheld by the Ministry of Agriculture in his position as a civil servant. As female guests, Dr. Rokiah's and Dr. Husna's views could be expected to reflect those of women whereas Encik Samsuddin's views could mirror a male's perspective on the issue.



Conversely, the host introduced callers by their first names only. This minimised introduction serves a dual purpose; firstly, it indicates that these individuals do not necessarily represent any group or views. Secondly, since very little time is allocated for call-ins, the minimised introduction reduces 'excess' talk. Often the introduction, which only indicates the name of the caller is followed by an 'invitation to speak' (Crow, 1986 in Hutchby, 1991:120), after the caller has given a vocal recognition of his presence in the studio (see call recognition in Extract 3).

**Extract 3**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Call-in*

*Functions*

K9 :	OK, we've got a caller on line and we'll hear what he's got to say. We've got Razali on line. Razali, are you there?	<i>Introducing caller</i>
Rz1 :	Kelvin	<i>Call recognition</i>
K8 :	Yes, go ahead.	<i>Invitation to speak</i>
Rz2 :	I'm hearing your argument there...	

iii. Maintaining the talk

Talk is maintained through eliciting. Often, to probe further for details or clarification, the host would refer to a point and then asks for clarification. Sometimes the host may challenge the speaker if he feels that some justification is required.

**Extract 4**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Maintaining talk*

*Functions*

K3 :	... where you said that man is the captain Of the household... Dr. Husna?	<i>Seek clarification on a point raised earlier</i>
K7 :	Right, Encik Samsuddin? Women better money managers? in this instance?	<i>Seek clarification on a point raised earlier</i>

**Extract 5**

Episode 4/9/96

*Discourse – Probing**Functions*

A4 :	OK, well -ahm - I think that's - ah on the screen right now ...but I don't think he's actually 18 years old=	<i>Eliciting views</i>
K4 :	=Oh yeah=	
A5 :	=I don't think this is- This is another section=	
K5 :		
A6 :	=Oh, this is another section So this is not a- This is not the one...	<i>Clarifying information</i>
K6 :		

Reformulating or summarising information is normally done with two purposes in mind: to seek clarification from the guest(s); and to emphasise a point for the viewers. Reformulation typically occurs at points in the show:

- When the host summarises callers' propositions;
- At the beginning and end of a talk segment separated by commercial breaks, which is usually in the form of recapitulations, or at the end of the programme, as a round up of the whole interview.

**Extract 6**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Summarising caller's proposition**Functions*

C2 :	... So, what-what's your comment about that?	
K20 :	Right, thank you Annie. Talking about sharing responsibilities – yeah?	<i>Reformulating</i>

**Extract 7**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Summarising for commercial breaks**Functions*

<i>Summarising – before a commercial break</i>		
...	and I think as we have all come to one conclusion here...	<i>Summarising</i>
Thank you.		
OK when we come back...		

*Summarising – after a commercial break*

Thank you for staying with us, and we're talking about...

*Summarising*



In controlling the direction, and to prevent the talk from going off tangent, the host may cut in with a question aimed at focusing the direction

**Extract 8**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Summarising and assigning turn to a guest* *Functions*

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- R2 : ... We live in situations where men are supposed to be superior... compared to women=  
 K6 : =does that got a lot to do with – *Cutting and redirecting*  
 er- our culture as well - the Asian culture?

Often, in order to facilitate discussions between the guests, and preventing it from getting out of hand or being dominated by any guest(s) or caller(s), control is manipulated through appropriate fielding of the questions, and turn allocation.

**Extract 9**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Fielding questions* *Functions*

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- K1 : ...these conceptions - are these still playing... *Eliciting*  
 R1 : Well. Kelvin, in the absence of hard data ....  
 K2 : Encik Samsuddin? Are these misconceptions... *Clarifying*  
 in the minds of Malaysian society?

**Extract 10**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Facilitating discussions through turns* *Functions*

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- Q1 : OK, Prof, I'll start off with you. *Assigning speaker #1*  
 Q2 : Hmn, ah - Encik Samsuddin? Are these .... *Assigning speaker #2*  
 Q3 : OK, that means ... Dr. Husna? *Assigning speaker #3*  
 Q4 : Hmn, but getting back to ....? *Referring to speaker #3*

**Extract 11**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Summarising and reassigning turn to a guest* *Functions*

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- C2 : ... So, what-what's your comment about that?  
 K20 : Right, thank you Annie.  
 Talking about sharing responsibilities – *Reformulating*  
 yeah? *Indicating guest's turn*

b. Talk behaviours

In the interview sessions the host has adopted a "conversational posture" (Greatbatch, 1988: 425) to build rapport with the guests and audience. Bearing in mind that this programme encouraged viewers to call in to the studio to share their views and interact with the people in the studio, the perception of the host is that of a friendly, approachable and non-judgemental facilitator. Throughout the different sessions in the talk programme, both the public affairs discussion and light personality-type interview, this conversational posture did not change.

i. The probe

In the interviews that dealt with social issues, the host's elicitory modes were provocative in nature to allow for in-depth probes. Although elicitations may on occasion verge on the confrontational, the host stopped short of accusation. In addition, the questions were often worded as if they came from an outside source. In Extract 12 in the use of the pronoun 'they', the source of the accusation is attributed to a nebulous third party, thus distancing the host (and by implication the broadcast station).

**Extract 12**

Episode 4/9/96

Discourse – Clarification

Functions

H : Now, Mr. K, they-they-re saying that places like yours are actually breeding grounds for vice activities.

Seeking clarification

Challenges may also be worded in the polar form – in a question that only allowed for either a 'yes' or 'no' response, which then gave the host the opportunity to push for a justification or for further action.

**Extract 13**

Episode 4/9/96

Discourse – Challenge

Functions

H : You agreed? Why? Do you mean you actually see all these things happening?

Challenging

**Extract 14**

Episode 4/9/96

Discourse – Challenge

Functions

H : Do you think at any time maybe ABIM or your Department will actually look into this kind of study?

Asking for actions to be taken



Because callers are usually influenced by the host's behaviours, the provocative questions employed by the talk host that is challenging normally affect and align the type of propositions in the call-ins. The extracts below from both episodes 28/8/96 and 4/9/96 compare how the callers tended to align their talks with what the host did in the earlier part of the talk session.

### Extract 15

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Clarifying views*

*Functions*

H5 :	... is it true - that you know - like - er - women have to work doubly hard and even they are perhaps even more qualified than the men, maybe the job goes to the men. Does that still work that way?	<i>Asking for clarification</i>
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*Call-in at later part of the session*

R1 :	...so when she calls "Abang", it's finished. So the man will be the boss=	<i>Stating a case prior to asking for clarification reflect H5</i>
H17 :	=Right=	
R2 :	=Isn't it?	
H18 :	Yeap.	
R3 :	What do you think? How-how-how do you go about to change? I think we cannot change because ....	

### Extract 16

Episode 4/9/96

*Discourse – Challenging*

*Functions*

H3 :	...Have you had any problems of stopping them? Do you check their I.C. or, do you actually-ahm-find out how old they are?	<i>Challenging</i>
------	---	--------------------

*Call-in at later part of the session*

M2 :	...what is more, the racket, which costs him maybe 30 or 40, or maybe 60 dollars=	<i>Stating own view prior to challenging : reflects H3</i>
H17 :	=Right=	
M3 :	=you see=	
H18 :	=it is expensive=	
M4 :	=all these....	

**Extract 17**

Episode 4/9/96

*Discourse – Query**Functions*

K31 : ...do you see yourself as a group with strong social messages?

*Query**Call-in at later part of the session*

R2 : My question is : just want to know about your concept of this album, and the selling so far.

*Query : reflects K31*

## ii. The chatty mode

In a personality interview session, the host adopted the role of an interested party casually chatting with his guests, eliciting superficial information; at the level of the type associated with casual acquaintances. The guests invited tended to be personalities from the entertainment sector, and the questions tended to revolve around their career. This type of elicitation tends to be non-confrontational, aimed at making the guests comfortable so that they are lulled into giving interesting bits of information about their preferences, the challenges they faced and their future plans regarding their career.

**Extract 18**

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Casual start**Functions*

H : OK. So. How did you all begin...

*Use of conversation starter***Extract 19**

Episode 6/2/97

*Discourse – Casual start**Functions*

H : E, can you tell me why....

*Use of first name and first person singular "me"***Extract 20**

Episode 6/3/97

*Discourse – Setting a conducive atmosphere**Functions*

H : Hello, Kak Pah. How are you?

*Casual greeting and name abbreviation*



### iii. The non-judgemental listener

On the whole, members of the audience prefer to remain as passive viewers even if some do vocally express their agreements and disagreements to the screen in front of them. However, if they perceive that the attitude displayed by the host is non-judgmental, that may encourage them to call in. Such a stance is often manipulated through back-channelling. Since backchannels tend to be vocal sounds like 'uhms', 'rights', 'oks', 'yeaps', these verbalisations perform emotive functions that function as encouragement. They are often perceived as non-threatening, and help the caller to elaborate his/her views. Since call-ins are utilised through the phone line, the use of backchannels also indicates to the caller that the host is listening to their conversation.

Throughout the episodes studied, there is evidence that call-ins are generated through the host's back-channelling strategies which help to present a non-judgemental stance. In the extract below, the use of the backchannel as a 'continuer' (Schegloff, 1982: 81): "go on, I'm getting your message".

#### Extract 21

Episode 28/8/96

*Discourse – Backchannelling*

*Functions*

- |      |   |            |
|------|---|------------|
| R1 : | ...so when she calls "Abang", it's finished. So the man will be the boss=                       |            |
| KO : | =Right=   | Vocal cues |
| R2 : | =Isn't it?  |            |
| KO : | Yeap.   |            |
| R3 : | What do you think? How-how-how do you go about to change? I think we cannot change because .... |            |

#### c. Structure of talk

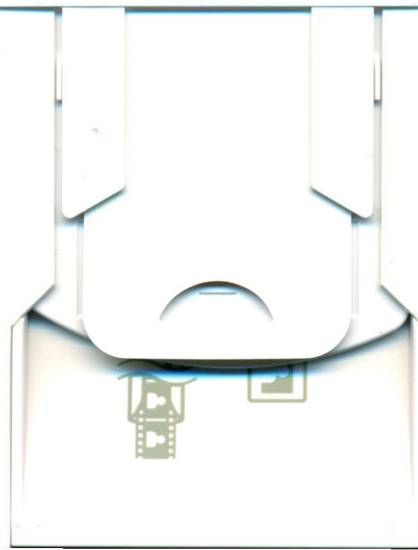
Basically, there are four varieties of talk according to the purpose of the talk:

- i. The news reporting and documentary types of talk: the authoritative stance tends to have a high credibility level.

#### Extract 22

Episode 28/8/96 - News reporting

- H : And now in last year's conference on women, Malaysia's commitment was to achieve a 30% target for women in decision-making positions in the political, public and private sectors by the year 2000.



**Extract 23**

Episode 6/2/97- Documentary

H : ... The Chinese believe that the lion will not only ward off evil spirits, but it will bring about good health and prosperity to the Chinese. The lion is not ferocious or destructive, but it signifies peace, harmony, vigour, justice, and uprightness. Hence the lion dance is usually performed to grace the year, the opening of a new business premise....

ii. The interview mode realised by elicitations enables clarification, reformulation, or even challenges.

**Extract 24**

Episode 4/9/96 - Elicitations

H : Now, what kinds of activities it leads to - or do you all know *Clarify*  
Of any reports that that actually links, have a very specific link between arcade, game centres and these other activities?

H : Now, Mr. K, they-they're saying that places like yours are *Formulate*  
actually breeding grounds for vice activities?

H : You agreed? Why? Do you mean you actually see all *Challenge*  
these things happening?

iii. The facilitating mode adopted for the phone-in talk: the pared-down style allows for brevity while maintaining a sense of approachability in its conversational mode.

**Extract 25**

Episode 28/8/96 - To open talk channel to caller

H : OK we've got a call on line. We've got R on line.  
R are you there?

R : K.

H : Yes go ahead.

**Extract 26**

Episode 28/7/96 - To facilitate between caller and guest

R : What do you think? I think we cannot change.

H : Um-hmm. OK.

H : Thank you.

H : Thank you, R. Encik S, we'll get you to answer this one first.

iv. The pragmatic openings and closings for the interviews as well as for commercial breaks: the openings help to focus on the talk goals while the closings perform the leave-takings as well as preparation for the next segment of the talk (i.e., after the commercial breaks), or for the next episode.



### Extract 27

Episode 4 /9/96 - To greet

H : Hello there,  
You're watching *Face to Face* coming to you live from Sri Pentas.  
Well, today this - this issue will probably be very familiar to many of us. We're talking about entertainment outlets here. And this, I mean specifically video arcades and karaoke centres.

### Extract 28

Episode 4/9/96 - To close talk

H : We'll look into more of these values and the problems that you mentioned in a - in a while.  
We have to go for a commercial break.  
*Face to Face* viewers, if you have anything to share with us, er - with regards to this topic, do call us at 7161603, or 7161604.  
We'll be right back.

### Conclusion

Broadcasting is an institution – a power, an authority – and talk on radio and television is public, institutional talk, an object of intense scrutiny that gives rise to political social, cultural and moral concerns.

Paddy Scannel (1991:7)

Because broadcast talk is public, it is inevitable that it carries with it the social-cultural behaviours of the society that engages in the talk. Therefore, talk participants not only communicate their norms of behaviours, but by using them in a public discourse, also signal that these behaviours are publicly accepted norms. This is amply illustrated in *Face to Face*. The institutional convention of a talk show dictates that the central element of the programme has to be made up of 70% talk, and a panel discussion dictates the content as one which discusses public affairs that embeds social values. Therefore, it is not surprising that the topics selected for the panel discussion session in *Face to Face* are related to social, political, cultural and moral concerns (see Table 5).

One factor in any broadcast has always been the tension between information and entertainment. Where information is high, the ratio of entertainment reduces proportionately. In countries where it is politically expedient for the station to be under state control, any output tends to be regulated by the need to inform and to educate. Thus, a talk show produced in any country where there is a need to monitor the nature of the information would invariably carry with it overtones of political agendas. The nature of the message depends on the current political concerns.

TOPICS	TALK GOALS	AGENDAS
28/8/96 Challenges and Responsibilities of Malaysian women	That the attitudes of Malaysian men towards women have yet to move with the times.	<b>Political, social</b> To promote a change in social attitude along with current economic changes
4/9/96 Entertainment Outlets	That the current move of a State Government not to renew the licenses of entertainment outlets in the state has not solved the existing problem	<b>Political, moral</b> To defend the authority's actions from a moral point of view.
11/9/96 Performance Enhancing Drugs	To discuss the issue of a recent case in which a Malaysian athlete was found to have taken performance enhancing drugs.	<b>Political, moral</b> To promote a clean and drug-free society To promote idealised professional and ethical behaviours.
6/2/97 Special Edition: Double Festive Celebration	To inform of the different social practices of the 2 ethnic groups	<b>Political, social, cultural</b> To promote the value of racial tolerance through understanding and accepting others' cultural practices
27/2/97 The Changing Role of Men	To discuss whether Malaysian men are able to take on more responsibilities in the domestic sphere.	<b>Political, social,</b> That changing times require a more dynamic manner of looking at situations.

Table 5: Topics and the Concerns

In *Face to Face*, the major concern in the programme tends towards a political agenda. In this case, the broadcast institution is seen as an auxiliary to state policy, echoing the desired goals of the government. The desired goals are as expressed in the content of the talks as illustrated in Table 5. Controversial topics that may not be expressed are not expressed, and if a caller happens to mention an issue that is politically contentious, the host tends not to take it up. One such example can be seen in the 28/8/96 episode where the host minimises his response to a form of



backchannel utterance, i.e., "um-hms" (see Extract 29). This is significant in that the host distances himself from a potentially controversial issue, based on the strained political relations between Malaysia (the site where the discursive activity was taking place) and Singapore.

**Extract 29**

Episode 4/9/96 - Caller proposition

- C3 : I wish to address this -ah- sort of a report from a newspaper that reported this, that Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore=  
 K16 : =um-hm=  
 C4 : =regretted his social engineering in  
 Singapore  
 K17 : Um-hm=  
 C5 : =whereby women's status has been raised almost equal to men=  
 K18 : =um-  
 hm=  
 C6 : =Now, because of this, women in Singapore marry very late=  
 K19 : =um-hm=  
 C7 : =or  
 even remain single=  
 K20 : =um-hm=  
 C8 : =Now he has also stated that to be a well-  
 developed rich country, you need not have to have equal status. He  
 quoted Japan=  
 K21 : =um-hm=  
 C9 : = whereby women remain in the home=  
 K22 : =um-hm=  
 C10 : =Can you please comment on that?  
 K23 : Right, thank you.  
 C11 : Thank you.  
 K24 : We'll get Prof. to comment on this. Professor?

Gender, or gender equality is another issue that has state approval. Since it was then a politically desired goal, it was politically correct to discuss such issues as can be noted from the 2 episodes (28/8/96 and 27/2/97). Even the presentation of the talk is seen as legitimising the equal role and status for the female gender, as can be seen in the topics: *Challenges and Responsibilities of Malaysian Women; The Changing Role of Men.*

Malaysia is home to many ethnic groups. One of its main concerns is to promote interethnic harmony. This can be illustrated in one episode – 6/2/97 where the station went to the extent of having 4 interview sessions, each taking 15 minutes. The interview topics were divided equally in terms of its cultural content as illustrated below:

- Session 1 : Chinese - Chinese predictions for the lunar year  
Session 2 : Chinese and Malay - Batik designs for the festive occasions  
Session 3 : Malay - Songs for Hari Raya  
Session 4 : Chinese and Malay - Festive fare provided by a Hotel for the double celebration

In conclusion, I would say that broadcast talk in Malaysia tends to promote the socio-political ends of the nation. However, as the nation moves towards political maturity, broadcast talk in Malaysia would perhaps move towards including broader range of interests and concerns.

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