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Airing Indigenous Eye Health Solutions on the Radio: Enlightening the Public, or Letting Sleeping Dogs Lie?

ABSTRACT

This paper is concerned with news interviews on radio as systems of power. Excerpts from a radio interview between a well-known radio interviewer and an eminent professor of ophthalmology, active in the field of Indigenous eye health, are subjected to Conversation Analytic methodology, to show the consequentiality of the interview for informing public opinion. The defining features of such interviews give the interviewer insurmountable advantages in the power stakes played out in them, in producing an agenda that may not accord with that brought to the table by the interviewee. In the interview discussed in this article, the pressure exerted on the interviewee by the characteristic features of the system of interaction recognizable as ‘news interview,’ presented the interviewee with a great and complex challenge as he collaborated with that pressure, while at the same time, resisting the foregrounding of the interviewer’s agenda, which differed significantly from his own. Examination of the details of the interaction, and how they were managed in relation to the characteristics of this genre of talk, reveals the extent of the interviewee’s struggle to tell the story he wanted to tell. That story concerned the possibilities for providing real solutions to Indigenous eye health problems. Nevertheless, the power of his statements was undermined in the process of orientation to institutional requirements of the task at hand. The consequence of the battle enjoined in this interview was that the discourse of impotence in this area of Indigenous health remained intact.
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AIRING INDIGENOUS EYE HEALTH SOLUTIONS ON THE RADIO: ENLIGHTENING THE PUBLIC, OR LETTING SLEEPING DOGS LIE?

BACKGROUND

This article is concerned with the power of an interactive news interview on ABC Radio National in perpetuating the cultural myth of the intractability of problems with Indigenous Australian health and well-being. This deeply entrenched Australian myth was typified by a news release on 17 June 2011, which stated that more than $3 billion had been spent on Indigenous health in 2008-2009, with no improvement in the so-called ‘health gap.’ As the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare hastened to report, ‘For every dollar that was spent on a non-Indigenous person in the Northern Territory, $3.50 was spent on an Aboriginal person.’ The implication of such news releases is that if an enormous amount of money is spent by government agencies, we should see an improvement, and if not, the problem is insoluble. Furthermore, they imply that mainstream Australians do not share responsibility for failure to reach a solution.

Academic research supports the claim that there is a long-standing journalistic tradition in Australia of portraying Indigenous Australians as a problem for the mainstream, as in a critical state as regards health and well-being, framing those problems as intractable, and formulating proposed solutions exclusively in terms of government intervention. A recent project, for example, supported by an Australian Research Council Discovery grant, interrogated portrayal of Indigenous health policy in three major Australian newspapers, using news framing theory and Critical Discourse Analysis. Similarly, a discourse and journalistic frame analysis approach has been taken in recent Canadian scholarship to interrogate portrayal of Canadian aboriginals. Textual analysis of headlines and excerpts from major Canadian newspapers concerning child welfare and land rights has yielded findings that concur with those in Australian scholarship, in that dominant interests continue to be protected, and aboriginals are framed as a threat to those interests. In both countries, old stereotypes from colonial times have been maintained, and hegemonies preserved, by virtue of a variety of framing techniques.

However, the power of interactive news radio talk itself in shaping public discourse has not been extensively studied in the same way as print or television media. Broadcast news has been the subject of considerable research in the United States and the United Kingdom using Conversation Analysis, showing how the content of news interviews is inevitably shaped by the spoken interaction itself. Listening audiences have been found to orient more to the agenda struggle being played out, than to the news content. Research also confirms the fact that the interactive news interview has become recognized abroad as a well-honed and highly institutionalized form of broadcast journalism, considered to be ‘a finished news product in its own right.’ Despite these findings, news interviews remain under-researched in Australia to date. A notable exception is the work of Johanna Rendle-Short, who has used Conversation Analysis methodology to analyze spoken interactions between well-known radio journalists and politicians in Australia. However, interactive news interviews are the medium of choice for news delivery on the ABC, dubbed by media journalist Tim Dick ‘a network charged with

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covering big ideas,’ and ‘the home of brainy listening.’ Media researcher and journalist Margaret Simons has found that Radio National Breakfast, a morning show characterized by short, interactive news presentations, is the ‘front-runner by a substantial margin’ of ABC radio programmes. While the proportion of the Australian listening audience tuning in to Radio National is only 2.4 percent, the significance of this small group is recognized by ABC management, who backed down in the face of outrage expressed in 2008 when programme changes were proposed to attract younger listeners. No such outrage has been expressed in 2012 since changes were made, however, and not surprisingly, Radio National Breakfast, ‘required listening for the political set’ has been extended by half an hour.

The above profile of the Radio National Breakfast show and its listeners does not attempt to claim certainty about the demographics of listeners, as these are vague at best. Nevertheless, such comments as the above from prominent journalists, and strategic programming choices by the ABC management, do infer the commonly held understanding that Radio National Breakfast listeners are mainstream, educated Australians. However, given the theoretical and methodological direction from which the data are approached in this study, discussed forthwith, the aim of this paper is not to comment upon attitudes or beliefs in the minds of listeners. Rather, it interrogates the contribution of interactive talk on air to a common public discourse of intractability concerning Indigenous affairs in the same way as existing research into print media and television images shows how those media sustain that discourse. However, whereas those kinds of data are approached from a discourse analytical and journalistic frame analytical direction, interactive talk can be examined in detail using Conversation Analysis.

**THE STUDY**

The case under scrutiny in this article is a news interview between a broadcast journalist and a medical expert. The data presented in this paper are taken from a 6 minute 51 second news interview aired on 27 May 2011. The interviewer was Fran Kelly, and the interviewee was Professor Hugh Taylor, director of the Indigenous Eye Health Unit of the School of Population Health at the University of Melbourne. The news item being presented was the release of two new reports, one, a detailed survey of the incidence, distribution and causes of visual loss in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and the other, a history of government Indigenous eye health policies from 1980-2010, from which recommendations for future policy had been distilled in preparation for a forthcoming report expanding on those indications. The question is whether this interview, a typical example of spoken interaction on the radio as a medium for news dissemination, reproduced the discourse of intractability in Indigenous health matters to the same extent as has been shown with respect to print media, and if so, how it was done.

A corpus of interviews from the ABC is being collected at the time of writing, in order to address the lack of research into interactive news interviews generally, and particularly in order to compare their discursive power with that of print media, as claimed by the researchers previously mentioned. In the meantime, this interview serves as a specimen of a genre of talk recognizable as ‘news interview.’

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11 Dick, *Revamp for Radio National to lure younger listeners*.


14 Hugh Taylor et al., *Projected needs for eye care services for Indigenous Australians* (Melbourne: Indigenous eye Health Unit, Melbourne School of Population Health, the University of Melbourne, 2011).


THEORY AND METHOD

The over-arching theoretical platform adopted in this study is Foucauldian, in that it is concerned with power relations, including ways of using language. However, as Fairclough and Wodak point out, much discourse analysis done from this perspective remains abstract, with little 'close analysis of particular texts.' For this reason, the approach used here employs Conversation Analysis (CA), which not only relies upon analysis of the details of spoken interaction as evidence, but also takes into account the power of various genres of institutional talk, including such episodes of spoken interaction as news interviews. In this regard, it could be argued that CA research into institutional talk overlaps with the 'critical' of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in that it necessarily engages with wider social structures. In this instance, the aim is to contribute to an explanation of a discourse that is particularly important for Australians, and which will be further mediated, becoming part of the broader political discourse. This, however, is as far as the overlap may be taken, because CA methodology is quite distinctive, as will be shown.

In line with the Foucauldian tradition, a CA approach is decidedly post-positivistic. By means of orienting to the characteristic structural features of radio interviews, the focal participants design their interaction in order to achieve an institutional task. They are organizing their talk 'to display and realize its institutional character over its course, and doing so recurrently and pervasively.' As Clayman and Heritage have it, 'it is through the specialized adaptation of conversational practices that a course of interaction betrays its 'institutional character,' and that social institutions are ultimately talked into being.' At the same time, the contribution of Bakhtin's formulation of the idea of genre, which has influenced CDA thinking concerning the normative properties of available social genres upon texts, must be acknowledged. CA, however, forefronts the spoken interaction as displaying orientation to the normative properties of genre, and in the case of news interviews, for example, the resultant interactional structures must shape the 'content and appearance of news messages.' So the interview is not understood primarily in terms of themes expressed, but in terms of the unfolding interactional 'game' being played by the interviewer and the interviewee.

In order to make such claims available for interrogation, evidence is sought in the transcript of a publicly available recording of the spoken interaction, so that CA can be considered a 'bottom-up' approach, rather than 'top-down.' For the present study, for example, the transcription convention originally developed by Gail Jefferson, a version of which is supplied, is used to transfer these recorded phenomena to the page. This transcription convention makes available for analysis non-lexical details of talk such as timing and speed, volume and pitch, emphasis and breath management, all of which are crucial in the organization of spoken interaction. For example, the interviewee in the following excerpt is explaining the reason for failure to solve the Indigenous eye health problem:

40. IE: ... so .hh † one of the lessons is we need to
41. have some <c(h)ontinuity in (.) oversight> 'n monitoring
42. what’s happening.

The interviewee (IE) has inserted a small breath into the word 'continuity', denoted by the small 'h', and paused before delivering the word 'oversight.' The phrase is also stretched out over time, denoted by the arrows.

18 Ibid.
22 Clayman and Heritage, The news interview: Journalists, 261.
23 Ibid., 262.
26 See Appendix.
Although it is risky to interpret a singular example such as this, since sequential development is important in CA, this way of managing the talk, at this early stage in the interview, looks like ‘doing emphasis.’ It looks like a strategic move in setting up the terms of an agenda struggle, which, in fact does ensue. This interpretation is strengthened by the fact that this utterance completes a long turn in which IE began by first acknowledging the truth of the dire situation summarized by the interviewer in her introduction, before supplying his own agenda item. The interviewer (IR) begins her response by repeating the exact words with which he expresses his claim, thus:

43.  IR: the ↑continuity in oversight, hh what about resourcing.=
44.  because I ↑think th- the general community there’s bi- (.)
45.  very broad support for funding, hh >to address this issue

While the phrase ‘continuity in oversight’ is lexically and semantically identical to IE’s previous utterance of those words, hers differs intonationally. First, she does not emphasize the phrase with an inserted breath in ‘continuity,’ nor a pause before ‘oversight,’ nor stretched out timing. Furthermore, the phrase is now delivered with a slightly upward intonation denoted by the comma. Used here, this intonation lends a sense of continuing, of an unresolved idea, or possibly an assessment of doubtful significance. The abrupt change of subject to ‘resourcing’ lends weight to this interpretation. This example shows how these phenomena are made available for analysis, and in this case, the inference that IR is challenging IE to defend his stated position by minimizing the importance of his statement can be proposed.

While Harvey Sacks, the progenitor of CA in the 1960s, proposed that ordinary conversation involved a complex organizational system of turn-taking, subsequent research after his death in 1975 has shown how organizational features identified by him are modified by interlocutors to reproduce institutional context.

Rather than regarding institutions as ontological entities, taking a CA approach means regarding interlocutors as orienting to known-in-common, institutional norms, and consequently, the ways in which they recreate or alter institutional context as their talk progresses can be identified. In the example given above, the interviewer displays her orientation to the listening audience, to the relevance of the news interview context for them, and to the normative constraint of her professional obligation to challenge the interviewee to defend his position.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NEWS INTERVIEWS

So, what are the institutionally normative characteristics of news interviews? First, the talk in news interviews, like court-room and class-room talk, is produced for an overhearing audience, whose members may assess the moral character of the focal participants. Also, the procedures for producing them are ‘strongly constrained’ because they represent institutional solutions, in this case, for achieving broadcast journalism, and all three of these genres involve sanctions if the rules are broken. The rules, however, are not in a causal relationship with utterances made by the interlocutors, as they are demonstrably often broken.

Secondly, similar to radio journalists in the U. K. and the U. S., Radio National interviewers are obliged to present an unbiased reportage. In accordance with the ABC Act 1983, journalists are trained in Editorial Policies, the first of which constrains them to present a ‘wide range of perspectives.’ However, the ‘fairness’ requirement puts pressure on them to challenge interviewees with the opposite side of an argument or opinion, and this has encouraged a more adversarial style. Successful interviewers tend to be known for their own ‘take,’ which implicates the over-hearing audience, as popularity is invested by them. Whereas we expect interviewers to take an adversarial approach in interviewing politicians, regarding them as ‘fair game,’ in the case of non-politicians such as the health professional interviewed in the excerpts presented here, I suggest this can be problematical. It is reasonable to expect that the regard in which health professionals are held in the community would be qualitatively quite different from that in which politicians, in general, are held.

27 Note that according to CA transcription convention, punctuation marks do not have their usual grammatical function, but denote intonational phenomena.
29 Ibid., 96-97.
Thirdly, in achieving objectivity, and at the same time producing talk for the listening audience, news interviewers are constrained to maintain an impartial stance. A news interviewer should not respond personally, or challenge the interviewee on behalf of him or herself. Rather, authorship of an opinion expressed by an interviewer is typically attributed to a third party, or to the listening audience. An interviewer can also conflate his or her identity with the audience’s by referring to ‘we’ or ‘us,’ thus retaining a neutral, journalistic footing.\(^{33}\)

Fourthly, the constraint to maintain interviewer neutrality is also managed by interviewees. CA research shows overwhelmingly that interviewees collaborate in maintaining an interviewer’s neutral stance.

**FORMAT OF NEWS INTERVIEWS**

The known-in-advance format for this interplay of neutral and adversarial positions in a news interview is a series of question and answer turns. Interviewers are obliged to ask questions and interviewees are obliged to answer them. This generates the following three corollaries: First, only interviewers can open. This means that they introduce the news that the interviewees have brought. Secondly, interviewer questions have an agenda-setting power, which means that interviewees must negotiate a complex task in order to challenge or evade those questions.\(^{34}\) Thirdly, only interviewers have the right to close the interview.

**TURN DESIGN IN NEWS INTERVIEWS**

IR turns in interviews are composed of several units which, in ordinary talk, could stand alone as a turn. In ordinary talk, the completion of such a unit can be recognized semantically, syntactically, and intonationally by the other speaker as a relevant place to take a turn. CA research has shown overwhelmingly that the systemic pressure of ordinary talk predisposes the production of such single unit turns, and that speaker change is frequent.\(^{35}\) But in news interviews, the interviewer typically produces a series of such possible single units of talk, inserting information into them, then moving as quickly as possible to a recognizable final question. The inserted prefatory information is characteristically attributed to a third party, thus transforming it into ‘fact,’ as ‘an object issued on behalf of others,’ enabling the interviewer to maintain a neutral position. The interviewee can now attack that third-party attributed material as ‘fact,’ without jeopardizing the interviewer’s neutral stance.\(^{36}\)

Interviewees are obliged to answer the final question first, so they typically withhold responses until it is produced. However, an interviewer’s final question component is not expressed in a vacuum. It has inevitably been informed by what has gone before. So, in answering it, an interviewee must defend challenges that were made or inferred in the interviewer’s prefatory statements, a complex task.\(^{37}\) Only then can an interviewee reintroduce agenda items on his or her own behalf. I contend that this compounds his or her disadvantage, because the energy of the fight is generated by the defence to challenges, which must be addressed before a chance can be taken to bring back his or her own agenda item.

**CHARACTERISTIC INTERACTIONAL DEVICES IN NEWS INTERVIEWS**

News interviewers have at their disposal a characteristic agenda-setting tool, ‘formulation,’ used to summarize or simplify an interviewee’s prior turn, or the action so far. However, as Hutchby points out, interviewer formulations can constitute ‘the inferentially elaborative probe,’ and are ‘rarely entirely neutral.’\(^{38}\) Formulation gives an interviewer a powerful advantage in the agenda stakes, because it can further downgrade the import of an interviewee’s agenda statement, already in second place because of the organization of turn components.

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37 Ibid., 100.
38 Hutchby, Conversation Analysis and the Study of Broadcasting, 129.
Then, both can employ ‘rush-throughs.’ A speaker doing rush-through action noticeably speeds up, snatching a
breath after a possible transition point has been safely passed. Such action is often characterized by stumbles, or
emphasized and stretched syllables, followed by a drop in volume and pitch. Schegloff calls these ‘forms of
strategic maneuver in a competitive or agonistic undertaking,’ which may be both weapons and casualties in an
agenda fight. So, as well as flagging an agenda fight in progress, rush-throughs provide an elegant resource
for both participants in waging a battle in news interviews. In the absence of response tokens such as ‘OK,’
‘right,’ ‘really?’ used in ordinary talk to acknowledge, evaluate, challenge, and agree or disagree, rush-
throughs facilitate these same actions without implicating an interviewer personally. This means that rush-
throughs characteristically accompany both the interviewer’s insertion of prefatory information and inference
when designing an interview question, and the interviewee’s attempts to deal with challenges thrown out by it.

**DATA AND ANALYSIS**

*Excerpt 1: The agenda-setting power of an IR introduction*

The following excerpt from the studied interview comprises IR’s complete introductory turn. Because IR opens,
she can put her spin on the news IE has brought to the table.

1. IR: First though more than thirty years after people
2. like Fred Hollows brought it to our attention.
3. Indigenous eye health remains a critical health
4. issue in Australia. The blindness rates among
5. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders is (.) six times greater than amongst the non-Indigenous
6. population. still today two new reports are
7. released, outlining what should be done to
8. close that gap... the other documenting the history
9. ev (.) where, when, and how it all went wrong. Hugh
10. Taylor is the co-author of the two reports and he’s
11. in our Melbourne studios this morning. Professor
12. Taylor welcome to breakfast?

Here is some evidence of the spin. Lexical choices such as ‘critical’ in line 3, and ‘it all went wrong’ in line 10,
are powerfully loaded. Then, the stretched and emphasized phrases, ‘six times greater’ (lines 5-6), and ‘where,
when, and how’ (line 10), denoted by the small arrows, upgrade the framing of Indigenous health as in crisis. At
the outset, these variations in the smoothness of the talk could only be weapons, as IR has no need of defence at
this point. She has managed to put on the table an agenda of crisis and failure, which challenges IE to defend his
agenda, known-in-advance by IR.

**IE’s agenda**

However, the following collection of IE’s statements about causes and solutions in this interview shows that his
agenda is significantly different from IR’s. While his reports, and indeed his interview responses acknowledge
the critical status of Indigenous eye health, he has also brought to the table ‘good news’ as well, in the form of
‘lessons learned’ about solutions:

Lines 23-29: The ‘GOOD news’ is that we understand the causes of visual loss, we can actually do something
about it, we can close the gap ‘fairly straightforwardly’.
Lines 40-42: We need ‘continuity in oversight in monitoring what’s happening’
Lines 55-57: We need to improve ‘the patient journey or the pathway to care’
Lines 68-70: Services in cities are ‘not accessible or culturally safe for Aboriginal people’
Lines 84-86: ‘Ninety-four percent of vision loss is unnecessary, preventable and treatable’
Lines 90-91: ‘There’s some very easy things for us to fix up’
Lines 99-100: The number of medical practitioners needed is ‘trivial’
Lines 131-132: The needed increment is ‘small if you look at the big picture’

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39 Emanuel Schegloff, “Overlapping talk and the organization of turn-taking for conversation” *Language in
40 Ibid., 14.
The thrust of IE’s agenda is to minimize the importance of monetary solutions in favour of non-monetary aspects of implementation of patient care, and it is, over-all optimistic. In each case, however, the statements above are uttered at the end of a long IE turn which began with IE countering and addressing prefatory challenges thrown out by IR. Due to limitations of space, they cannot all be presented here, but the following example demonstrates conformity to this pattern.

Excerpt 2: The agenda-setting power of an IR question

The following excerpt demonstrates the power of an IR question turn in minimizing an item from the agenda IE has expressed in the statements above. In the first place, it occurs at the end of IE’s turn, which began by addressing IR’s question asking what were the chief causes of visual loss amongst Indigenous Australians. IR manages to trump IE’s claim, that there are some ‘easy things’ to be fixed, without breaching her requirement to remain neutral, and to uphold professional standards, thus:

88. IE: ....   .hh so that .hh forty percent ev ah ADults

89. ↑CAN’T SEE SMALL PRINT. becos >they don’t have the

90. right pair ‘v GLASSes.< ↑there’s some V’Ery. EAsy.

91. things fer us t’ fix up.

92. IR: W’ll THOse things. (.I mean- it’s- ”criminal that we

93. ↑HAVen’t ↓fixed them”= but< .hh c’n you give us a sense or

94. do <YOU ↓know> as someone who’s been working in this area

95. fer a <LOng time now> ’n you’re JUst publishing these reports

96. .hh in ↑terms of resources. .hh ↑what do we need.

97. = ↑because one finding y’ say is we ↑CAN fix this.

98. = ↑what do we need = how many .hh optometrists. = ↑how

99. many ophthalmologists. = ↑how*. how many treatments.

100. = ↑how many operations. =

In line 92, IR begins her turn with ‘well,’ a discourse marker found, in CA research, to be overwhelmingly implicative of disagreement.41 Her intonation, also, works as a formulation of what IE has just said, its inconclusive, continuing trajectory left hanging in preparation for an expression of collective guilt, on behalf of ‘we’ and ‘us’ in lines 92 and 93, uttered with lower pitch and volume. What is the work being done here? The answer becomes clearer if we consider that the discourse marker, ‘but’ in line 93 signals an alternative, and has been delivered via a rush-through action, accompanied by postponement of breath until after it has been uttered. This timing, and postponement of the breath until the possible transition point is safely passed, enables IR to hold the floor and prepare to deliver that alternative with gusto.

The next thing IR does, in Lines 93-95, is to recall IE’s identity as an expert before redirecting the focus of this interview. At this point, the conversation-analytic question begging to be asked is: Why that now? The series of quickly delivered questions that follow give us an idea of the work being done. The questions are prefaced by the word ‘resources,’ and they concern metric, managerial solutions, the implication being that these are the kinds of things experts are expected to be concerned with. It looks as though the familiar territory of monetary solutions is considered by IR to be more comfortable for the audience than examining why easy solutions such as providing the right pair of glasses have not been provided to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islands people who need them.

Excerpt 3: The IE response

IE is obliged however, to answer questions first, and to reintroduce his agenda second, and here is how he does it.

101. IE: = yep. w’ll that’s one of the things tht tht one

102. of the reports we’re (gh)ah (.I releasing today sets

103. out the TARgets we need for ↑each ↑health region =

104. for the number ev ah Abor’gn1 ↑n Torres Strait

Island people who need an eye exam, hh

the number of people who need to have cataract

surgery = the number of people who have diabetes 'n

treatment 'n so on. hh ↑over ↑all we need

ab- a* ↑TRivial number = only about hh ah eight

or so full time equiv 'lent ophthalmologists

caring for care ( ) an something like <sixty

or eighty> .hh full time equiv 'lent optometrists

would meet ↑ALL the needs across the country.

hh ↑but ( ) ↑putting it 'n another way. hh ah

looking at cataract blindness which is the

leading cause of blindness there's <↑TWElve TImes>

as much bi- cataract blindness in Abor'g'n'l

people as there is in mainstream. hh but we're

only doing <ONE SEVenth> the amount of surgery.

so there's a ↑huge mismatch there.

He also begins his turn with the disagreement-implicative discourse marker, ‘well,’ after stemming IR’s series of questions with his ‘yep.’ He supplies the wanted metric answers until the end of line 113, displaying signs of the struggle with glitches and disturbances, countering IR’s challenge with rush-through action of his own. He is quite explicit in downgrading the importance of that metric approach to solving the problems of eye health delivery in line 109, providing a definitive assessment of the quantitative list provided by IR with the utterance, ‘a trivial number,’ with extra volume and emphasis.

Finally, in line 114, having worked hard to fulfill the normative requirement to answer the question, and at the same time defend against inferences made by IR’s prefatory insertions, he can proceed to re-introduce his alternative agenda. He signals the change of direction, back to his own agenda, with another ‘but’ in line 114. He can attack energetically without threatening IR’s neutral stance, as IR’s biases are not her own, but have been uttered on behalf of ‘us,’ the listening audience. IE tries to foreground the disjuncture between mainstream and Indigenous health services and delivery, because for him, this is the hot topic. Nevertheless, his talk, in lines 114 to 120, like the information about not having the right pair of glasses, has been minimized in favour of the discussion of metric solutions, because that is where the energy of the fight can be read in terms of the nature of the interaction.

Excerpt 4: The agenda-setting power of an IR closing

The primacy of IR’s agenda in this interview is sealed by the fact that only IRs can close. Here, she puts crisis, dollars, and failure back on the table, as the last word:

139. IE: ... .hh ↑I think government
140. is very INterested, ( ) in having solutions that they c’n
141. implement. they KNOW the ↑problems, people ↑r Slick o’
142. problems .hh what we’re looking for is solutions.
143. IR: so ge’ ‘em sign off on the dotted line on those dollars
144. Hugh ↑thank- [you very much fer joining us]=
145. IE: [ha ha ha ] .hh ↑thank-you
146. very much Fran. [nice to talk to] you again.
147. IR: [an’ good luck. ] .hh Hugh Taylor.
148. >he’s co-author of the reports The Projected Needs
149. for Eye Care Services fer Indigenous Australians<
150. .hh >and A Critical History of Indigenous Eye Health
151. Policy-Making which basically is a history of< .hh
152. FAIlure. = >he’s Professor ‘v Ophthalmology and Australia’s
153. leading Indigenous eye health researcher at the University
154. of Melbourne. = ↑it’s TWELve past EIGHT on Breakfast.<
CONCLUDING REMARKS

As a typical specimen taken from the genre recognizable as ‘interactional news interviews,’ this one shows how the outcome was contingent upon the game played out by the focal participants. The output from news interviews is consequential, both for institutions for which news interviews are a popular product, and for the discourse facilitated by them. A crucial question arises here: If IR is understood by listeners, at some level, as acting as intermediary on behalf of listeners, how is her adversarial treatment of this subject consequential for them? Listeners are hearing broadcasts such as this in isolation from each other, raising the question of what assumptions, then, are being nurtured about the position of other mainstream Australians, as a collective, concerning the disjuncture between Indigenous and non-Indigenous health policies and practices. Perhaps this aspect of radio broadcasting is a crucial piece of the puzzle as to how such discourses are perpetuated, and how, in this case, such social problems can be talked into being as intractable. Real solutions brought to the table could not be fairly explored and explicated for the listeners because of the inherent properties of the genre of talk-in-interaction known as ‘news interviews,’ and therefore, were less likely to inform public discourse. Rather, the existing narrative of vast amounts of wasted money, and the associated implications of black blame and assuagement of white guilt, was reproduced, and social hegemonies contingent upon that were probably sustained.

APPENDIX


(0.5) The number in brackets indicates a time gap in tenths of a second.
(.) A dot enclosed in a bracket indicates a pause in the talk of less than two-tenths of a second.
= The ‘equals’ sign indicates ‘latching’ between utterances.
[ ] Square brackets between adjacent lines of concurrent speech indicate the onset and end of a spate of overlapping talk.
.hh A dot before an ‘h’ indicates speaker in-breath. The more h’s the longer the breath.
.hh An ‘h’ indicates an out-breath. The more h’s the longer the breath.
- A dash indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound.
: Colons indicate that the speaker has stretched the preceding sound or letter. The more colons, the greater the extent of the stretching.
! Exclamation marks are used to indicate an animated or emphatic tone.
( ) Empty parentheses indicate an unclear fragment on the tape.
(guess) The words within a single bracket indicate the transcriber’s best guess at an unclear utterance.
. A full stop indicates a stopping fall in tone. It does not necessarily indicate the end of a sentence.
, A comma indicates a ‘continuing’ intonation.
? A question mark indicates a rising inflection. It does not necessarily indicate a question.
* An asterisk indicates a ‘croaky’ pronunciation of the immediately following section.
↓↑ Pointed arrows indicate a marked falling or rising intonational shift.
Under Underlined fragments indicate speaker emphasis.
CAPITALS Words in capitals mark a section of speech noticeably louder than that surrounding it.
° ° Degree signs are used to indicate that the talk is noticeably quieter than the surrounding talk.
Thaght A ‘gh’ indicates that the word in which it is placed had a guttural pronunciation.
> < The talk between the signs is noticeably quicker than surrounding talk.
< > The talk between the signs is noticeably stretched over time.