

CHAPTER II

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE OBJECT OF THE STUDY

II. 1 Interview

Interview, as a kind of conversation, is probably as old as language itself. In its simplest form, it is typically manifested as an interrogative encounter between two participants.

This kind of encounter usually has asymmetry power of the participants. In most of the interview interaction, the interviewer is often more powerful than the interviewee. The examples of such kind of encounter are parents-child, adult-youth, teacher-pupil, employer-employee, etc.

But actually there are some exceptional cases where the power asymmetry may be reversed, as in the case of a journalist interviewing a successful politician, or a field worker interviewing an informant. In this study, the writer does not concern with the latter.

II. 2 Job Interview

Nowadays, in bureaucratic setting where the personnel selection procedures must be standardised, the job interview has become a major gate-keeping situation. In this interaction, several potential candidates compete for limited economic rewards through intense, face-to-face verbal interaction usually with unknown persons.

It has been a key situation where social inequality becomes a major problem where basic differences in class, access to power, knowledge, and specific discourse convention mediate the interaction between the participants.

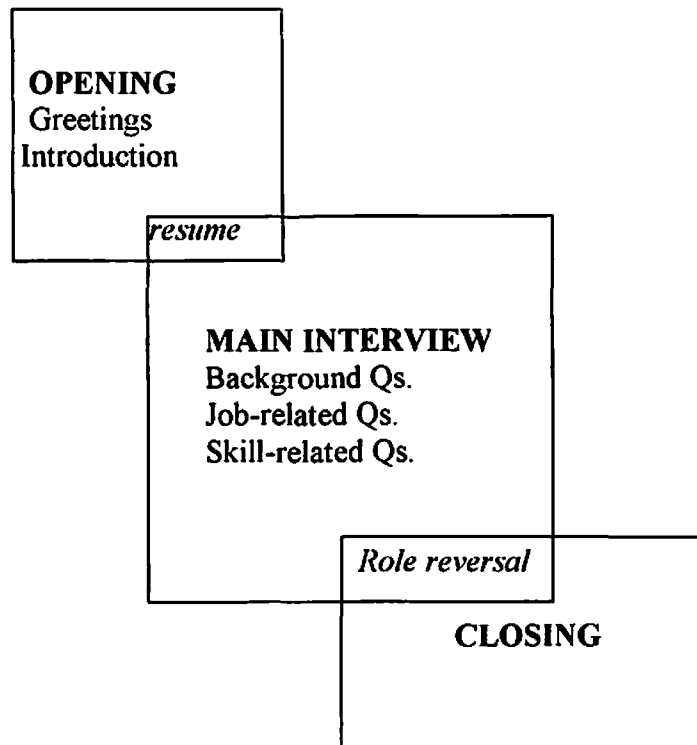
II.2.1 The Structure of Job Interview

Job interview differs from ordinary conversation. Structurally, the job interview is a formal speech event that normally arises out of scheduled appointment. In job interview, the results of the encounter will be used “to settle future decisions about an issue known prior to the commencement of talk” (Silverman 1973:39).

Thus, unlike ordinary conversation, which are not normally prepared by the speakers, the aim of the job interview is to settle practical outcomes. The interviewee wants the job and the interview selects the most suitable candidate. In this case, the participants do not concern their interaction as ordinary conversation.

Several other structural features that distinguish job interview from ordinary conversation are the use of some form of programs and some proceeding reports of the interview in directing the interaction. The interviewer in directing the interview has a form of program that is well arranged in order to direct the course of the interaction. However, the form of program is not rigidly used in the interaction as both parties – interviewer and interviewee – may improvise naturally the conversation.

The result of the interview usually is presented in the form of proceeding record to be reported to superior authority and used as the basic of the interviewee’s future decision.



SCHEME OF JOB INTERVIEW

(Akinnaso and Ajirotutu in Gumperz, 1982: 133)

However, the most important structural feature of the job interview is reflected in its fixed organisational and strict allocation of the rights and duties. Basically the interviewer has superiority over the interviewee. S/he controls both the organisational structures of the interview and the mechanics of the interaction. S/he has the privilege of starting it, of introducing new topics or changing topic lines (Covelli and Murray in Gumperz, 1980), and of terminating conversation. And the greatest weapon of the interviewer is that s/he has a legitimate right for asking question that elicits interviewee's answer to be evaluated.

The interviewee on the other hand is more powerless than the interviewer. Mostly the interviewee is confined to the role of responding to the interviewer's questions. S/he gives information about his or her background and experiences for evaluation. Unless with permission, the interviewee has no rights to ask question, except may be for clarification. The interview, in this case, has no obligation to answer question.

The power asymmetry between the interviewer and the interviewee, then, can be seen in the allocation of turns and the pattern of linguistics choice. The interviewer shows his/her power by doing these following things which could be disaster if done by the interviewee, those are:

1. Interrupting the speaker
2. Shifting the responsibility for answering a question to another party
3. Using the pronoun of power 'we' as opposed to the interviewee's 'I'.

This power asymmetry is enhanced by the role differential between the interviewer and the interviewee. In this case, in term of treating the kinds of information they give (Akinnaso and Ajirotutu, 1982).

II.2.2 Questions and Responses in Job Interview

Questions and answer used by interactans in ordinary conversation has certain functions. In general discourse task, they are used to secure, gain information, determine topic, and achieve communicative co-operation. Questions are among the most effective devices used by the participants in the local management and maintenance of conversational interaction.

They are used to secure, allocate, or exit a turn, as well as to open or close topics and whole conversations (Sacks et al., 1974; Sacks and Schegloff 1974;

Johnson 1980.,in Gumperz). Goody (1978) also states that questions not only involve asking for information, but also carry command function, signalling “message about relationships, about relative status, assertion of status and challenges to status”.

In job interview, the semantic-pragmatic implication and interpretative demands of questions vary with the levels of formality of the encounter, the level of difficulty increasing with the level of formality. Because of evaluative orientation, interview questions and the function they perform differ from those of ordinary conversation in several ways: (1) They are prerogative of the interviewer, (2) they constitute the focus of communicative activity, (3) they are intended to elicit responses that will be evaluated, and, perhaps most importantly, (4) they are mostly indirect, relying upon the interviewee’s to infer the type of answer wanted (Akinnaso and Ajirotutu in Gumperz, 1982).

Since interview’s questions are mostly indirect and since interviewers must ask question to seek any information that they do not have, the interviewee needs to properly relate responses to interview question. The interviewee’s ability to go beyond the surface, pick the relevant cues, infer the intended meaning and make an acceptable relationship between questions and responses are an important measure of his/her success.

II.2.3 Communicative Task in Job Interview

In Job interview, the use of certain communicative task occurs during interview interaction. Such tasks include narrating, explaining, justifying, arguing, etc. While those are universal discourse task, their performance is based on

systematic and culturally specific conventions. And within group of people, the use of such convention varies from one situation to another.

For example, personal narrative may be told to entertain, to advise, to inform, to seek praise, and other kinds of positive evaluation (Van Dijk in Gumperz, 1982:128). Besides, those functions of personal narratives depend on some factor in audience, context, and setting that lead to variation of communicative choice. Thus the different pattern of communicative choice would be used in narrating personal experience to friends in school, to police officer, or to parents.

In job interview, the form, content, and presentation of the personal narrative is determined by the goal orientation of interaction, by its formal structures, and by the power asymmetry between the participants.

The writer has selected the narrative task for illustration in this study heeding to its frequency of occurrence in his data. Besides, in the performance of such a task, the candidates (unconsciously) show much of their personality, job experience, and sociolinguistic background.

As described earlier, two of the major differences between a job interview and an ordinary conversation are in the fixed organisational structure and goal orientation. These structural differences give rise to differences of “conversational mode” in the two kinds of encounters.

From the four types of conversational modes (associational mode, problem solving mode, interrogation mode, and clarification of misunderstanding mode), the job interview is mostly govern by the problem solving mode.

In this mode, according to Robinson, “conversation is organised by around an exchange of information, whether facts, ideas, or experiences. The topic or theme of the conversation is narrowly defined and dominates verbalisation. Each contribution is expected to relate to the problem posed. Since the goal of the conversation is to resolve the problem, there will be a premium on truth value and plausibility” (Robinson in Gumperz, 1982: 129). Thus, the interviewee is forced, in the most part to use “problem solving mode” in answering the question as opposed to the interviewer’s use of a more powerful conversation mode: interrogation mode.

Those two kinds of modes are not used exclusively as there are some other modes that are used partly during the interview interaction. In this case, the use of “associational mode” for setting up interactive scene and the use of “clarification of misunderstanding mode” for determining why misunderstanding has arisen between participant, occur partly during interaction.

II.2.4 Types of Questions

According to Berko, Wolvin, and Curtis, there are five basic questions that can be useful to the interviewer in structuring the content of the interview. These kinds of interview questions can also be applied to the job interview. Those are:

- **The open Question** provides for an alternative of responses, giving the interviewee room to elaborate a response.
- **The Closed Question** narrows and structures the responses the interviewer will receive. It is useful if you need a direct, to-the point answer.

- **The Mirror Question** reflects the content of what the respondent has just said.

At times, particularly in counseling interviews, it may be useful to reflect on the emotion being communicated as well.

- **The Probe Question** is designed to get more specific, more detailed information or opinions from the interviewee. It is a good follow-up to open questions.

-**The Leading Question** literally leads the interviewee to a response. It is a manipulative form of communication that could make the interviewee say things or agree to things he or she really does not believe. Furthermore, the ramification of asking such question should be considered before using this.

CHAPTER III

DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS