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RADIO PHONE-INS: COMPARISON OF QUESTIONING  
TECHNIQUES ACROSS TWO BBC CURRENT AFFAIRS PROGRAMMES

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## **Poděkování**

Na tomto místě bych ráda poděkovala vedoucí mojí práce, paní Mgr. Heleně Lohrové, Ph.D. za spolupráci, pomoc a velikou ochotu.

## **Anotace**

Práce si klade za cíl porovnat techniky užití otázek, které používají rádioví hlasatelé ve dvou BBC Radio 4 debatách probíhajících formou 'phone-in'. Forma otázek, jejich užití a vliv hrají důležitou roli při rozvíjení debaty a jsou předmětem bádání této práce. K analyzování a porovnání otázek jsem ve své práci použila metodu konverzační analýzy, kterou aplikuji na data tvořená transkripčními přepisy dvou autentických rádiových debat, diskutujících aktuální události, z nich každá je zaměřena na odlišnou tematiku – sociální a politickou problematiku.

## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis is to compare questioning techniques used by the broadcaster in two BBC Radio 4 phone-in debates. The question form, together with the use of specific questioning techniques, have an influence on the course of the debate; they present the focus of this study. In the thesis, I apply the method of Conversation Analysis to the examination of data transcripts. While both debates discuss current affairs, each of them addresses a different topic: a social and a political issue respectively.

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## 1 Introduction

Questions are nowadays one of the key techniques used for communication in radio phone-in programmes. Clayman in his study talks about the primary function of questions in broadcast journalism as "a tool for gathering information" (256). Nevertheless, the use of questions and their function has developed and changed in the course of time. For example nowadays, the broadcaster in a radio phone-in programme is able to conduct the whole debate with only questioning. This means that the broadcaster can be restricted solely to asking questions, and yet to be the most powerful participant in terms of controlling the debate. And so along with the development of the question function, the awareness of questions as a communication technique has increased.

Questions as a means of conducting the debate on the radio broadcasting have been studied and analysed from various perspectives. Studies explore "the forms, functions, and normative foundations", in broadcast news, talk shows, advice-giving programmes, etc. (Clayman 256). In this thesis I examine questioning techniques in radio phone-in current affairs programmes. Applying the method of Conversation Analysis I analyse the questions, their forms, use and function. The questioning techniques are compared across two BBC current affairs programmes. The first programme is called "Who Would be a Teacher", and the host in this programme is Winifred Robinson. Robinson questions several persons calling to the programme to contribute to the debate on pre-selected topic. A special guest, the professional in the topic, is also present to the debate. Who Would be a Teacher is a programme oriented to the social issues current affairs. The second programme is called "How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care". Julian Worricker is the host there who questions listeners calling to the programme. There is also a professional guest, the chairman of the Health Select Committee, Stephen Dorrell.

The thesis seeks to compare questioning techniques used by the broadcasters across the two radio phone-in programmes. Specifically, it focuses on the use of questions, their implications in the debate and also specific features of the questions.



The work is divided into eight chapters. Starting with the introduction, the thesis continues with the second chapter that summarizes the background of Conversation Analysis, and explains the role of Conversation Analysis in the context of media discourse. The third chapter briefly describes the process of transcribing the data used in the thesis. The fourth chapter introduces radio phone-in programmes and genre of current affair; distinguishes the types of phone-in programmes and describes the motivation of the participants in the programmes. Chapter five differentiates institutional talk from non-institutional talk and focuses on media talk. Chapter six is dedicated to questions, questioning techniques and the question types in the context of media discourse. In chapter seven the question preface is analysed and compared across two phone-in programmes. The last chapter discusses the use of tag questions in media talk, and analyses the use of tag questions across the two programmes. Findings from the thesis are discussed in the conclusion.

## **2 Development of Conversation Analysis as a discipline**

Conversation Analysis (CA), is a method used in investigating social interaction. An important feature of CA is its interdisciplinarity: "CA lies at a unique interface between sociology and other major disciplines within the social sciences: principally, linguistics and social psychology" (Hutchby, Wooffitt 3). Interconnection of these sciences brought the idea of CA as a discipline into being. A person who played an important part in the inception of the method called Conversation Analysis was Harvey Sacks. Sacks's prior interest was not in linguistics though. He was a well-known sociologist, and he studied also many other disciplines, such as psychology or anthropology. Despite the tragic accident that ended his career early Sacks was very influential.

Sacks, who was killed in a car crash in 1975 aged 40, was highly original, often iconoclastic thinker whose ideas have, since his death, radically influenced researchers in fields as diverse as sociology, social psychology, linguistics (especially sociolinguistics and pragmatics), communication studies, human-computer interaction and speech therapy. (Hutchby, Wooffitt 2)

Sacks contributed to the study of social interaction significantly: the method of CA is very efficient in examining how people interact with each other using spoken language. He made his ideas public in his lectures that were crucial in formation of CA. "CA originated in the pathbreaking lectures given by Harvey Sacks in the sociology departments of the University of California at Los Angeles, and later, Irvine, between 1964 and 1972" (Hutchby, Wooffitt 2). His lectures were transcribed by Gail Jefferson who along with Sacks and sociologist Emanuel Schegloff represented the triad of formers of the Conversation Analysis method.

## **2.1 Investigation of Conversation Analysis**

Talk is the essential part of everyday social life. It is not an exchange of information with no order between the speakers; in fact, the talk in interaction is an act performed by the speakers who cooperate in order to produce a conversation, rather than an accidental attempt to have a conversation. Hutchby and Wooffitt declare that:

Talk is not seen simply as the product of two 'speaker-hearers' who attempt to exchange information or convey messages to each other. Rather, participants in conversation are seen as mutually orienting to, and collaborating in order to achieve, orderly and meaningful communication. At least in part, the aim of CA is thus to reveal the organized reasoning procedures which inform the production of naturally occurring talk. (1)

What speakers aim to accomplish when they talk—and how they achieve it, is a subject of investigation of Conversation Analysis—the study of talk in interaction. As Hutchby and Wooffitt suggest; "Conversation Analysis is characterized by the view that how talk is produced, and how the meanings of talk are determined, are the practical, social and interactional accomplishments of members of a culture" (1). It follows that CA is not interested merely in language as a system, but in the conversation as a social act. The social environment may affect the context of the conversation, and since the context of the debate differs according to the situation, the organisation of the talk in interaction differs along with them. It follows that the organisation of the talk-in interaction in a radio phone-in debate may differ from other forms of conversation. The aim of CA is therefore the study of organisation of talk in interaction. In this work particularly,

the organisation of the questions in the reasoning procedures will be revealed, and also the effect emerged in the procedure.

## 2.2 CA in media discourse

CA is not focused solely on common, everyday-life conversation, but also on talks in the different kinds of institutional discourse; such as medical, judicial or media discourse. Despite the fact that the concern of CA is more than ordinary talk, it is based on the comparison of findings from the study of naturally occurring mundane conversation, and institutional conversation such as media talk. Hutchby and Wooffitt define mundane conversation as "a technical category which is defined by a turn-taking system in which the order, size and type of turns are free to vary" (140). Contrary, "more institutional forms of talk-in-interaction involve either the reduction or the systematic specialization of the range of practices available in mundane conversation" (Hutchby, Wooffitt 140). Since the turn taking system for mundane conversation "is treated as a benchmark against which other forms of talk-in-interaction can be distinguished" (Hutchby, Wooffitt 140), the analysis of institutional, mediated talk works on findings of traditional CA and its comparison. Ehrlich and Freed develop on the idea and refer to Heritage's discovery that;

Basic CA refers to work that follows in the tradition of Sacks, Schegloff, and Jefferson and investigates conversation as a basic form of social action, while "institutional CA" refers to work that uses the findings of basic CA to analyse the way talk figures in the operation of social institutions. Because institutional CA involves the study of institutions, which are inevitably subject to the forces of social and cultural change, Heritage argues that the findings of institutional CA "tend to be less permanent" than the findings of basic CA. (17-18)

Institutional CA can be also applied to the study of media discourse. In my thesis, I use the method of CA and apply it on study of media discourse, specifically, I focus on the talk in the radio phone-in current affairs. In this kind of radio programmes participants display orientation to institutional context, by involvement in specific goal of the interaction (having a discussion), and by following systematic turn-taking structure of conversation. The turn-taking

structure follows mainly question-answer pattern. My concern therefore is the questioning techniques that are used in these current affairs programmes.

In other words, study of questioning techniques in radio phone-in programmes with the aid of Conversation Analysis, works on presumption that the use of questions in media discourse is to some extent identical to use of questions in mundane conversation. In my study of questioning techniques of radio phone-in programmes I proceed from this assumption.

### **3 Data collection and transcription**

Data used in the thesis comes from the audio recording of the BBC Radio 4 phone-in broadcast, Call You and Yours. The genre selected for the purpose of analysis is current affairs. The first programme, "Who Would be a Teacher", is a programme focused on social current affairs. The audio recording was converted by the author of the thesis into the transcript and adjusted for the purpose of analysis. The original audio recording lasts 54 minutes, however, for the purpose of the analysis the extract of approximately 11 minutes was used. The second programme, "How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care", is a programme specialized in political current affairs. The transcript of the data was available on the BBC Radio 4 website. The author modified some expressions that seemed incorrect according to the audio recording and adjusted the transcript for the purpose of the analysis. The audio recording lasts 53 minutes, however, for the purpose of the analysis the extract of approximately 13 minutes was used.

### **4 Radio phone-in programmes as a part of BBC broadcast**

BBC radio station and its various programmes are of great importance in forming the social background of British culture. The programmes differ in forms and topics broadcasted. Different topics of the programmes: music, sport, drama and news, fulfil their 'holy trinity' creed of the public service in the UK; obligation to inform, to educate and to entertain. "It was, and is, obliged to inform, to educate and to entertain; to report proceedings of Parliament; to provide a political balance; and in a national emergency to broadcast government messages" (Crisell 22). This means that the station not only is involved in everyday life of people,

but it also involves their lives into the programmes, and engages in people's problems with the aim to draw public attention to them. Programmes addressed in this thesis have a form of radio phone-ins.

#### 4.1 Types of radio phone-in programmes

According to Hutchby, there are several different types of radio phone-in programmes. He distinguishes open-line radio phone-ins, single-phone-ins and advice-giving phone-ins. In the open-line radio phone-in programme, "callers are invited to select topics of their own choice" (81). It means, that it is the callers who determine the topic of the debate. Usually, they discuss the topic with each other; contribute to the debate with their own experiences and compare them with others. In the single-phone-in, "callers contribute to a debate on a pre-selected topic, often with a politician or expert in the studio along with the show's host" (Hutchby 81). In this kind of debate, callers contrarily do not have the privilege to determine the topic, so they call to the broadcasting with the topic set beforehand. Callers may consult their opinion with an expert, or they can oppose him/her. Lastly, the advice-giving phone-in is "focusing on relationships issues or other matters involving specialized information" (Hutchby 81). This kind of phone-in might also include an expert, this time, however, for the purpose of giving advice to the caller.

Data used in this thesis belong to the category of single phone-ins. In both cases there is a pre-selected topic that is set at the beginning of the broadcasting, and introduced by the broadcaster to the audience. In Data Sample 01 the topic is Who Would be a Teacher. As we can see, the broadcaster, Winnifred Robinson introduces the topic with the question:

Data Sample 01

1. WR: Hello, welcome to the programme.
2. Today, as some children go back to school after the Easter break
3. → are asking, who'd be a teacher?
4. They seem to be pretty miserable lot. Yesterday delegates at the
5. NUT conference voted to continue series of strikes over pay and
6. workload,
7. another teaching union, the NASUWT published a survey
8. reporting wide spread abuse of teachers online.
9. One in five teachers has been subjected they say to derogatory

10. comments from pupils and parents.
11. So why do people go into teaching?
12. Call us with your experience please,
13. 03700 100 444.
14. Shawna Reeds on the line in Nottingham.
15. Shawna, you're teacher, you're still on your holidays,
16. what're you doin' now?

Robinson introduces the topic beginning in line 2 and revealing the actual title in the form of question in line 3. The callers therefore do not have the privilege to determine the topic; and they call to the programme with the topic pre-set by the host.

In Data Sample 02, the topic is How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care. Julian Worricker, the host, also introduces the topic to the audience beforehand.

Data Sample 02

1. JW: Hello, good afternoon.
2. → Today your chance to shape future policy on adult social care in
3. → England.
4. The Commons Health Select Committee is in the middle of an
5. inquiry into this key policy area, following the publication of the
6. Dilnot Report in the summer. It's taken written evidence, now it's
7. considering oral evidence, all with a view to influencing the
8. contents of a government white paper which will be published
9. next spring. Today, the chairman of the Health Select Committee
10. Stephen Dorrell is here, if you speak to him today, we've been
11. told by a spokesperson for his committee, that you can directly
12. contribute to his inquiry on the record, and have a direct
13. influence on the course of the inquiry.
14. Early oral evidence, we're told, often informs questioning at later
15. sessions.
16. So get in touch with your current experiences of adult social
17. care.
18. → How do you find the system now?
19. → What sort of care do you or does your loved one need?
20. → How are you funding it?
21. As the programme unfolds we'll hopefully build up a picture of
22. care provision in different parts of England but we'd also like to
23. hear from other parts of the UK as experiences there can clearly
24. inform the debate.

Worricker sets the topic in lines 2-3, talking about the opportunity to shape future policy on adult social care in England. Later, in lines 18-20, he specifies the topic discussed by asking concrete questions concerning the issue. In this way he proposes closer details about the topic that can be subsequently discussed.

## 4.2 Genre of current affairs

BBC radio 4 current affairs phone-in programmes are popular owing to a number of aspects. As Hendy asserts, "Radio Four is repeatedly described as a source of intelligent companionship for the 9.5 million or so British people who tune in at some point or another every week" (1). In his work, Hendy further explains how many of those people are influenced by BBC Radio Four in their everyday lives. It is not only the individual lives of the listeners that are affected by the broadcasting, but also it is the general public affairs that are being discussed on the radio and directly or indirectly affected. Current affairs programmes are special category of broadcasting dealing with public issues that address wide range of topics.

The rise of current affairs in BBC radio started after the War: "current affairs had been the BBC's biggest area of growth since the War" (Hendy 46). This is reasonable since at that point there were many social issues going on, needing to be discussed. Major significance of current affairs in BBC radio was later noticed by the end of 1967 when "news and current affairs had more prominence than ever in the schedules" (Hendy 51).

Current affairs is a complex genre focused on various issues that are recently discussed in the world. The interest of current affairs may be political, economic, social, etc. The main task is to inform general public, and subsequently discuss the issues with the aim to come to some kind of solution. The solution may be useful to the listeners or to the general public. It may be presented in the form of an advice, or in more influential manner, as a proposal to some change in the current affairs discussed. In data we can observe both forms of the solutions:

Data Sample 03 extracted from Who Would be a Teacher represents the solution in the form of advice.

Data Sample 03

1. WR: Hello, welcome to the programme.
2. Today, as some children go back to school after the Easter break
3. → are asking, who'd be a teacher?
4. They seem to be pretty miserable lot. Yesterday delegates at the
5. NUT conference voted to continue series of strikes over pay and

6. workload,
7. another teaching union, the NASUWT published a survey
8. reporting wide spread abuse of teachers online.
9. One in five teachers has been subjected they say to derogatory
10. comments from pupils and parents.
11. → So why do people go into teaching?
12. → Call us with your experience please,
13. 03700 100 444.

In the introduction the host presents the topic in line 3 and continues with adding some background information to it in the following lines. In line 11, the question that is intended to be answered as the solution is asked. Subsequently, the host invites the audience to call to the broadcasting and help to solve the issue with the contribution to the debate (in line 12).

Data Sample 04 extracted from How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care is a representative of the solution in the form of proposal.

Data Sample 04

1. JW: Hello, good afternoon.
2. → Today your chance to shape future policy on adult social care in
3. → England.
4. The Commons Health Select Committee is in the middle of an
5. inquiry into this key policy area, following the publication of the
6. Dilnot Report in the summer. It's taken written evidence, now it's
7. considering oral evidence, all with a view to influencing the
8. contents of a government white paper which will be published
9. next spring. Today, the chairman of the Health Select Committee
10. → Stephen Dorrell is here, if you speak to him today, we've been
11. told by a spokesperson for his committee, that you can directly
12. contribute to his inquiry on the record, and have a direct
13. influence on the course of the inquiry.
14. Early oral evidence, we're told, often informs questioning at later
15. sessions.
16. So get in touch with your current experiences of adult social
17. care.
18. → How do you find the system now?
19. → What sort of care do you or does your loved one need?
20. → How are you funding it?
21. As the programme unfolds we'll hopefully build up a picture of
22. care provision in different parts of England but we'd also like to
23. hear from other parts of the UK as experiences there can clearly
24. inform the debate.

In the introduction, the host explicitly states what kind of solution is offered (lines 2-3). In line 10, Worricker introduces the special guest who is



present to the debate, in order to help with finding the solution. In lines 18-20, the questions that are suggested to be answered in the course of the debate are asked, with the aim to help to start out the debate.

Radio phone-ins are a special category of radio programmes. Even when directed by the broadcaster as any other radio programme, radio phone-ins are controlled by non-professional listeners to some extent. Together the participants constitute the unit that creates the debate. In a broadcasting of this kind, lay people are invited to contribute to the show by calling to the studio and sharing their opinion on a particular topic with other listeners. The lay people or, the audience, are therefore not only the passive constituent of the radio phone-in show, but rather they form an active part of the formation. The formation that is comprised of a broadcaster, who is in the position of the presenter of the topic; an audience, whose role is to listen and react to the issue that is being dealt with on the programme and usually a special guest, an expert in the matter, who supports the debate with a professional opinion.

#### **4.2.1 Motivation of participants in current affairs phone-ins**

The motivation of participants in the phone-in programme is not always clearly defined. Their role, to contribute to the conversation, is set from the beginning of a debate. However, what is not set is what motivates participants to contribute to the debate and then, equally importantly, how the conversation is managed as it unfolds.

#### **4.2.2 The host's motivation**

The host is an initiator of the whole conversation and therefore is generally perceived as the one who dominates the debate. Despite the fact that his/her dominant position is set from the beginning, he/she needs to maintain the dominance by using a variety of techniques. The host is therefore motivated to keep the sovereign position over other participants. His/her effort to maintain the dominant position differs according to the programme and the topic of the programme. In case of this thesis, it is demonstrated how the motivation differs in social issues affairs and political affairs programme.

Considering the open-line radio phone-in, it could be the caller who appears to have control over the debate from the very beginning, since it is the caller's privilege to choose the topic in such a debate. However, he/she is rather in a disadvantaged position. The participant of the open-line radio phone-in who goes first must set the topic of the debate, and motivated by challenges from other participants, he/she needs to defend his/her stance. The one who goes second can adapt offensive posture immediately and challenge the first speaker; therefore, be in the dominant position.

Going first means having to set your opinion on the line, whereas going second means being able to argue merely by challenging your opponent to expand on or account for his or her claims. While first position arguers are required to build a defence for their stance, those in second position are able to choose if and when they will set out their own argument, as oppose to simply attacking other's. (Hutchby 90)

In the case of the examples presented in this work—single-phone-in programmes, it is contrarily the host who goes first. The host's task is to set the topic beforehand, so the callers may react to it. According to Hutchby, the first position is rather disadvantaged, as the participant needs to build a defence for his/her stance (90). The host, however, seeks to set off the debate from the advantageous position that assures his or her dominance. How this could be done is the concern of following part.

#### **4.2.3 Question as a method ensuring the host's position**

In Data Sample 05, Robinson as the host of the single-phone-in programme is in the first position at the beginning.

Data Sample 05

1. So why do people go into teaching?
2. Call us with your experience please,
3. 03700 100 444.
4. → Shawna Reeds on the line in Nottingham.
5. → Shawna, you're teacher, you're still on your holidays,
6. → what're you doin' now?
7. SR: am, I'm just takin' a break from marking GCSE eh,
8. unit one and unit two, from music ehm,

9. exam papers, I'm havin' a break from that to talk to you.

As demonstrated earlier in the chapter, in the Data Sample 03; after introducing the topic, Robinson presents the background information. In the Data Sample 05, the involvement of the second participant to the debate happens in line 4. What follows in lines 5-6 is switching the positions. Robinson uses question preface (in line 5), that is related closely to the topic of the debate, and then asks the caller a specific question in line 6. The effect on the caller is that she is urged to either agree or disagree with the statement in line 5, and then elaborate on it answering the question in line 6. In this manner, the caller is situated into the disadvantaged position from the beginning. As a response, Reeds answers Robinson's question in lines 7-9. She does not explicitly react to the statement that Robinson makes in line 5, and so she confirms it in an implicit manner.

In Data Sample 06, the example of political affairs in How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care, Worricker as the host is also situated in the first position.

Data Sample 06

1. JW: Hello, good afternoon.
2. Today your chance to shape future policy on adult social care in
3. England.
4. The Commons Health Select Committee is in the middle of an inquiry
5. into this key policy area,
6. following the publication of the Dilnot Report in the summer.
7. It's taken written evidence, now it's considering oral evidence,
8. all with a view to influencing the contents of a government white
9. paper which will be published next spring.
10. Today, the chairman of the Health Select Committee
11. Stephen Dorrell is here, if you speak to him today, we've been
12. told by a spokesperson for his committee, that you can directly
13. contribute to his inquiry on the record,
14. and have a direct influence on the course of the inquiry.
15. Early oral evidence, we're told, often informs questioning at later
16. sessions.
17. So get in touch with your current experiences of adult social
18. care.
19. How do you find the system now?
20. What sort of care do you or does your loved one need?
21. How are you funding it?
22. As the programme unfolds we'll hopefully build up a picture of
23. care provision in different parts of England but we'd also like to
24. hear from other parts of the UK as experiences there can clearly

25. inform the debate.  
26. 03700 100 444 is the phone number,  
27. a call will cost you the same as dialling an 01 or an 02 number,  
28. you can e-mail,  
29. via [bbc.co.uk/radio4/youandyours](http://bbc.co.uk/radio4/youandyours),  
30. or you can text to 84844 and if you do that you'll be charged  
31. your standard message rate and we may call you back on that  
32. number.  
33. Before we hear from Mr Dorrell I'm going to take a couple of  
34. calls just to sort of set the tone for some of the concerns that  
35. you're wanting to air over the next hour,  
36. → Elisabeth Bolton is in London, Elisabeth good afternoon.  
37. EB: Hello.  
38. JW: →What's your position here?

Worricker introduces the topic in lines 1-18. Then he invites the audience to contribute to the debate in lines 19-32. He involves the second participant to the debate in line 36 by presenting her to the audience. The caller first contributes to the debate by only greeting in line 37, and Worricker continues in line 38 by asking a question. Unlike in Data Sample 05, the example of social affairs, the question is not specific this time. Worricker does not propose any concrete statement to the debate related to the caller's position; instead he gives the caller the freedom to share her experience without any restriction. The caller is not located to the disadvantaged position by the statement, and is much more independent in her answer.

The host of the radio phone-in programme seeks to retain the dominant position over the caller, and is motivated to do so by being challenged through the debate. Therefore, he/she needs to demonstrate the positions at the beginning of the debate. In the analysis of the examples we found out, that the host in social current affairs phone-in programme was more motivated than the host in political current affairs phone-in. In both examples the hosts used questioning technique to place themselves in the dominant position; however, the intensity of the motivation differed. In the first example, the host restricted the caller at the beginning by asking a concrete question, and thus urged the caller to answer the question and defend her position. In the second example, the host asked general question and let the caller to speak freely. In this way the exchange between the first and second position would be easier to happen. Motivation of the host in the political issues programme was therefore weaker.

## **5 Institutional talk**

Institutional talk may not be easily distinguished from non-institutional talk. As Freed and Ehrlich report: "an institutional setting does not in itself make talk institutional, and, conversely, institutional talk can occur outside of the physical setting of an institution" (16). Therefore the fact, that a conversation takes place in an institution, does not necessarily make the conversation institutional. In other words, institutional talk can occur in a non-institutional setting. As an instance we can think of a ceremonial conversation. Heritage demonstrates this example on a traditional religious marriage ceremony. He claims that, "such a ceremony, appropriately enacted, involves the participants—religious official, bride and groom, and sometimes others—to speak in a particular order" (Heritage 106). The ceremony does not necessarily need to take place inside the building appropriate to the institution. If we think of a radio phone-in debate as institutional talk, it is rather unlikely, that the debate would take place somewhere else than in the actual building of broadcasting company. Nevertheless, it does not mean that it is the broadcasting building that makes the radio talk institutional. Rather than the actual physical setting, it is the conventions that the participants follow in conversation, and that make their talk institutional. Equally important is also a goal for which sake is the conversation performed.

### **5.1 Participants in radio broadcasting as institutional talk**

Using the example of ceremony, Heritage further distinguishes basic elements of institutional talk:

1. The interaction normally involves the participants in specific goal orientations that are tied to their institution-relevant identities: doctor and patient, teacher and student, bride and groom, and so on.
2. The interaction involves special constraints on what will be treated as allowable contributions to the business at hand.
3. The interaction is associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts.

Applying these terms on the radio phone-in broadcasting, the radio phone-in programme talk may be defined as institutional talk. The participants in radio phone-in programmes are oriented to the specific goal, which is the performance of discussion on a certain topic, and are also tied to their institution relevant identities: the host, the caller, the overhearing audience and optionally the guest, who is a professional in the issue discussed according to the topic of the debate. The constraints are not as strict as in a traditional religious marriage ceremony; however, there are some presuppositions that are to be followed. For instance, accomplishing question-answer pattern in turn-taking. In this case, it is unlikely for the host to be asked by the caller; however, it is not unreal. Usually and in the most cases, it is the host who ask the caller or the guest questions, and they answer them. This kind of constraint is stricter, for instance, in news interviews where the question-answer pattern is of greater importance. Last-mentioned is the framework within which the participants proceed in the debate with the aim to collect the opinions and different points of view and ideally come to some kind of conclusion of the issue discussed.

## **5.2 Formal and non-formal institutional talk**

Institutional discourse can be further divided in two types. According to Hutchby and Wooffitt, there are two types of institutions. Formal and non-formal institution. Based on the differentiation between formal and non-formal institution, they distinguish the discourse and the form of the talk performed in the particular discourse. Specifically, they present examples of two basic types of institutions. According to the differentiation, radio phone-in conversations are loosely structured and non-formal encounters. "Non-formal types include more loosely structured, but still task oriented, lay/professional encounters such as GP's consultations (Frankel, 1990), . . . radio phone-in conversations (Hutchby, 1996a) and so on (Hutchby and Wooffitt 140)".

Both, formal and non-formal institutional discourse involve the participants in specific goal orientations, normally lay and professional participants at the same time. In case of radio phone-in programmes it is the host, the caller, and possibly the professional guest. All these participants follow the

conventions most of the time, however, as mentioned above, the discourse is more loosely structured, but still task oriented. Radio phone-ins are therefore non-formal institutional talk.

### **5.2.1 Talk in media discourse**

Media talk differs from non-mediated talk in several aspects. First of all, it is broadcasted talk. "As Scannell points out (1991), broadcast talk is always "doubtly articulated" in that it is produced in one place and received in another" (qtd. in Thornborrow 280). In case of the radio phone-in programme the talk is produced in the radio studio and received by the listeners somewhere else. This fact affects the course of the debate in a significant manner. Radio talk specifically, despite the semblance of being spontaneous talk act, follows set of conventions characteristic for the broadcast debate. Thornborrow elaborates on this idea presenting the criteria that make mediated discourse different:

. . . mediated interaction involves a set of conventionally acknowledged roles and identities for participants in broadcasting events (e.g., . . . callers to call-in programs, . . . ), as well as a range of routinely recognizable activity types (Levinson 1992) that participants are called upon to produce in this public setting. (Thornborrow 280)

One of the conventions characteristic for broadcasted talk is questioning. Radio broadcast talk requires great rhetoric skills of the broadcasters, including various techniques that are highly important for his/her position in the media talk. Questioning is a technique that is a powerful tool not only for gathering the information, but also for working with the material received from the answer and developing on them. As Clayman says: "questions were primarily a tool for gathering information" (Clayman 256), but as I will prove, questions can do more than just gather information. First however, the focus is on the primal role of the question in radio phone-in programs.

## **6 What is a question**

A question is not rarely used in the ordinary talk; therefore, it is not difficult for a participant in the every-day life conversation to recognize a question

and its purpose in the first place. Several factors can easily indicate the questioning function of the utterance. Interrogative intonation, grammar structure of the utterance, etc. Freed and Ehrlich insist that, "While the communicative function of questioning is typically associated with a particular syntactic form—the interrogative—it is a well-documented fact that there are other kinds of syntactic forms that routinely ‘do questioning’" (4). On one hand, question does not need to have interrogative structure in order to provide the questioning task. On the other hand, not all the interrogative structures have necessarily the questioning function. In my thesis I analyse closer the utterances that do the questioning task in current affairs radio phone-in programmes. Questions in this mediated discourse are overused in comparison to mundane discourse and also, are used in a more complex way. Not only their structure but also their function can differ. Therefore, I specify the use of questions in media discourse and subsequently focus on the questioning techniques in two radio phone-in programmes.

## **6.1 Questions in media talk**

"Fairclough (2002) suggests that two different types of questions typically occur within mediated interaction" (qtd. in Thornborrow 281). Analysing a BBC Radio 4 programme, Fairclough recognizes two types of questions. "The first, he claims is not really a question but a comment; however, the recipient (here a doctor) treats it as requiring a response, just as an interrogatively formatted question would" (qtd. in Thornborrow 281). The second question type Fairclough identifies is information-eliciting question" (qtd. in Thornborrow 282). Analysing the questions from current affairs radio phone-ins, I distinguish three types of questions that elicit the information.

What the host does when asking a question, is that he/she usually elicit the answer to the question in order fill in the gaps in the knowledge, to clarify the doubts he/she has, or to justify the ambiguity he/she deals with. To support this idea of the questions' function I am using the example of my data below. In the conversation from current affairs radio phone-in, *Who Would be a Teacher—Robinson*—who is the host of the programme, asks the callers—Shawna Reeds and Tony Patience—questions. She uses the questions to elicit the answer in order to:



- Fill in the gaps in her knowledge:

Data sample 07

1. WR: → How many years have you been teaching Shawna?

In Data Sample 07, Robison elicits the information about the period of time that the caller, Shawna, has been working as a teacher. She clearly knows that Shawna is a teacher as she explicitly asks about teaching and not about working in general. That is the partial information she has. Nevertheless, she does not know how many years Shawna has been teaching. That is the gap in the host's knowledge she seeks to have answered.

- Clarify the doubts she has:

Data Sample 08

1. WR: → It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it?
2. But then when, ehm,
3. you had for example Wales abandoning testing which teachers
4. didn't like because they said it was a lot of paper shuffling and it
5. was unnecessary standards there fell,
6. → I mean none of us like to be managed do we?
7. None of us like to...

In Data Sample 08, Robinson agrees with the caller's previous statement by using the utterance in line 1. But then in line 6, she casts doubts about abandoning testing and claims, that nobody likes to be managed. She has the information but she does not know, to what extent is this information adequate. She elicits the detailed interpretation.

- Justify the ambiguity she deals with:

Data Sample 09

1. WR: → Shawna what would you say to ehm,
2. → the government who say that the teachers've been given more
3. freedom than ever that the job has never been more popular,
4. there have never been more teachers in the classroom,
5. it's never attracted more top level graduates than it does now?

In the Data Sample 09, Robinson presents the information she has about the government's opinion on teaching. From the previous questioning she also has

the information about what teachers say about their profession. On one hand there is government who see teaching as an advantageous job, and on the other hand there are teachers who see it as a disadvantageous job. She presents the contrary point of view here, and she elicits the information in order to resolve this ambiguity and to unify the opinion on the issue.

Based on the examples from the data analysed above, I will present the definitions of the types of questions that were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. The question types are based on the scale of the degree of the information that the interviewer has at the moment of asking the question. The scale has three different question levels, and each of the level has different function. Analysing the questions from current affairs radio phone-ins, I distinguish three types of questions that elicit the information in order to:

- **Fill the gaps in interviewer's knowledge:** The interviewer has either none, or partial knowledge of the issue; and he/she elicits either complete information on the issue or the part that is missing;
- **Clarify the doubts:** The interviewer has the complete information, but he/she does not know how to interpret it. Therefore he/she elicits the explanation of the issue;
- **Justify ambiguity:** The interviewer has more information than required owing to the different points of view on the issue, and he/she elicits the evaluation so he/she can unify the points of view and make a final conclusion about the issue.

It was observed from the study, that the boundaries between the function of Clarification of the doubts and the function of Justification of ambiguity are very narrow; hence, these two functions can be easily interchanged. The interviewer has certain level of the information in both cases, and it is up to him/her how he/she treats it. To illustrate the narrow boundaries, I refer to data Sample 07. Robinson is aware of what opinion government has when it comes to teaching and also what opinion teachers have. She elicits Shawna's contribution in lines 1-5 so she can come to some kind of conclusion. In line 1, Robinson starts the question: *Shawna what would you say...*, and so she explicitly asks for Shawna's reaction. With Shawna's further contribution, Robinson is able to

evaluate the situation and decide what point of view is more adequate to the topic. If Robinson's choice of the questioning technique was different, and the question was formulated differently, the function of the question would be also different. In the following example, I demonstrate a different structure of the question adapted according to the Data Sample 08.

Data Sample 10

1. WR: → It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it?
2.       But then when, ehm,
3.       you had for example,
4. →     the government who say that the teachers've been given more
5.       freedom than ever that the job has never been more popular...
6.       I mean, there have never been more teachers in the classroom,
7.       have there?
8.       it's never attracted more top level graduates than it does now,
9.       has it?

Robinson might agree with Shawna's previous statement in line 1 and at the same time contrast it with the example of the government's opinion in lines 4-5. Subsequent challenge in lines 6-9 would demonstrate that she has the information, but she does not know to what extent is this information adequate. The clarification of the doubts would be therefore required.

## 7 Question Preface

The participants of the radio phone-in debate need to be acquainted with a certain framework of information related to the matter discussed. Specifically, when introducing a new topic or a subject of debate, they need to be provided with general information concerning the issue discussed. This general information is important in assisting participants to understand the context and be able to contribute to the debate with their own thoughts. Such information cannot be therefore omitted.

One possible way to deliver this general background information to the audience is via a question preface. As asserted by Clayman, question prefaces are "formatted as declarative statements and are often rather extensive" (258). Clayman highlights the importance of question prefaces saying that:

Such prefaces might seem to stretch the boundaries of questioning, but they are allowable on the grounds that they provide the kind of background information that the recipient and the media audience need to understand the import of the question and the reason it is being asked. (Clayman 258)

In other words, without outlining the required information, the discussion would not make sense, as the contributing participants, in our case the callers or the audience, would not be able to contribute properly. Callers would not be able to present their opinions in an adequate manner, alternatively, in case of lack of information they would not be able to present it at all. Consequently, listeners would not be able to evaluate correctly callers' contribution.

### **7.1 Formulation of the question preface**

The question preface is formulated by the host, revealed to the caller, and in the act of asking the question is provided to the audience. As a first step, however, general background information regarding the caller is revealed by the host to the audience. The host can approach this task in various different ways and thus modify the effect that the preface has on the caller and on the subsequent answer.

With the aim of preserving the question/answer pattern, the host uses a preface. The host incorporates the preface into a question and thus manages to maintain his prior obligation to ask the caller a question. Therefore, by the use of an effective questioning technique, the host accomplishes two tasks at the same time. The host informs the participants, or the audience, about the circumstances of the issue discussed by making the preface the part of the question; and at the same time he/she asks the actual question.

The question preface does not have the same effect in all kinds of debates. In the following analysis of the current affairs radio phone-ins I demonstrate the different effects that the preface may possibly have in the different contexts of the current affairs phone-in programmes. Specifically, I focus on the context of current social affairs and current political affairs.

## 7.2 Analysing the question preface in the social current affairs debate

Primary, I apply the CA method on the excerpt from the Who Would be a Teacher radio phone-in transcript. The topic of the debate in this example is teaching in the UK. The concrete question asked for the course of this debate is, as mentioned above, who would be a teacher. The aim of this debate is to present the advantages and disadvantages of being a teacher in the UK to people who may not have any understanding of this profession. Among the callers there is not a lay person in these examples. People calling to this programme are all professionals to some extent. Either they are teachers or Ofsted inspectors, meaning that both sides are knowledgeable of the topic of discussion. The purpose of the debate is to contrast views on teaching practice from the perspective of Ofsted inspectors and those of teachers.

As we can observe from Data Sample 11-13, question preface is frequently used in the current affairs debate of a social interest. Just to sum up the frequent use of prefaces in this particular broadcast, I provide an example of the opening statements used by the host when accepting a new caller on air.

Data Sample 11

1. WR: → Shawna Reeds, on the line in Nottingham,
2. → Shawna, you're a teacher, you're still on your,
3. holidays,
4. what're you doin' now?

Data Sample 12

1. WR: Shawna thank you very much for that.
2. If you'd like to take a part in this conversation ring us now.
3. 03700 100 444.
4. → Tony Patience on the line, he is in Kent.
5. → Tony, hi, you're a retired teacher going to give us a little bit
6. overview, are things better now than they used to be?

Data Sample 13

1. WR We're still there Tony because we're having an inspector on the
2. line Peter in Essex.
3. → Peter I know you're still teaching now even
4. → though you're 68 but you used to be an Ofsted inspector.
5. WR: D'you [recognize] the picture that we've just heard from Tony
6. PH: [Yeah]

7. WR: Patience.
8. A breakdown in trust over inspection.
9. Too much paperwork.

These are the opening statements produced by the host when accepting the first three callers in the debate. Every time when a new caller is received on air, the host uses a preface to the question to introduce him/her. It is of interest that in this particular programme question preface is used always at the beginning of the introduction of a new caller.

In order to demonstrate the skill with which the host employs question prefaces, I focus on one particular moment in the programme, where the first caller, Shawna Reeds, phones in to share her teaching experience.

Data Sample 14

1. WR: → Shawna Reeds, on the line in Nottingham,
2. → Shawna, you're a teacher, you're still on your,
3. holidays,
4. what're you doin' now?
5. SR: → am, I'm just takin' a break from marking GCSE eh,
6. unit one and unit two, from music exam papers,
7. → I'm havin' a break from that to talk to you.

In Data Sample 14, the host uses preface to introduce the caller Shawna briefly. By revealing her profession in line 2; *you're a teacher*, the audience can already expect some negative experience contribution on the topic from Shawna's answer. That is, as previously mentioned, because of the fact that teachers are rather in opposition to Ofsted inspectors in this debate. This was explicitly explained at the opening part of the debate where the host mentioned discontented teachers. Their point of view is not as enthusiastic as inspectors'. The host therefore not only gives the information about the caller's profession, but also seeks to prepare the audience for the particular caller's attitude towards the topic that sets up the course of the debate.

Subsequently, the host highlights (in lines 2-3) that Shawna is still on her holidays; *you're still on your holidays*, and this is the inconspicuous but important part of the question that has the major impact on Shawna's answer. By highlighting the fact that Shawna is still on her holidays, the host pursues to

contrast the holiday time and working time. The overhearing layman audience may presume holidays to be a free time for the teachers, so the host intends here to show the lay people that it is a stereotype that might not be always true. In her answer Shawna emphasizes that she is taking a break from her work (in lines 5 and 7); *am, I'm just takin' a break from marking GCSE . . . I'm havin' a break from that to talk to you.* She explains that she is doing her job despite the fact that it is her holiday. Her answer therefore satisfies the host's question and her intention to demonstrate to the listeners that the holiday time is not necessarily a free time for teachers.

The host effectively uses the question as a method to present background information about the caller's situation to the overhearing audience. Before the caller is permitted to perform on the air, he/she portrays his/her situation to the programme researchers who inform the host. Therefore, the host is acquainted with the situation beforehand. However, it is not the host's task to present this information explicitly to the overhearing audience. As demonstrated in Data Sample 14, instead of doing so Robinson lets the caller, Shawna, to do this job and present herself to the audience. The only background information Robinson provides is in form of a brief preface to her question where she mentions that Shawna is a teacher and is on her holidays. In this way she insures the debate to underway in the direction required by the host and to talk about subjects she wants. It gives the host power to set the context and to constraint the caller's answer. Clayman suggests that:

Because question prefaces allow the journalist to set the context for a given question, they have the effect of releasing journalists from the confines of what might already be understood or presupposed in the context of the interview at that juncture. They thus enable journalists to ask about all manner of subjects, including those quite unrelated to the interviewee's previous remarks. Correspondingly, prefaces also facilitate the introduction of the information that disputes, challenges, or criticizes the interviewee, which may in turn operate as a constraint on the interviewee's subsequent response. (Clayman 258)

It is observed from the analysis, that the question preface is used always at the beginning of the introduction of a new caller in current affairs radio phone-ins. In three particular examples the host uses brief question prefaces to introduce the caller. Along with the name, she introduces the place of the caller's stay and his/her profession, which is apparently the most accurate information to the topic of the discussion. By introducing the caller and giving the information to the audience, the host sets the context of the debate. This enables him/her to direct the caller's answer. The question preface gives the power of setting the context to the host and restricts the caller in his/her answer.

### 7.3 Implications of the question preface in the social current affairs debate

The preface displayed in the Data Sample 11 was a part of the first introducing question, however, its implication extends further in the debate. The preface is important to the extent, that the impact of it endures far more than just on the actual first question and answer. Later in the debate Shawna was asked to explain what are the pressures and the pleasures of teaching. After doing so, Shawna is asked whether she feels valued. She answers the actual question and also comes back to the issue with holidays, mentioned in question preface.

Data Sample 15

1. WR: Do you feel valued?
2. SR: Ehm, sometimes.
3. Not all the time.
4. I certainly don't always feel valued by students, ehm,
5. some students are fantastic you know,
6. they're very grateful for everything what we do, ehm,
7. tomorrow I'm going into school,
8. → it is my holiday but I'm going in tomorrow to work with some
9. A level students, so they're prepared for their exam and they will
10. be grateful. Ehm,
11. stuff also very grateful for the extra mile that we go.
12. But I don't necessarily feel valued by ehm, I have to say,
13. Mr. Gove.

In her question the host only asks if Shawna feels valued with no further references to working during the holidays. Shawna seeks to explain by whom she feels valued and by whom she does not. Meanwhile, in doing so, she makes use of the fact that she is going to work despite the holiday time and mentions it again, in lines 7-9, without being asked about it: ...tomorrow I'm going into school, it is my



*holiday but I'm going in tomorrow to work with some A level students...* This is obviously a response related to the very first question, *you're teacher, you're still on your holidays, what're you doin' now?*, in Data Sample 11, lines 2-4. Although Shawna does not say what she is doing at the moment, she makes a remark about holidays and her obligation to work during her free time. This answer is linked to the very first question rather than to the question she is being currently asked, i.e., if she feels valued. It is important that the question preface includes crucial information related to the topic. In this example, holiday time is highly discussed issue to the topic: who would be a teacher. The host's choice of the controversial topic of holidays has implication throughout the following debate. The controversy strongly invites the caller to react and elaborate on it through the interaction. The question preface formulated in the first question has therefore implications for the ensuing interaction.

It may be noted that the preface to the question in this instance is of significant importance and affects considerably more than just the answer to the actual question. The broadcaster picks up the most important information related to the caller and his/her situation and incorporates it into the question in the form of preface. Doing so, he/she informs the overhearing audience about the background situation of the caller and sets up the agenda for the forthcoming debate.

#### **7.4 Analysing the question preface in the political current affairs debate**

I will now continue to analyse the same phenomenon—the occurrence and the effect of a question preface—in radio phone-in debate. The following example is an abstract from the same broadcast, *Call You and Yours*. The subject discussed, however, is in this instance different and so is the context entailed. The topic of the debate is: 'How will we pay for social adult care?' The interest of this debate is therefore political granting the callers to the programme an opportunity to contribute to the debate with their own arguments and thus shape future policy on adult social care in England. The Commons Health Select Committee was in the middle of an inquiry into this key policy area, and the chairman of the HSC Stephen Dorrell was present in the broadcasting to join the debate. The audience

was enabled to contribute directly to his inquiry on the record and have a direct influence on the course of the inquiry.

In Data Sample 16, we can see the first caller coming on air and being introduced by the host.

Data Sample 16

1. JW: → ...Elisabeth Bolton is in London, Elisabeth, good afternoon.
2. EB: Hello.
3. JW: → What's your position here?
4. EB: Well my mother had dementia and in 1999 this necessitated her
5. move to a nursing home where she was well cared for until she
6. died four years later.
7. I had to sell her bungalow to fund the fees,
8. and if I can make a small point I was able to sell it but I don't
9. think people in the same position as me now find it that easy to
10. sell houses quickly.
11. And I was able to invest and get a rate of interest which now of
12. course, you're getting zilch.
13. But one of my gripes is the very low level of assets at which
14. people in England have to pay for all their own care.
15. When my mother was alive I think it was about £17,000,
16. now it's about £23,000.
17. And I compare that with the sort of fees that Tony Blair charges
18. for one of his speeches.
19. Would he get out of bed for £23,000?
20. I don't think so.
21. And so politicians who are making the decisions that affect us are
22. living in a totally different world,
23. £23,000 total assets is not a great deal.
24. From what I've read of what Dilnot is proposing,
25. I think he says that you wouldn't be stuffed for more than
26. £36,000 altogether.
27. So I think he recognises this particular grievance.

What happens in Data Sample 16 is that the host is, as he says: “going to take a couple of calls just to sort of set the tone for some of the concerns”. He explicitly says what his intention is. Worricker wants to set the tone; in other words, he intends to set up the context of the debate and then expand on it. In the previous examples from social interest current affairs this task was achieved by adding the preface to the question, in which the background information was added. In this example, however, the host sets the context of the debate in a different manner.

The only background information the host provides the audience with, is the first statement (in line 1); *Elisabeth Bolton is in London...* This statement is "formatted as declarative statements" (Clayman 258), but it is not a part of the question. Moreover, this information is not crucial for shaping the debate. It is rather introducing the caller to the audience, presenting her name and the city she comes from, that is rather an obligation in any kind of interview. Unlike in the previous example with Shawna, in this example the host does not use question preface to present the background information to the audience. Instead, he chooses to leave the task (of giving the information to the audience) upon the caller. He does so by asking simple and direct question (in line 3): *What's your position here?* With this utterance he pronounces the request for presenting the information about the caller herself.

Omission of the question preface occurs through the interview repeatedly. I will present two more examples below, where the callers are introduced on air without the question preface being used.

Data Sample 17

1. JW: Elisabeth thank you very much for kicking us off.
2. I want to take two more calls before I bring in Stephen Dorrell
3. and a brief conversation as well with our reporter Carolyn
4. Atkinson who of course specialises in this area.
5. → David Scott in Kent.
6. David, good afternoon.
7. DS: Good afternoon.
8. JW: → Your experience here.
9. DS: Yes my mother's similar situation that she and her late husband
10. sold her house a number of years ago.
11. They'd saved all their life, they'd worked all their lives,
12. and now faces, my mother faces care costs of around £36,000
13. a year.
14. And that's rapidly going through her money she'll run off below
15. the £23,000 in just a few months' time, taking her from 100%
16. dependence to 100% dependent on the state,
17. there should be some form of graduation so that she can
18. actually support as she goes this.
19. And we're also left in the situation that we really do not know
20. what the government or local authority will actually support
21. when she gets below the £23,000 so we've had to set up various
22. things now, not knowing what will happen in a few months' time
23. and there seems to be no way of actually getting people to
24. commit until she's below that level.

In Data Sample 17 the host again, introduces the caller with his name and the city where he lives (in the line 5); *David Scott in Kent*. Providing this general information, he does not restrict the interviewee in his answer. The host's subsequent utterance (in line 8), *Your experience here*, invites the caller to share his experience and in this manner sets the tone for the further discussion. Despite the fact that this utterance does not have interrogative structure, it provides the questioning task. We can suggest that it is a modification of the interrogative structure: *Can you tell us what is your experience here?* With this request for sharing the experience, the host gives a certain freedom to the caller and does not affect his answer beforehand. His decision to give the caller the freedom is also affected by his awareness of the general direction that the caller's contribution will take, which is delivered to him through the programme's researchers. Because the host is aware of the general direction the caller is aiming to pursue, he does not have to try too hard to frame the question in order to maintain the debate.

The same situation occurs in the next example.

Data Sample 18

1. JW: David, thank you and one more before we talk to Stephen
2. Dorrell.
3. Vicky Raphael in Cambridge.
4. Vicky, good afternoon.
5. VR: Good afternoon.
6. JW: → Your point here.
7. VR: I'm a family carer of a young man with learning disabilities,
8. very severe learning disabilities so I've been a lifelong family
9. carer for the last 25 years and I'm now 60.
10. And I find myself in the situation where uhm,
11. I totally agree with the Dilnot Report which says that at this point
12. in time we're not looking forward with enough clarity and
13. planning with enough clarity,
14. and that actually we're starting from a deficit situation where
15. there isn't enough money in the pot.
16. Uhm, my son needs total care,
17. 24 hour care,
18. so he needs people with him the whole time,
19. he has very complex epilepsy and needs support in every aspect
20. of his life,
21. so I'm talking about a high level of care.
22. JW: Yeah.
23. VR: But since April 1<sup>st</sup> uhm,

24. a cap to my budget has meant that I'm now providing more care.  
 25. As a person who probably should be retiring and I'm now uhm,  
 26. supporting my son for 114 hours minimum a week, day and  
 27. night.  
 28. I think this is unsustainable.  
 29. Now if you put this in the context of many many other family  
 30. carers, coz I'm one of many.  
 31. And a large number of people with complex needs live at home  
 32. with their families, so this impacts upon the health and social  
 33. care of the whole family.  
 34. So, looking forward we've got issues of families who've got older  
 35. people who are caring for younger people with learning  
 36. disabilities,  
 37. who themselves are becoming part of the social care scene.  
 38. It seems to me that the word time bomb is probably a useful  
 39. descriptor of the situation people are in.

The caller—Vicky—is again introduced by name and the city where she comes from. It is the background information for the audience that is essential to the interview. Subsequently, Vicky is invited by the utterance (in line 6); *Your point here*, to make her contribution. No interrogative structure is required to do the questioning task. The caller automatically understands the utterance as a possible question: *What is your point here?* It is a general, non-restricting challenge for Vicky to share her experience and to set the tone for the further debate. Through an open invitation, she is given the freedom of speech rather than being restricted in her answer. The fact that the caller is not restricted at the beginning is partly influenced by the host's awareness of the general direction that the caller is aiming to pursue, and that is realized through programme's researchers.

## 7.5 Comparison of the use of question preface in current affairs

In the first part of this chapter I analysed the use of the question preface in a current social affairs debate in which the topic was: 'Who would be a teacher?'. The analysis indicated that the question preface is used frequently in this type of programme. The broadcaster used the question preface when introducing every single caller. The preface was attached to the question to introduce the caller by saying his/her name and the place where he/she is calling from. This step is rather inevitable since it is a standard process of introducing a participant of the debate on air. Apart from introducing the caller, the use of the question preface gave the host the chance to shape the debate in a significant way.

The preface not only provided the background information about the interviewee, but also it restricted the interviewee's answer to the adequate topic. The host makes sure that the debate continues in the direction required by him/her and that the participants will talk about subjects the host determines. Considerable fact is, that the host was aware of the general direction that the caller's contribution would take, through the programme's researchers, and so the host had an opportunity to change the direction in case she wished to. The question preface gives the host power to set the context and to constraint the caller's answer at the same time. Lastly, the question preface may have impact on the listeners' expectations. If the profession of the caller is mentioned by the host in the background information, the overhearing audience can presume a specific reaction or contribution from the particular caller. This fact, however, does not affect the course of the debate.

In the second part of the chapter, I focused on the use of the question preface in current affairs debate of political interest, which topic was; 'How will we pay for adult social care'. The findings were very different from the first example, that is, the use of the question preface was not used. The broadcaster only introduced the interviewee at the beginning of every debate providing the name and the place where he/she was calling from and then asked the direct question. In the question the host asked for the contribution from the caller giving the caller the freedom of directing the debate. In this way he yielded power to the caller, to set the context of the debate.

Use of the question preface was noted in the current affairs programme of social interest only, and the debate was affected by the preface as it followed. In the political affairs programme, the host did not make use of the question preface to shape the debate, instead he provided the caller with more freedom.

## **8 Assertive and non-assertive effect of tag questions**

One of the multiple effects of using the questions in debates is provoking a lively discussion. This effect of the questions, provoking a heated debate, can be achieved by different kinds of questioning techniques. That is to say, certain kind of question has an assertive effect on the subsequent answer. One kind of such

questions is tag question. I demonstrate the assertive effect that tag questions may have in specific context, and contrast it with the non-assertive effect they may have in a different context. The data transcriptions will be used to support the idea.

## 8.1 What is a tag question

Tag questions have from the syntactic point of view the interrogative form, yet their function is more than just eliciting the confirmation to the question. Characteristically, tag questions have two parts. The first one has usually declarative form and the second one the interrogative. Hepburn and Potter suggest how to define a tag question in grammatical terms:

... a tag question has two parts: a statement (e.g., a declarative, an imperative, a description, or an assessment) and an attached interrogative clause. An example of a declarative would be “you haven’t been to the doctor.” One feature of a declarative’s auxiliary component is that it can undergo inversion with the addition of the attached interrogative clause or “tag,” for example, “you have” to “have you?” Auxiliaries may have positive or negative “polarity” (have/haven’t), and most commonly this is reversed from declarative to tag—for example, negative-positive (“you haven’t been to the doctor’s, have you?”) or positive-negative (“you have been to the doctor’s, haven’t you?”). (Hepburn, Potter 72)

The polarity of the tag question has an important role in shaping the answer to the question. Negative-positive and positive-negative reversion have both different effect on the subsequent answer. The positive-negative reversion has rather rhetorical function; and even though it might require the confirmation to the question asked, it presupposes the agreement with the statement. It is less insistent in terms of challenging the interviewee’s answer. Contrarily, the negative-positive reversion elicits the answer in more provocative manner. Two cases can arise when using a tag question in negative-positive reversion form. In the first case, the tag question may require a confirmation of the statement that is a part of the question and elaborating on the questioned topic. In the second case, the tag question may provoke the contradictory answer. Hepburn and Potter refer

to Heritage who studied the phenomenon of the negative tag questions in news interviews and came to the following findings:

Heritage (2002) fleshes out this latter observation by comparing the placement of negative interrogatives at turn beginnings and turn endings in news interviews. He suggests that, in turn beginnings, negative interrogatives provide a useful vehicle for making assertions by providing a projection of an expected (preferred) answer that hangs over the whole subsequent assertion, which in news interviews is often provocative in nature. Conversely, statements with negative tags are treated as less assertive and are more likely to be treated as a question to be answered rather than an assertion to be agreed or disagreed with. In effect, Heritage is suggesting that tag questions are a weaker form of interrogative, in that they claim less knowledge about the declarative component than a negative interrogative at turn beginning would. These findings are based upon the specific institutional environment of a news interview. (qtd. in Hepburn, Potter 72-73)

Heritage compares questions in negative interrogative form to tag questions of positive-negative reversion form. His study is performed on news interviews that is mediated talk just as phone-in interview is. Based on the comparison, he states that tag questions are weaker than ordinary questions in terms of interrogative function. In the following part of the thesis the use of tag questions is analysed in current affairs radio programmes. I examine their form and compare their function. Working on presumption that the effect of tag questions in news interviews and phone-in interviews is similar, meaning that tag questions are weaker forms of interrogative in the phone-in debate, I examine to what extent are tag questions emphatic in current affairs radio programmes.

## **8.2 The use of tag questions in the social current affairs debate**

First I analyse the use and the function of tag questions in the current affairs programme of social interest. The host, Robinson, asks the caller Tony about his experience with teaching.

Data Sample 19



1. WR: [Tony],
2. TP: [mornin']
3. WR: hi, you're a retired teacher going to give us a little bit overview
4. are things better now than they used to be?
5. TP: Eeh, no. eeh
6. WR: In what way not?
7. TP: Well I'd, I did, thirty four years in London comprehensives
8. followed by ehm, four and a half years in a private sector,
9. and I do the occasional supply now and then but'am it's over
10. management.
11. Ehm, when, when I started in the early 1970' school had uhm
12. 1300 pupils they had management team four.
13. Now ehm, the same number of pupils and the management
14. teamis nine.
15. And there's so many dictates and everything coming from central
16. government, that, the management expend to cope with the
17. bureaucracy.
18. And the lot of these managers are actually are very good
19. classroom teacher who do very little teaching because they're
20. stuck in papers and setting targets and so on all the time,
21. and it's really sad.
22. WR: → It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it?
23. But then when, ehm,
24. you had for example Wales abandoning testing which teachers
25. didn't like because they said it was a lot of paper shuffling and it
26. was unnecessary standards there fell,
27. → I mean none of us like to be managed do we?
28. None of us like [to...]
29. TP: [Aaah, excuse me], if I go back to...

In Data Sample 19 Robinson asks Tony, the retired teacher, if the things are better now than they used to be (in line 4). Specifically, Robinson seeks to get the answer on how is the situation of teachers in the UK. Tony claims that things are not better now than they used to be and elaborates on his statement. He explains that in his opinion the teachers are over managed with paper work. Therefore, instead of teaching they rather cope with papers and setting targets etc. With this argument Tony supports his statement that matters with teachers are not better now than they used to be. In order to challenge Tony's statement, Robinson replies to him with a question statement. In the first part of the statement (the line 22) she uses tag question; *It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it?* And she continues with the example of Wales, who abandoned testing. Finally, she suggests that none of us like to be managed. To declare so, she uses tag question again (line 27), *I mean none of us like to be managed do we?*

Tag questions in this example are composed traditionally of two parts. The statement: *It's a persuasive argument to once sense*, that is a declarative assessment and the attached interrogative clause: *isn't it*. The statement is reversed from positive declarative to negative tag: *It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it*. According to what Heritage claims about the statements with negative tags: "statements with negative tags are treated as less assertive and are more likely to be treated as a question to be answered rather than an assertion to be agreed or disagreed with "(qtd. in Hepburn, Potter 72-73); this statement is not as challenging as if it had inverse form with the positive tag. However, in Tony's response the urgent necessity to intervene is observed as his turn overlaps with Robinson's before she finished the utterance. The overlapping response is not necessarily the consequence of the first tag question in line 22, since there is one more in that section in line 27, *I mean none of us like to be managed, do we?* This tag question is again composed of two parts. The statement; *none of us like to be managed*, that is declarative assessment and attached interrogative clause; *do we?* The statement is reversed from negative declarative to positive tag. Reflecting on Heritage's idea again, this type of tag question is assertive and invites the interviewee to agree or disagree with it. It is more provocative and invites Tony to contribute in an insistent manner. The first tag question (line 22) is therefore less assertive in comparison with tag question in line 27. Rather than eliciting the answer, the first tag question introduces the host's contribution. The second tag question ends host's contribution with the aim of inviting the caller to take over.

### **8.2.1 The effect of tag questions in the social current affairs debate**

This section examines the different implications of the two tag questions from Data Sample 19. The first tag question, *It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't*, has two main functions in this particular context. The positive statement expresses the agreement with Tony's previous contribution, and the negative tag then challenges the positive statement. Robinson favours with Tony and with teachers in general, but she seeks to expand on the topic and so she challenges Tony's argument. The negative tag question also serves as a connector between the statement that expresses agreement, *It's a persuasive argument to once sense*, and the subsequent challenging statement, *But then when, ehm, you had for example Wales abandoning testing...* This connector indicates that

although the speaker (Robinson) accepts the answer to her previous question, she will challenge it with another, sort of offensive statement. So the two functions of the tag question are supportive and challenging.

The second tag question of the section, *I mean none of us like to be managed, do we?*, has one function. It elicits the answer in a provocative manner. The effect of the provocative tone is that of challenging the subsequent answer. Figuratively, it works as an engine that spurs the interviewee to answer. The answer that is to follow is expected and this is reflected in the tag question. The statement; *none of us like to be managed*, is negative assertive statement, according which the answer is expected to be negative too. In other words, Robinson awaits the confirmation of her statement that nobody likes to be managed. Without adding the tag question to the declarative, the awaiting of the confirmation would not be obvious. "The tag question again produces the prior turn as something that the caller has rights to know and sets up the further requirement for confirmation from the caller in a way that the declarative alone would not have" (Hepburn, Potter 80). The positive tag; *do we?*, carries the provocative connotation that invites Tony to answer. Without using this question tag, the statement; *none of us like to be managed*, would be a declarative with no requirement for confirmation. What the second tag question in the example does is that it invites Tony to react to the statement and it elicits the answer in a provocative manner.

### **8.3 The use of tag questions in the political current affairs debate**

In the following example I analyse the use and the function of tag questions in current affairs programme of political interest.

In Data Sample 20, the interviewee Raphael is a carer of a young man with severe learning disabilities. Taking care of the young man requires 24 hour dedication which is not only exhausting for the interviewee, but also very difficult owing to the budget deficit. Worricker elicits clarification of what caused the budget deficit and Raphael gives more detailed description. In response to this Worricker asks for the clarification of the different eligibility criteria that affects the budget. This time he uses question tag in his question; *this is quite a confusing area isn't it*. As a response, Raphael names individually the four different criteria.

1. JW: And just to clarify your situation because you talked about a cut
2. in your budget,
3. explain where that cut has come from, what's driven that?
4. VR: This is to do with uhm, more charges for services up front,
5. this is to do with eligibility criteria which is supposed to not have
6. changed which are being used to sort of manipulate people's
7. situations.
8. JW: → And just to clarify that aspect of this because this is quite a
9. → confusing area isn't it?
10. There are four different eligibility criteria in terms of need.
11. VR: Yes low, moderate, substantial and critical.

Tag question in this example (lines 8-9) is composed traditionally of two parts. The statement; *this is quite a confusing area*, that is a declarative assessment and the attached interrogative clause is; *isn't it*. The statement is reversed from a positive declarative to negative tag; *this is quite a confusing area isn't it*. As examined in the previous section, statements with negative question tags are less assertive than statements with positive tags. In this example the statement is also "treated as a question to be answered rather than an assertion to be agreed or disagreed with" (qtd. in Hepburn, Potter 72-73). It is not as challenging as if it had inverse form with the positive tag.

### 8.3.1 The effect of tag questions in the political current affairs

This part examines the implication of tag question from the example in Data Sample 20. Referring to Heritage and his findings again, we can see the same effect of the negative question tag used in the news interviews (from Heritage's study) and the question tag used in the political current affairs programme in my study. In Data Sample 20 the interviewer asks for the clarification. He seeks to reveal the four different criteria, so his intention is to have his question answered. He does not elicit the answer in a provocative manner, neither is he challenging the subsequent answer in assertive way. It is a part of the question that is eliciting the information rather than eliciting the agreement or disagreement. This part of the question (the question tag) is not inevitable though. The question would fulfil the information seeking task even if question tag would not constitute a part of it. As Hepburn and Potter suggest, "another useful feature of the tag question that seems particularly silent in this example is the way that it fills what might be (in

the environment of distress) an empty transition space" (80). Taking into consideration this statement, use of the question tag is not therefore absolutely necessary in this example. Reconstructing the question without the question tag, it would preserve the same function:

Data Sample 20 reconstructed example

1. JW: → And just to clarify that aspect of this because this is quite a
2. → confusing area.
3. There are four different eligibility criteria in terms of need.
4. VR: Yes low, moderate, substantial and critical.

Omission of the question tag in this example would not lead to a difference concerning the semantic content. By leaving out the question tag, as demonstrated above, the part of the statement which does the questioning task, specifically eliciting the detailed information, is not the question tag itself. It is rather the statement that follows; *There are four different eligibility criteria in terms of need.* This statement does not have interrogative form, yet it has the questioning function. Two possible interpretations arise here. The first one treats the statement in line 3 as an incomplete statement that needs to be completed. In other words, it invites the interviewee to take over and answer by adding the information and therefore making the statement complete. The second interpretation treats the statement in line 3 as a modification of the question: *What are the four different eligibility criteria?* Both of these possible questioning techniques have the function of eliciting the information.

The impact of the tag question in the example of current affairs with the political interest is less appealing to the interviewee. The function of the tag is filling the transition space between two statements: the declarative statement and the statement eliciting the answer.

Tag questions were detected in both current affairs radio programmes in the data presented, social affairs and political affairs. From the analyses that was carried out it was observed, that the effect of question tags in social affairs programme differed from the political affairs programme. First, we discussed how the effect of tag questions depends on the polarity of the tag question. Negative-positive and positive-negative reversion have both different effects. Generally, the positive-negative reversion presupposes the agreement with the statement and

negative-positive reversion elicits either confirmation or agreement, in an assertive manner. In the first example from social current affairs programme, the tag questions were used in order to provoke the heated debate by challenging the caller's contribution. Contrary, the tag question used in the political current affairs programme had the function of eliciting the information. It is to follow, that the tag question used in the political current affairs programme is not as challenging and assertive as the tag question in the social affairs programme.

## Conclusions

The aim of the thesis was to compare the questioning techniques used by the broadcasters across two BBC Radio 4 current affairs phone-in programmes. Specifically, the use of questions, their implications in the debate and also specific features of the questions were aimed to discuss. Data analysed in order to support the study were the audio recordings of the two radio programmes that were transcribed and arranged for the method of Conversation Analysis. The thesis provided theoretical part that was supported with the examples of Data Samples from the transcript, and the practical part where the analysis provided new observations from the study.

On the basis of the distribution of radio phone-in programmes, according to Hutchby (81), it was recognized that the two programmes used in the thesis as examples belonged to the category of a single phone-in. Both broadcasters, in social current affairs and political current affairs phone-ins, introduced the topic of the debate beforehand, meaning that the listeners were invited to contribute to the debate on a pre-set topic. The listeners in both programmes were therefore challenged on the same level in terms of the topic, as the same topic was set for all of them at the beginning of the debate.

In the section introducing the genre of current affairs, the two programmes were recognized as current affairs of social interest and current affairs of political interest. It was explained, what is the difference in terms of the solution they offer to the listeners or to the general public. The Who Would be a Teacher programme was recognized as a representative of the solution in form of advice. Contrarily, The How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care programme was recognized as a representative of the solution in form of proposal. The solution in form of proposal may seem to be more challenging for the callers, since the impact of the solution may be wider. Concretely, How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care programme, guaranteed the possible change in future policy on adult social care in England. Listeners of the political current affairs were therefore more challenged and motivated, in terms of the solution that the debate might result in.

Furthermore, it was observed, that the host's motivation is driven by necessity to maintain the dominant position in the debate, and the motivation

differed according to the programme and the topic discussed. As analysis showed, the host in the social current affairs programme was more motivated than the host in political current affairs programme. According to Hutchby, participants who go first in a debate are required to build a defence for their stance (90). For this purpose, both hosts used questioning technique to demonstrate the sovereign position; since they were both in the first position. However, the questions' function differed. The host in social current affairs asked the first caller a concrete question; therefore the caller was restricted in the answer more, than the caller in political current affairs, where the caller was asked a general question and therefore more independent in the answer. Motivation of the host in the political issues programme was therefore weaker, since he did not have to necessarily defend his sovereign position with much effort.

Chapter six approached the main concern of the thesis; that is the use of questions in the radio phone-in debate. Focusing on questions in media talk it was demonstrated, that Fairclough recognizes two different types of questions that may be found in mediated interaction (Thornborrow 281). The analysis of phone-in programme talk, however, found three different types of questions that are used within the interaction. The question types were based on the scale of the degree of the information that the interviewer had at the moment of asking the question, and the scale had three different levels of three different functions. The three types of questions had the function of: Filling the gaps in interviewer's knowledge (the interviewer lacks knowledge and elicits the complete information), Clarifying the doubts (the interviewer has the complete info and elicits the interpretation) and Justifying the ambiguity (the interviewer has more information than required and elicits the evaluation). From the analysis it was observed, that the boundaries between the function of Clarification of the doubts and the Justification of ambiguity are very narrow.

The following section analysed the use and function of question preface across the two current affairs programme. It was found that question preface is frequently used in social current affairs, and omitted in political current affairs. Question preface in general, has the function of informing the overhearing audience and asking a question. In social current affairs the host, Winifred Robinson, when introducing a new caller on air, used question preface in order to



give the background information to the overhearing audience and also in order to restrict the caller's answer. With the use of question preface the host provided the background information to the audience, that was required for the purpose of the debate, and shaped the direction of the debate. In addition, the host incorporated the most controversial issue related to the caller or the topic (in this case it was holiday time) to the question preface, and thus caused that the impact of the question preface endures further in the debate. By contrast, in political current affairs the host, Julian Worricker, did not use question preface to shape the debate, nor to restrict the caller's answer. He provided the overhearing audience with the general information about the caller, but he did not incorporate any controversial issue to the question preface, and so did not affect the course of the debate from the beginning with the use of question preface. Instead, the host provided the caller with more freedom in choosing the direction of the debate.

The last chapter analysed the use and the function of tag questions. The use was noted in both, social current affairs programme and political current affair programme. The function however, was different. In social current affairs tag question were used both, in order to invite the caller to contribute and provoke the heated debate by challenging the caller's contribution. The statement that was reversed from negative declarative to positive tag was observed to have the function of provoking the heated debate, and the statement with negative tag was contrary observed as less assertive. In political current affairs tag question was used only in non-assertive manner. The question was reversed from a positive declarative to negative tag and was treated as a question to be answered, not as an assertion to be agreed or disagreed with. It was also demonstrated, that the use of tag question in political current affairs programme was not inevitable, and might have been easily replaced by other questioning technique, since the tag had the function of filling the "empty transition space" (Ehrlich, Freed 80).

The thesis came to the conclusion that the questioning techniques used by the hosts across the two radio phone-in programmes differ in various aspects. It was observed, that questioning techniques were frequently used across both BBC radio 4 current affairs programme. However, the host in social current affairs asked more specific question, so as a consequence the impact of questions was noticeable further in the debate and not only in the actual answer to the question.

In this manner, the host controlled the course of the debate; and changed its direction if required. The host's questions in social current affairs phone-in were more assertive, provoking and in general more effective in terms of controlling the debate. The host in political current affairs, Julian Worricker, asked more general questions, and did not affect the course of the debate much. The use of his questioning techniques was less assertive and enabled the debate to develop more freely. Questions in political current affairs did not carry any preferences, unlike question in social current affairs, and therefore did not influence the subsequent answers. The principal function of the questions in political current affairs phone-in was to elicit the factual information in order to clarify the topic of the debate and come to the solution of the issue, whereas the principal role of the questions used in social current affairs phone-in was to challenge the callers' answers in order to produce an interesting and controversial debate. Questioning techniques used by the host in social current affairs ensured control over the debate, in contrast to questioning techniques used by the host in political current affairs.

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## Transcription Glossary

The transcription symbols used in this thesis were based on the Transcription Glossary used by Hutchby and Wooffitt as published in *Conversation Analysis*.

"The transcription symbols used here are common to conversation analytic research, and were developed by Gail Jefferson" (Hutchby, Wooffitt x).

- [ ] Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.
- ! Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone.
- ( ) Empty parenthesis indicate the presence of an unclear fragment on the tape.
- (guess) The words within a single bracket indicate the transcriber's best guess at an unclear utterance.
- word. A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the grammatical end of a sentence.
- word, A comma indicates a 'continuing intonation'.
- word? A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question
- Arrows in the left margin point to specific parts of an extract discussed in the text.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0418kfy>

BBC Radio 4

You and Yours: Who Would Be a Teacher?

The participants of this debate are:

- WR: Winifred Robinson - the host
- SR: Shawna Reeds
- TP: Tony Patience
- PH: Peter Halliday
- GH: Gillian Hargreaves

**1. WR:** Hello, welcome to the programme. Today, as some children go back to school after the Easter break are asking, who'd be a teacher? They seem to be pretty miserable lot. Yesterday delegates at the NUT conference voted to continue series of strikes over pay and workload, another teaching union, the NASUWT published a survey reporting wide spread abuse of teachers online. One in five teachers has been subjected they say to derogatory comments from pupils and parents. So why do people go into teaching? Call us with your experience please, 03700 100 444. Shawna Reeds on the line in Nottingham. Shawna, you're a teacher, you're still on your holidays, what're you doin' now?

**2. SR:** am, I'm just takin' a break from marking GCSE eh, unit one and unit two, from music ehm, exam papers, I'm havin' a break from that to talk to you.

**3. WR:** And tell me what are the pressures and the pleasures of teaching?

**4. SR:** Um, the pressures are numerous, ehm we may seem a lot of change at the moment through Ofsted frameworks, eh for example I was Ofsteded not last May but the May before and I believe the framework's changed at least twice since then. Ehm, we have a lot of pressure too, insure sometimes unrealistic targets, there are some students ehm, we have to justify, under performance, sometimes of each and every single child that has been through our doors. And while (some feels valued) that might be ok, you know, we don't get asked why we didn't the mother or the parents or the carers bring the child to school at first place.

**5. WR:** Do you feel valued?

**6. SR:** Ehm, sometimes. Not all the time. I certainly don't always feel valued by students, ehm, some students are fantastic you know, they're very grateful for everything what we do, ehm, tomorrow I'm going into school, it is my holiday but I'm going in tomorrow to work with some A level students, so they're prepared for their exam and they will be grateful. Ehm, stuff are also very grateful for the extra mile that we go. But I don't necessarily feel valued by ehm, I have to say, Mr. Gove.

**7. WR:** Why not?

**8. SR:** We're under attack, we're under attack a lot ehm, in terms of, ehm for example glorifying our holiday time, ehm, and making that seem like it's a massive pay off for what is a very difficult job, ehm holidays, yes may appear to be ehm, long, for example

the six week holiday, but I wouldn't get all of that, most of that time I will spend at marking and planning for the year overhead. And I view it more as a non-contact time rather than holiday time.

**9. WR:** How many years have you been teaching Shawna?

**10. SR:** I started teaching, ehm I was a (practical) teacher first, when I left music college, that would have been... uf, to 1998 something like that, then I joined the army for little while, eh and I've been teaching in classroom since 2010.

**11. WR:** Music.

**12. SR:** Music ( ) I'm a head of performing arts, uhm, drama's in my remit too but I'm a classroom music TGF.

**13. WR:** Shawna what would you say to ehm, the government who say that the teachers've been given more freedom than ever that the job has never been more popular, there have never been more teachers in the classroom, it's never attracted more top level graduates than it does now?

**14. SR:** On one hand you could agree and say, you know, there's a lot of things that make teaching attractive, but don't get me wrong, I find my job incredibly rewarding, I don't moan about my job. Yes it's difficult, but I don't moan about it because I enjoy it. What I would say is that there's not enough acknowledgement to what we go through on a day to day basis, there's not enough publicity to the general public who maybe don't have a spouse who is a

teacher or don't have a children at school at the moment or don't have a child who's a teacher and are not entirely aware of what we go through on a day to day basis.

**15. WR:** Shawna thank you very much for that. If you'd like to take a part in this conversation ring us now. 03700 100 444.03700 100 444. Tony Patience on the line, he is in Kent. [Tony], hi, you're a retired teacher going to give us a little bit overview, are things better now than they used to be?

**16. TP:** [mornin']

**17. TP:** Eeh, no. eeh

**18. WR:** In what way not?

**19. TP:** Well I'd, I did, thirty four years in London comprehensives followed by ehm, four and a half years in a private sector, and I do the occasional supply now and then but'am it's over management. Ehm, when, when I started in the early 1970' school had uhm 1300 pupils they had management team four. Now ehm, the same number of pupils and the management team is nine. And there's so many dictates and everything coming from central government, that, ehm the management expend to cope with the bureaucracy. And the lot of these managers are actually are very good classroom teacher who do very little teaching because they're stuck In papers and setting targets and so on all the time, and it's really sad.



**20. WR:** It's a persuasive argument to once sense, isn't it? But then when, ehm, you had for example Wales abandoning testing which teachers didn't like because they said it was a lot of paper shuffling and it was unnecessary standards there fell. I mean none of us like to be managed do we? None of us like to...

**21. TP:** Aaah, excuse me, if I go back to... I used to test regularly in the course of my teaching and you know when I got to the end of the section of work I used to get the pupils a, a test, long before national curriculum anything like that, and I think most good teachers did. But ehm, it's the amount of record keeping and everything now that some of us mind this, I mean my, my daughter in law she's an infant school, sorry, reception school class teacher, and ehm, she... she was up before the head the other day, who told her that she wasn't writing adequate comments, ehm, at the bottom of the books when she checked her students or pupils books. And she said, I do for the ones who can read, and he replied yes but all Ofsted Inspectors can read. Now, she's just break down with trust. And while she having to- sort of do unnecessary stuff just for the sake of an inspector might actually look at something.

**22. WR:** We're still there Tony because we're having an inspector on the line Peter in Essex. Peter I know you're still teaching now even though you're 68 but you used to be an Ofsted inspector.

- 23. WR:** D'you [recognize] the picture that we've just heard from Tony Patience. A breakdown in trust over inspection. Too much paperwork.
- 24. PH:** [Yeah]
- 25. PH:** I do, though I have to say I was very lucky because I think all the teams I worked for when I worked for Ofsted were excellent. And we tended to have very good experiences in schools. But I quite accept that it isn't the experience that every school has.
- 26. WR:** And how do teachers react to you in the classroom, how did they when you were inspecting?
- 27. PH:** Well I think that since I worked with, we always make sure that we got into the school very early and the first thing we did was try to meet all the teachers, and to reassure them that we were basically there, to help them to do a better job and we were looking for all the good things as well as any possible weaknesses.
- 28. TP:** could, could I just come in there please?
- 29. WR:** Yeah, do!
- 30. TP:** Ehm, because, this is actually about the head saying it, not an inspector. They have to fear of everything not being in place, from the inspection. And, the (moral) target is another thing being looked at, the more records have to be produced to justify the new statement the school makes, and the heads, you know, they

are worried of the inspection because of the writings and how it's publicised, and they are covering their own backs and, as they see it, doing everything they can. And it's all piled on the teachers at the bottom who do the most of the teaching. And that's why, you know twenty-five percent of new teachers leave within five years and if that isn't a cause for concern, I don't know what is?

**31. WR:** [Peter, d'you want to reply on that? Then, then we must leave there are lot of people, thanks Tony,] a lot of people waiting to come on. What're you saying to that Peter?

**32. TP:** [...and, you know... that should be addressed.]

**33. PH:** Well, I think it is up to the Ofsted team to make sure that they do professional job. Eh, I was a head for twenty-one years and part of the time while I was an Ofsted inspector, and did I see Ofsted inspection as an opportunity to improve my own school, and my experiences before Ofsted, I think we did have some very poor teachers who got away with poor performance, I don't think that's true anymore, because Ofsted doesn't allow it. [On the other hand] I think we had some extremely creative teachers who are not comfortable with being looked at by Ofsted and I think ( ) with some of those. So I think there are advantages and disadvantages.

**34. WR:** [Peter Halliday]

**35. WR:** Peter Halliday thank you very much for that. Now as I mentioned delegates at the NUT conference at Brighton have voted to

continue with the series of strikes. The BBC's education correspondent is Gillian Hargreaves, she's been there for a last few days. Gillian why have those teachers belonging to the NUT (were) those delegates, voted to strike at this conference again?

**36. GH:** The heart of this dispute are changes to teacher's pensions and pay. Teachers, like a lot of public sector workers under the private sector workers, are being asked to work longer, younger teachers in particular work longer, and contribute more to the pension part. The other thing that they don't like that the government has introduced is a stronger performance related pay element to their pay deal, uhm, that was introduced in September and will start to fee through into teachers' salaries uh, in the summer. So these two things have already been implemented, and the government says they're not gonna bite down on the fundamental changes, talks are going on at the moment about how tey're being implemented, how they're being introduced into the classroom. And the NUT says uh, the government will not meet them and compromise on the implementations, so that's why it's voted for a walk out on the week, beginning the 23<sup>rd</sup> of June. They have said that they don't want to disrupt the exam cycle and disrupt students' exams, but by our calculation, there are at least a handful of GCSCs and possibly one science A level paper, to be said, that week, at the beginning of the week, so I think if what they say they stand by, then the strike action would perhaps be towards the end of the week.



<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b016ld51>

BBC Radio 4

How Will We Pay for Adult Social Care

The participants of this debate are:

- JW: Julian Worricker – the host
- EB: Elisabeth Bolton
- DS: David Scott
- VR: Vicky Raphael
- CA: Carolyn Atkinson
- SD: Stephen Dorrell

1. JW: Hello, good afternoon. Today your chance to shape future policy on adult social care in England. The Commons Health Select Committee is in the middle of an inquiry into this key policy area, following the publication of the Dilnot Report in the summer. It's taken written evidence, now it's considering oral evidence, all with a view to influencing the contents of a government white paper which will be published next spring. Today, the chairman of the Health Select Committee Stephen Dorrell is here, if you speak to him today, we've been told by a spokesperson for his committee, that you can directly contribute to his inquiry on the record, and have a direct influence on the course of the inquiry. Early oral evidence, we're told, often informs questioning at later sessions. So get in touch with your current experiences of adult social care. How do you find the system now? What sort of care

do you or does your loved one need? How are you funding it? As the programme unfolds we'll hopefully build up a picture of care provision in different parts of England but we'd also like to hear from other parts of the UK as experiences there can clearly inform the debate.

03700 100 444 is the phone number, a call will cost you the same as dialling an 01 or an 02 number, you can e-mail via [bbc.co.uk/radio4/youandyours](mailto:bbc.co.uk/radio4/youandyours) or you can text to 84844 and if you do that you'll be charged your standard message rate and we may call you back on that number. Before we hear from Mr Dorrell I'm going to take a couple of calls just to sort of set the tone for some of the concerns that you're wanting to air over the next hour, Elisabeth Bolton is in London, Elisabeth good afternoon.

2. EB: Hello.

3. JW: What's your position here?

4. EB: Well my mother had dementia and in 1999 this necessitated her move to a nursing home where she was well cared for until she died four years later. I had to sell her bungalow to fund the fees, and if I can make a small point I was able to sell it but I don't think people in the same position as me now find it that easy to sell houses quickly. And I was able to invest and get a rate of interest which now of course, you're getting zilch. But one of my gripes is the very low level of assets at which people in England have to pay for all their own care. When my mother was alive I

think it was about £17,000, now it's about £23,000. And I compare that with the sort of fees that Tony Blair charges for one of his speeches. Would he get out of bed for £23,000? I don't think so. And so politicians who are making the decisions that affect us are living in a totally different world, £23,000 total assets is not a great deal. From what I've read of what Dilnot is proposing, I think he says that you wouldn't be stuffed for more than £36,000 altogether. So I think he recognises this particular grievance.

5. JW: Well his recommendation on that was that the means tested threshold above which people are liable for their full care costs should be increased from £23,250, the figure you refer to, to £100,000.

6. EB: Yes and that seems to me a step in the right direction. So that is one thing. Another point which angered me is that you are paying these fees yourself out of net income. In some circumstances, particularly if you're in some freelance professions, you can set your expenses against your income but you can't set the cost of getting your bottom wiped against tax. Before I sold my mother's bungalow her income did not reach that cut off point at which you start to lose the age related higher personal tax allowance. And when I sold the bungalow and invested the proceeds yes it pushed it above that limit. So she lost that allowance. Her effective tax rate soared. And if you're having to spend every halfpenny of



your income or even dig into your capital to pay for your care  
your effective tax rate is about 100% which is very high indeed.

7. JW: Elisabeth thank you very much for kicking us off. I want to take two more calls before I bring in Stephen Dorrell and a brief conversation as well with our reporter Carolyn Atkinson who of course specialises in this area. David Scott in Kent. David, good afternoon.

8. DS: Good afternoon.

9. JW: Your experience here.

10. DS: Yes my mother's similar situation that she and her late husband sold her house a number of years ago. They'd saved all their life, they'd worked all their lives, and now faces, my mother faces care costs of around £36,000 a year. And that's rapidly going through her money, she'll run off below the £23,000 in just a few months' time, taking her from 100% dependence to 100% dependent on the state, there should be some form of graduation so that she can actually support as she goes this. And we're also left in the situation that we really do not know what the government or local authority will actually support when she gets below the £23,000 so we've had to set up various things now, not knowing what will happen in a few months' time and there seems to be no way of actually getting people to commit until she's below that level.

11. JW: So there's two aspects to this really: There's partly the funding issue but also this business of not knowing enough about future care provision from those who are providing it.
12. DS: And also a disposable income, at the moment she has all the normal living costs of running the house and her neighbours, some of her neighbours for instance have always lived on state benefits etc., and they have much higher disposable income, in effect, than my mother has which just doesn't seem to be fair.
13. JW: David, thank you and one more before we talk to Stephen Dorrell. Vicky Raphael in Cambridge. Vicky, good afternoon.
14. VR: Good afternoon.
15. JW: Your point here.
16. VR: I'm a family carer of a young man with learning disabilities, very severe learning disabilities so I've been a lifelong family carer for the last 25 years and I'm now 60. And I find myself in the situation where uhm, I totally agree with the Dilnot Report which says that at this point in time we're not looking forward with enough clarity and planning with enough clarity, and that actually we're starting from a deficit situation where there isn't enough money in the pot. Uhm, my son needs total care, 24 hour care, so he needs people with him the whole time, he has very complex epilepsy and needs support in every aspect of his life, so I'm talking about a high level of care. But since April 1<sup>st</sup> uhm, a cap to my budget has meant that I'm now providing more care. As a

person who probably should be retiring and I'm now uhm, supporting my son for 114 hours minimum a week, day and night. I think this is unsustainable. Now if you put this in the context of many many other family carers, coz I'm one of many. And a large number of people with complex needs live at home with their families, so this impacts upon the health and social care of the whole family. So looking forward we've got issues of families who've got older people who are caring for younger people with learning disabilities, who themselves are becoming part of the social care scene. It seems to me that the word time bomb is probably a useful descriptor of the situation people are in.

17. JW: And just to clarify your situation because you talked about a cut in your budget, explain where that cut has come from, what's driven that?

18. VR: This is to do with uhm, more charges for services up front, this is to do with eligibility criteria which is supposed to not have changed which are being used to sort of manipulate people's situations.

19. JW: And just to clarify that aspect of this because this is quite a confusing area isn't it? There are four different eligibility criteria in terms of need.

20. VR: Yes low, moderate, substantial and critical.

21. JW: Indeed and each local authority will interpret those four in a slightly different way.

22. VR: They will and a problem that impacts on that is the fact that community care law, which is what this is all about, is much more hard to challenge these days because of the changes to legal aid, it's very difficult for vulnerable people to get access to advocacy and legal support to challenge decisions of which I think there will be many challenges.

23. JW: Thank you very much for calling Vicky. 03700 100 444, the phone number. I mentioned that Carolyn Atkinson is in our phone-in room hearing and reading more of your comments throughout the programme but she is our reporter who specialises in this particular area so perhaps Carolyn a brief word from you as to how we got to this point and also the Dilnot Commission, about which we have heard something already, a little explainer on that too.

24. CA: Yeah, well one of the first things the coalition government did was to appoint an independent commission to look at the funding of adult social care in England. It was headed up by the economist Andrew Dilnot and in July of this year it published the Dilnot Report and that's what is the key thing and that's going to go forward. Now in terms of what social care is - social care is the care that's given to people who can't look after themselves, it's things like getting up, it's getting washed, dressed, making meals, getting out and about. Many people get quite a big shock because they think that social care is free, like NHS healthcare, but it's not. Social care is means tested and a council can assess people in

terms of their need - and we've just been hearing there those four levels of need - and then separately in terms of their finances. And it could well be that someone who's assessed as needing care but then they fail the means test and they don't qualify, they're then on their own and they're often known as self-funders but in fact in reality many people - many of those self-funders - don't or can't self-fund and then they go without care altogether.

25. JW: So the Dilnot Commission specifically Carolyn what's it recommending?

26. CA: Well they are talking about a cap on what an individual should pay. They think that should be somewhere between £25 and £50,000 over a lifetime and they basically have plumped for the figure of £35,000. And they say that is what you should pay over a lifetime and then that it is, the government picks up the bill after that. The commission also thinks that anyone who needs care before they're 18 shouldn't have to pay anything throughout their lives, they've got no way of sort of gathering the money and the finances to do that. And equally people who need care before they're 40 they also think that they should not need to pay anything. So the government would pick up the bill after people who can afford it have paid the first £35,000 and that bill would be about £1.7 billion a year, that's the tricky bit, that's what everyone's chewing over at the moment. The report also recommends having national eligibility criteria instead of varying by councils. And it also wants a system of portability, so if you're

living in one part of the country and you want to move to another instead of starting all over from scratch when you need a care package then you can actually just take what you've got and go with it. And finally the other key recommendation is that the means tested threshold, which was mentioned earlier by one of the callers, of £23,000 should increase to £100,000.

27. JW: We can hear that it's a busy phone-in room behind you. This is all about England at this point but what's the situation in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland?

28. CA: Yeah this is about England but basically social care legislation generally applies to England and Wales, Wales is currently very similar to England, personal care there is means tested and Wales just published a 10 year vision for social care earlier this year and it looks at, amongst other things, rather like Dilnot, ending the postcode lottery. In Northern Ireland things are little different, the health and social care services are regionally integrated, which we don't have in England at the moment, but a recent report there warns the current system of free non-means tested home care is pretty impossible to sustain unless funding increases. And Scotland, we hear a lot about free personal care at home, we always get e-mails from people saying it isn't the case and that there is rationing and that is the case. And also what constitutes personal care is different from England, there's widespread criticism of this system at the moment though saying it's unsustainable.

29. JW: Carolyn, thank you. 03700 100 444 the phone number. E-mails via the Radio 4 website. Stephen Dorrell welcome.
30. SD: Thank you very much.
31. JW: Thank you for coming in. I was reading a quote from you: There are few more important issues in health and social care policy than how we pay for adult social care. So this is one of the most important issues facing the coalition government isn't it?
32. SD: That's exactly right. It's one of the issues that successive governments over a long period have recognised is key to the delivery of high quality services for adults and in particular elderly people. Successive governments have frankly refused the fence. I don't think it's any longer sustainable to refuse the fence, I'm delighted the coalition set up the Dilnot Commission. We've got a set of recommendations, we now need to work out precisely what we do about this because as your callers are identifying problems which are well known and now need to be solved.