

# **Questions and Answers in Chinese Political Press Conferences**

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**Xujia Du**

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## **Declaration**

To the best of my knowledge, this thesis represents my own original research unless otherwise acknowledged in the text.

Xujia Du  
October, 2011

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## **Abstract**

Since China's opening up in 1978, there has been increasing interaction between the Chinese government and the domestic and international media. Previous research has shown that journalists from developed countries take an adversarial role when questioning politicians in news interviews and press conferences while journalists from developing countries like China take a role that furthers the agenda of their governments. The literature has also demonstrated that evasiveness is observed in the answers of politicians from both developed and developing countries. Although much attention has been given to politician-media interaction in the western developed countries, there is a scarcity of research on political communication in the Chinese context and on cross-cultural differences in political communication between China and other countries. Using conversation analysis methodology and quantitative analysis, this thesis analyzed questions and answers from political press conferences in China in order to show 1) how adversarialness and evasiveness were encoded in journalists' questions and politicians' answers respectively; 2) whether there was a difference in adversarialness between journalists from different socio-political backgrounds, and 3) the relationship between adversarialness and evasiveness. The analysis revealed that journalists from developed countries displayed a higher level of adversarialness in their questions than Chinese journalist and that a higher level of journalistic adversarialness was more likely to result in a higher level of evasiveness in politicians' answers. While journalists resorted to various strategies to pose adversarial questions, politicians also employed different structural designs and techniques to mitigate their evasive answers.

# Table of Contents

<b>Chapter 1 Introduction</b> .....	1
1.0 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Background Information on CPPCs .....	2
1.1.1 The Distinction between Institutional and Mundane Talk.....	4
1.1.2 The Distinction between CPPCs and the US Presidential Press Conferences .....	8
1.2 Overview of Previous Studies.....	9
1.2.1 Journalistic Adversarialness in Different Countries .....	9
1.2.2 Politicians’ Evasiveness in Different Countries .....	12
1.3 The Research Questions.....	14
1.4 Methodology and Data.....	16
1.4.1 Data Collection and Transcription.....	16
1.4.2. Conversation Analysis (CA).....	18
1.4.3 Quantitative Analysis.....	23
1.5 Structure of the Thesis .....	24
<b>Chapter 2 Adversarial Questions in CPPCs</b> .....	26
2.0 Introduction.....	26
2.1 Basic Structures of Journalistic Questions in CPPCs .....	27
2.2 Strategies of Questioning in CPPCs .....	32
2.2.1 Agenda Setting.....	32
2.2.2 Presuppositions .....	34

2.2.3 Preference .....	37
2.2.4 Summary .....	39
2.3 Linguistic Realizations of Adversarial Questioning Strategies .....	40
2.3.1 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Question Prefaces .....	40
2.3.2 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Interrogatives .....	43
2.3.3 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Certain Lexicon.....	55
2.4 A Comparison of the Adversarialness of Questions from Journalists of Different backgrounds .....	57
2.4.1 Methodology .....	58
2.4.2 Results.....	64
2.4.3 Discussion.....	66
2.5 Chapter Summary .....	71
<b>Chapter 3 Politicians' Answers in CPPCs .....</b>	<b>73</b>
3.0 Introduction.....	73
3.1 The Range of Chinese Politicians' Replies.....	75
3.1.1 Minimal Answers.....	77
3.1.2 Elaborations .....	80
3.1.3 Implicit Answers.....	83
3.1.4 Non-replies.....	88
3.1.5 Summary .....	92
3.2 Distributions of Answers in CPPCs.....	93
3.2.1 The Frequency Distribution of Evasive/non-evasive Answers in CPPCs ..	94
3.2.2 The Difference between Answers to Different Groups of Journalists' Questions.....	96

3.2.3 Discussion .....	97
3.3 Interactional Structures of Different Types of Answers .....	101
3.3.1 The Structures of Non-evasive Answers.....	103
3.3.2 The Structures of Evasive Answers .....	108
3.3.3 Summary .....	118
3.4 Techniques for Evading Questions .....	119
3.4.1 Justifying Evasions .....	120
3.4.2 Making Political Points.....	127
3.4.3 Question Reformulation.....	131
3.4.4 Summary .....	133
3.5 Chapter Summary .....	134
<b>Chapter 4 Conclusion .....</b>	<b>136</b>
4.0 Introduction.....	136
4.1 Summary of Findings.....	137
4.2 Implications of the Current Study.....	141
4.3 Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research .....	143
<b>References.....</b>	<b>146</b>
<b>Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions .....</b>	<b>155</b>

# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.0 Introduction

With the rise of China as a global power in the past three decades, there have been persistent calls for reform in the political and media system both from inside and the outside world. In spite of the slow pace, the Chinese government has changed from one which released minimal information to its people and the outside world, to one that shows willingness to involve its people in the decision making process and to inform the outside world of what is happening in China. This change has manifested itself in the increasing interaction between government officials and the domestic and international media for the purpose of information exchange and dissemination.

One form of politician-media interaction is the political press conference. While less formal forms of interaction such as the political news interview is commonly used by the media in many western countries, in China, the unscripted political press conference is the most spontaneous encounter between the media and the politicians. Several scholars (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Semin and Fiedler, 1996) doing research on political communication have argued that the study of language in political contexts is not only important for the participants involved in political communication in terms of improving their own performance, but also for the general public to understand the phenomenon and its possible social consequences on the democratic process.

Situated within the context of Chinese political press conferences (henceforth CPPCs), this thesis analyzes how journalists from different backgrounds pose questions, and



how politicians respond to these questions from a linguistic perspective. It also sheds light on some of the differences between Chinese media members and politicians, and their respective western counterparts, in how to elicit information and how to disclose information in face-to-face interactions. The detailed analysis of question-answer sequences in CPPCs also provides insight into the recent cultural practices and socio-political situation in China.

### **1.1 Background Information on CPPCs**

Press conferences have been an important form of political communication where journalists seek information by posing questions to politicians and politicians disseminate information to the media through answering the questions. In China, both the local and national governments hold press conferences frequently for various communicative purposes.

The current study focuses on political press conferences held by the national government during the National People's Congress (NPC) and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) sessions, which take place in March every year. The two sessions have been important symbols of Chinese democracy. During these two sessions, important political, economic and social issues are brought up and discussed by representatives from different provinces so that relevant policies or regulations can be formulated to solve the existing problems. In order to keep the rest of the world informed of the progress of China's opening up, economic and social development, the government decided in 1983 to invite both domestic and foreign journalists to the press conferences held during the sessions of NPC and CPPCC. In

1988, the press conferences started to be broadcast live on television. They have become very popular and important forms of communication between the national government and both the domestic and international media since the late 1990s.

In a typical press conference held during the NPC and CPPCC sessions, over 500 domestic and international journalists are invited, as pictured in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. A Typical Chinese Political Press Conference**



Take the 2007 conference for example, 750 journalists were invited with 200 from the mainland, 200 from Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan, and 350 from other countries. These press conferences are all bilingual with an interpreter interpreting any information into English when the source language is Chinese, and into Chinese when the source language is English. The politicians and the journalists from the Chinese Mainland, Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan invariably use Mandarin Chinese, whereas journalists from other countries either use Mandarin Chinese or English to

raise questions. The press conferences normally last half an hour to two hours. The basic structure of these conferences is composed of four sequences including the welcome speech and brief introduction to the present government officials by a host politician (5 min), a few opening remarks by the government official (5-10 min), the interactional sequence where journalists ask questions, and government officials provide responses (70-100 min), and a very short closing sequence where the host politician extends a thank you to the government official (2 min).

### **1.1.1 The Distinction between Institutional and Mundane Talk**

According to Drew and Heritage (1992), institutional talk involves three basic elements and can be distinguished from mundane talk which refers to everyday conversation between family or friends in informal settings. First, in institutional talk, participants are tied to their institution-relevant identities in goal-oriented activities. For example, in CPPCs, politicians and journalists stick to their institutional roles for the purpose of information exchange. Second, there are special constraints on the contributions participants can make to the talk. In CPPCs, journalists are restricted to asking questions while politicians are restricted to answering questions. Moreover, institutional talk involves special inferential procedures that are particular to specific contexts. In CPPCs, the goal of information exchange, and the constraints on the contributions journalists and politicians are allowed to make, form the special procedure of CPPCs. Hutchby and Wooffitt (2008:140) have identified two basic types of institutions: formal types and non-formal types. The formal types of institutional settings are represented by courts of law (Atkinson and Drew, 1979), news interviews (Clayman, 1988, Heritage, 1985, Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991), job

interviews (Button, 1992), classroom teaching (McHoul, 1978), etc. The non-formal types include more loosely structured, but still task oriented, lay/professional encounters such as counseling sessions (Peräkylä, 1995), business meetings (Boden, 1994), service encounters in shops (Lamoreux, 1988/89), etc.

Drew and Heritage (1992:21) have also asserted that “a hard and fast distinction” cannot be made between institutional and everyday interaction, because the work of talk-in-interaction also permeates each particular institutional practice. Basic communication practices like turn-taking management are also found in different types of institutional talk. Numerous scholars have argued that institutional talk involves, to a different extent, the concentration of, and specialization and reductions in, the range of practices of particular procedures of talk-in-interaction (Drew and Heritage, 1992:26, Heritage and Atkinson, 1984:239-240, Hutchby and Woffitt, 2008:140). It might be hard to draw distinctions between the non-formal types of institutional talk and mundane interaction. However, as a highly institutionalized form of interaction, CPPCs show some distinct features that are not seen in everyday interaction.

Heritage and Greatbatch (1991) have pointed out that the institutional character of the interaction is embodied first and foremost in its turn-taking systems, which depart substantially from the way in which turn-taking is managed in mundane conversations. Mundane conversation is a speech exchange system in which turn size, order and content are not predetermined (Sacks et al., 1974). By contrast, in institutional interactions, the turn size, order or content is constrained by conventional

arrangements. CPPCs can be distinguished from mundane conversations in that the turn allocation, turn type, content and size in CPPCs are conventionally constrained.

In terms of turn allocation, the distribution of turns in mundane conversations is managed by conversational parties locally and thus the number of potential next speakers is maximized. In contrast, formal institutional interactions are based, to various degrees, on the pre-allocation of turns, which allows the order of the contributions to be planned, permitting equalization/hierarchization of the distribution of turns (Sacks et al., 1974). Levinson (1988) also asserts that restriction on the initiative to speak is a necessity in contexts where large numbers of people are co-present, most of whom are the non-addressed targets of the dialogue between primary protagonists. In CPPCs, turns are pre-allocated by a host politician. In each year's conference, it is found that journalists from the powerful countries are always given chances to raise questions, while journalists from other countries may never get a chance given the time limit and the large number of journalists present. This turn allocation system thus permits hierarchization of turn distribution.

There is also a salient difference in the types of turns that are allowed in mundane and institutional interactions. In mundane talk, conversational parties are not restricted to any particular type of contribution, whereas in institutional interactions, parties are usually restricted to one particular type of contribution (Drew and Heritage, 1992). For instance, in CPPCs, journalists are restricted to asking questions, and politicians to answering questions. If journalists want to make statements or comments on a particular issue, they need to incorporate these statements into their questions to show that they are merely asking questions.

Regarding turn content, there is no constraint on the topics mundane conversation participants should make contributions to (Drew and Heritage, 1992). The participants are even allowed to jump from one topic to another that is not related to the previous one. However in institutional talk, there is usually a central topic, to which participants are expected to make contributions. Deviation from the central topic is not appropriate. In CPPCs, both journalists and politicians are expected to focus on topics in relation to China's economic and social development, policy and planning, etc. Asking a personal question such as "what is your favorite food?" is considered inappropriate.

Moreover, turn size in mundane conversations differs from that in institutional talk. Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson (1974:730) notice increasing internal complexity within single sentence units is the central mode for mundane conversations. Institutional talk, where turns are pre-allocated, are characterized by the multiplication of sentence units within a turn. In CPPCs, journalists usually ask multiple questions in a turn while politicians usually give long elaborate answers, some of which last up to 10 minutes. My data shows that journalists' turns were routinely restricted to two questions, because the host politicians cut in and made requests to ensure that journalists comply with the "two questions" rule once some journalists were found not to. However, there is no restriction on the length of the politicians' turns.

The differences in turn taking systems are fundamental to distinguishing institutional interaction from mundane conversations (Heritage and Greatbatch, 1991, Sacks et al., 1974). However, as a highly institutionalized form of interaction, CPPCs also have

very different interactional features from other similar forms of institutional talk, as shown in the following section.

### **1.1.2 The Distinction between CPPCs and the US Presidential Press Conferences**

Presidential press conferences in the US have been the focus of a few studies (Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Kumar, 2005) in the past few years. During press conferences, the US president meets the press and takes questions from wire service, broadcast networks, national newspapers, newsmagazines, etc. The presidential press conference was introduced by President Woodrow Wilson in 1913. Historically, the numbers of conferences have varied from person to person. For example, President Clinton and G.W. Bush held on average two press conferences a month during their terms of office (Kumar, 2005). As a formal type of institutional talk, these press conferences share many similarities with CPPCs. For example, both of them are question-driven forms of interaction with a top-level national leader taking questions from a large number of journalists. Their turn-taking systems are also very similar in that turns are pre-allocated instead of being managed by the participants. However, CPPCs display a few important differences from US presidential press conferences.

The presence of a larger number of journalists and an interpreter at CPPCs is a key difference between CPPCs and the US presidential press conferences. In the US presidential press conferences, the number of journalists present is usually smaller than 100, and journalists are allowed to ask follow-up questions. By contrast, in CPPCs, the number of journalists is usually larger than 500, and no follow-up questions are allowed.

Besides, there is an interpreter doing consecutive interpreting at CPPCs, which, to some extent, disrupts the flow of communication between the journalists and the politicians. The interpreter interprets the journalists' question right after it is asked. The interpreter is also expected to start interpreting whenever the politician pauses when giving an answer. However, the US presidential press conferences are conducted solely in English. In this sense, CPPCs are less interactive given the interpreter's presence, which disrupts the flow of communication, and more formal in comparison with the US presidential press conferences.

In summary, this section provided background information on CPPCs and drew distinctions between CPPCs and mundane interaction and other forms of institutional talk. As this thesis focuses on the questions and answers in CPPCs, an overview of previous studies on the features of questioning and answering in the political context is presented in the next section.

## **1.2 Overview of Previous Studies**

### **1.2.1 Journalistic Adversarialness in Different Countries**

Adversarialness is one of the most salient features of journalistic treatment of politicians in a number of western developed countries. Previous research shows that journalistic adversarialness is not only demonstrated in news stories in the print media (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Robinson, 1981, Sabato, 1991), but also in face-to-face interactions between journalists and politicians (Adkins, 1992, Clayman and



Heritage, 2002b, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Eriksson, 2011, Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004, Rendle-Short, 2007).

Based on data consisting of traditional news stories, numerous scholars studying American journalism have argued that journalists in the postwar era have become increasingly aggressive and adversarial in their treatment of government officials (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a). Having conducted almost fifty personal interviews and collected sixty questionnaires from representatives, staff, and reporters in the US Congress between 1977 and 1980, Robinson (1981) found that around 93% of them thought that the press had grown more hostile to Congress. Sabato (1991) also found an increasing emphasis on scandal in national political news generally in the US.

In addition to the print media, the trend toward adversarial journalistic treatment of politicians has also been manifested in journalists' questioning strategies during their direct confrontation with politicians. Clayman and Heritage's (2002a) analysis of journalistic questions in presidential news conferences from Eisenhower to Clinton reveals a long-term decline in deference to the president and the rise of a more adversarial form of questioning.

In Britain, competition was introduced into the media after the BBC's monopoly was replaced by a duopoly with the creation of the independently operated television network of ITV in the 1950s. Since then, there has been a fast growth in journalistic adversarialness (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b).

The adversarial nature of journalistic questions has also been noted in Australia. To analyze disputatious challenges, Adkins (1992) collected 70 news programs prior to the Australian federal election. The majority of the challenges were found to occur in political news interviews. Rendle-Short (2007) also points out that it is not uncommon for journalists to openly challenge politicians within the Australian political context.

Eriksson (2011) collected and analyzed television data consisting of 74 items of news stories involving interviews with leading politicians from the year 1978, 1993 and 2003 in Sweden. He found that in the earlier periods, journalists tended to set the scene for the politicians to explain or motivate their policies, decisions or proposals, while in the latter periods, journalists assumed a more autonomous and adversarial role and became an “interpreter” or “critical interrogator of politicians” responses (Eriksson, 2011:66).

In Taiwan, as a result of political democratization, Taiwan's media has also experienced a dramatic transformation since 1987. There has been a noticeable decline in deference to authority. The media now is in a strong position to interrogate the decisions, actions and behavior of politicians rather than fulfilling political responsibilities that are designed to further the government's agenda (Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004).

However, unlike their counterparts in most western developed countries, journalists in some other countries, usually developing countries, show much more deference to politicians. Cohen (1989) analyzed and compared television news interviews in the US, UK and South Africa recorded in 1984. He (1989:440) referred to Labov and

Fanshel (1977:64) for the definition of “challenges”, which are “any reference to a situation that would lower the status of the other person’, such as an utterance that ‘criticizes, attacks, denigrates and insults”. Cohen found that the largest number of 'challenges' occurred in the American interviews and the fewest occurred in the South African interviews. In addition, American and British journalists were also found to use far more questioning by intonation or making a statement as well as question preface than their South African counterparts. All these techniques add to the adversarialness of questions put to politicians. Regarding word choice, not a single case was found in the South African interviews where pejorative or provocative expressions were used, whereas such expressions were present in American and British journalistic questions.

Like journalists in South Africa, Chinese journalists also place lower value on aggressiveness and perseverance, ranking humility and loyalty higher than aggressiveness and inquisitiveness (Brislin, 1997). This finding is further supported by a cross-cultural comparison of the US and Chinese press conferences. Jiang (2006) found that the American Journalists asked many more questions for clarification and confirmation, which were considered as adversarial and face-threatening challenges against the authority. Instead, the Chinese journalists asked more questions for comments, which were deemed more acceptable in Chinese culture as they were less likely to offend politicians.

### **1.2.2 Politicians' Evasiveness in Different Countries**

While the previous research shows a split in journalistic adversarialness in a number of developed and developing countries, it also shows that evasiveness has been a salient feature of politicians' answers to questions from members of the media in both western developed countries and some developing countries. Several studies done in UK, Italy, US and China have provided empirical evidence in support of the view that politicians do not reply to a large portion of the questions in political news interviews and press conferences.

In an analysis of a different set of interviews in Britain, Harris (1991) found that the politicians replied directly only to 39.28% of the journalistic questions. Explicit 'yes' and 'no' tokens occurred in fewer than 20% of the responses to questions that required a yes/no response. These results were further strengthened by Bull and Mayer's study (1993) that analyzed eight televised political interviews recorded during the 1987 British General Election campaign. They focused on the extent to which British politicians failed to reply to questions and the ways in which they did this. The results showed that Margaret Thatcher replied to only 37% and Neil Kinnock to only 39% of the questions put to them.

Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003) compared the language of five well-known Italian politicians in interviews and the language of five different politicians speaking in a courtroom setting in order to find out the reasons for politicians' evasiveness. Based on a systematic analysis of the interview data, they found that Italian politicians provided non-evasive answers to 43.7% of the total questions.

In a study that compared the cross-cultural pragmatic differences in the US and Chinese press conferences, Jiang (2006) also found that the spokespersons of the US Department of State answered only 30.3% of the journalistic questions directly while their Chinese counterparts gave direct answers to only 10.6% of the questions put to them.

As to why evasiveness is observed in politicians' replies from different cultural backgrounds, some researchers attribute politicians' evasiveness to their personal characteristics. Graber (1976:11) believes that there is a sound base for the statement that "politicians intend to hide realities and perceptions rather than to disclose them". In addition to Graber, Ekman (1985) and Spero (1980) also relate evasiveness to the personal shortcomings or furtive intentions of the communicator.

However, some other scholars focusing on equivocation argue that equivocation is a function, not of the individual, but of the individual's communicative situation (Bavelas, 1985). Equivocation refers to non-straightforward communication, including self-contradictions, inconsistency, topic switch, obscure style, etc. (Watzalwick et al., 1967:76). Bavelas et al. (1988:138, 1990:137) assert that people typically equivocate when placed in an "avoidance-avoidance conflict", in which all possible responses lead to negative consequences. Therefore, equivocation is the result of the communicative situation rather than personal characters.

### **1.3 The Research Questions**

The previous literature shows that there has been a growth in the adversarialness of journalistic treatment of politicians in a number of developed countries over the years and also indicates different levels of journalistic adversarialness between a number of developed countries and developing countries. The literature also demonstrates that evasiveness is observed in the responses of politicians from both western developed countries and developing countries. However, different scholars have different perspectives as to what evasiveness is attributed to. As can be seen, the majority of the previous literature was based on political news interviews or press conferences in western countries. There is a scarcity of research on political communication in the Chinese context and research on cross-cultural differences in political communication between China and other countries. In this thesis, the following five research questions are posed in the context of CPPCs:

- 1) What are the structures of journalists' questions and how do journalists pose adversarial questions?
- 2) Is there a difference in the level of adversarialness between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries?
- 3) What counts as a non-evasive or evasive answer and what is the relationship between journalists' adversarial questions and politicians' evasive answers?
- 4) How do politicians structure their answers and is there a structural difference between non-evasive and evasive answers?
- 5) How do politicians mitigate their evasions of journalists' questions?

The analysis in this thesis not only reveals how Chinese journalists and politicians pose and answer questions, but also shows some important differences between Chinese journalists, politicians and their counterparts in western developed countries.

## 1.4 Methodology and Data

### 1.4.1 Data Collection and Transcription

The data for the current study consisted of two corpora. As they are all publicly available on the Internet<sup>1</sup>, ethics approval for data collection was not required. The primary corpus was composed of around 30 hours of video recordings of 15 press conferences held during the NPC and CPPCC sessions between 1998, 2000-2011.<sup>2</sup> The government officials that took questions in the data were two premiers, Zhu Rongji and Wen Jiabao, and two foreign ministers, Li Zhaoxing and Yang Jiechi. The majority of the examples shown in the thesis and the data for the two quantitative studies in chapter 2 & 3 were from the primary corpus.

The complementary corpus consisted of another 10 hours of video recordings of 5 national-level political press conferences, which were not necessarily held during the NPC and CPPCC sessions, in the years 2002, 2006 and 2009. The government officials who took questions were two foreign ministers, Li Zhaoxing and Yang Jiechi, and former President Jiang Zeming. Only a few examples used in the thesis were from this corpus, which was employed primarily to explore and verify the generality of particular phenomena.

Due to the large amount of data and the limit of time, only the examples shown in the thesis were transcribed. The transcripts are different from those in other CA papers that usually follow the transcript conventions developed by Jefferson (Heritage and

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<sup>1</sup> All my data are available on [www.tudou.com](http://www.tudou.com), [www.youku.com](http://www.youku.com) and [www.youtube.com](http://www.youtube.com).

<sup>2</sup> The 1999 conference was not included as it was not available on the relevant websites.

Atkinson, 1984:ix-xvi). In this thesis, only inter-turn intervals and sentence-final pitch were transcribed, considering that the analysis focuses primarily on the form and content of the questions and answers. Inter-turn intervals were timed and recorded for the analysis of the interactional structure of answers. Sentence-final pitch was transcribed for the analysis of declarative questions in particular. Moreover, as some questions and answers are very long, only the beginning, ending and some topic sentences in between were transcribed. In addition, as the focus of the current study was not on micro-level features of interaction, interlinear gloss of each utterance was not necessary. Only idiomatic translations were provided for utterances that were originally in Chinese. As the interpreter's version involved occasional omission of the original sentences and also grammatical mistakes, it was used only as a reference. Corrections were made where necessary to make the translations more precise.

Tables were used to organize the transcripts. On top of the table, information regarding who the politician was, when the press conference was held, which country or region the journalist was from, and what language the journalist used, was provided in brackets. There are three columns in the table. The first column shows the number of paragraphs and the identities of the speakers. "J" stands for "journalist" and "P" stands for "politician". The paragraphs were arranged for the readers' convenience to find relevant information. The second column provides the English version of the questions. This could either be the original version or the translation, depending on the language the journalist used. It also shows the English version of the politicians' answers, which was always the translation. The third column gives the Romanization of the utterances in Chinese. This column was left blank if the journalist posed



questions in English. Furthermore, suspension points “...” were used for omission of any information that was not required for analysis. For example:

(Wen; 2007; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	...(text omitted) Now that chartered flights are opened for Taiwanese business people on the mainland and fruits from Taiwan can be sold to the mainland, people in Taiwan are now showing a great interest in the possibility of mainland tourists visiting Taiwan.	...(text omitted) na me ji kai fang tai shang bao ji he tui dong tai wan shui guo jin kou zhi hou tai wan min zhong xian zai fei chang guan xin de da lu ju min dao zhe ge tai wan lai guan guang
2. J	<p>When will such visits take place?</p> <p>What other steps are you going to take to advance Cross-Strait relations?</p> <p>With the upcoming Olympics Games in Beijing and election in Taiwan, the year 2008 is also a crucial year. What is your view on and expectation of the future of Cross-strait relations?</p>	<p>ri cheng shen me shi hou kai shi zheng shi kai fang he shi shi</p> <p>er wei le jin yi bu tui dong liang an guan xi hai you na xie ju ti cuo shi he gou xiang</p> <p>yi ji 2008 nian ye shi guan jian de yi nian wo men kan dao zai Beijing you ao yun zai Taiwan you da xuan dui yu wei lai de liang an guan xi zong li nin de qi dai he kan fa shi shen me xiexie</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>
3. P	(4.0) You mentioned that the years 2007 and 2008 are very crucial for Cross-strait relations. Why are they crucial? Because these two years are critical to upholding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. In my Government Work Report, I reiterated our firm opposition to all forms of separatist activities, including "de jure Taiwan independence"... (text omitted)	(4.0) ni shuo zhe liang nian shi ha ixia guan xi shi fen guan jian de shi ke guan jian zai na li guan jian zai wei hu tai hai de he ping he wen ding wo zai wo de zheng fu gong zuo bao gao li yi jing zai ci chong shen wo men jian jue fan dui tai wan “fa li du li” deng ren he xing shi de fen lie huo dong... (text omitted)

#### 1.4.2. Conversation Analysis (CA)

This thesis aims to investigate the journalists’ adversarialness and the politicians’ evasiveness based on an analysis of the form, content, and interactional structure of the questions and answers in CPPCs. CA is employed as a main approach to

analyzing questions and answers because CA is “the systematic analysis of the talk produced in everyday situations of human interaction” (Hutchby and Woffitt, 2008:11). Drew and Heritage (2006) further point out that CA is concerned with all forms of spoken interaction including not only everyday conversations between friends and acquaintances, but also interactions in various institutional contexts. Therefore, CA is equally applicable to institutional interactions as it is to mundane conversations.

A central assumption of CA is that “social actions are meaningful for those who produce them and that they have a natural organization that can be discovered and analyzed by close examination” (Psathas, 1995:2). When it comes to the analysis of talk-in-interaction in institutional settings, the task is to disclose and specify the verbal practices and interactional arrangements through which the institutional practice is talked into being (Arminen, 2005). In this thesis, CA is adopted to analyze the design of journalists’ and politicians’ turns and actions as well as the interactional structure of questions and answers in relation to the broader institutional and sociopolitical environment.

Since its very inception in the 1960s and 70s, CA has developed many important concepts and paradigms in the analysis of talk in interaction. Three notions: adjacency pairs, conditional relevance, and preference organization are discussed in the next section because they are highly relevant to the analysis of questions and answers in the following chapters.

### ***1.4.2.1 Adjacency Pairs***

According to Schegloff and Sacks (1973:295-296), adjacency pairs consist of two utterances that are adjacent positioned, with different speakers producing each utterance. The two utterances are differentiated into “first pair part (FPP)” and “second pair part (SPP)” respectively. FPPs are turns at talk that are designed to initiate some exchange (Schegloff, 2007:13). SPPs are utterances that are responsive to the action of the prior turn (Schegloff, 2007:13). FPPs and SPPs are related to each other to form a “pair type” (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973). The pair type of a FPP is relevant to the selection of possible SPPs. Example 1 shows different pair types including question-answer, greeting-greeting, and offer-acceptance.

Example 1 (Liddicoat, 2007:107, 110)

- (1) question-answer  
John: What time’s it?  
Betty: Three uh clock.
- (2) greeting-greeting  
Amy: Hello.  
Jean: Hi.
- (3) offer-acceptance  
Amy: W’d yuh like tuh come over tomorrow night?  
Jane: yeah. That’d be nice.

### ***1.4.2.2 Conditional Relevance***

The notion of “conditional relevance” (Schegloff, 1968, Sacks, 1969) is extended from the notion of “adjacency pair”. Schegloff (2007:20) argues that the type of SPP is determined by the prior FPP and the relevance between the two pair parts is conditioned by the FPP. The non-occurrence of an SPP will also be noted by the

hearer (Schegloff, 2007). In some pair types such as summons-answer sequence, an answer is the only conditionally relevant SPP possible (Schegloff, 1968). For example, in telephone conversations, the phone ring is considered as a summons, and the called person's first remark is treated as an answer to the summons. In the absence of the called person's remark to the phone rings' summons, the caller usually does an additional summons until an answer is produced. But in the vast majority of pair types, there is more than one alternative response that a first pair part makes relevant. For instance, Question-answer sequence involves complementary but unspecific turn types (Schegloff, 1988). A large number of utterances can be accepted as SPPs to questions.

#### Example 2

A: Isn't it pretty?

B: It is. /No, it's just OK. / It's amazing. / Well, it depends.

In example 2, A poses a question, to which B may provide more than four answers. Each answer suffices as an SPP to the question. So they are all alternative responses that the question makes relevant.

#### ***1.4.2.3 Preference Organization***

The notion of preference organization is used to examine how SPP speakers construct and organize their responses. Heritage and Atkinson (1984:53) define the term "preference" as "a range of phenomena associated with the fact that choices among nonequivalent courses of action are routinely implemented in ways that reflect an

institutionalized ranking of alternatives”. The focus of the term is on the structure of the talk rather than psychological desires or dispositions.

As indicated above, an FPP makes conditionally relevant more than one alternative responses in the majority of pair types. The alternative responses are however, not equivalent or “symmetrical alternatives” (Schegloff and Sacks, 1973:314). Schegloff (2007) argues that sequences are the vehicle for getting some activity accomplished. The responses that involve the accomplishment or the furthering of the activity are “preferred SPPs”. Pomerantz (1984:64) differentiates preferred and dispreferred turns in terms of whether the required action is performed and how these turns are usually realized. According to Pomerantz (1984:64), a preferred turn maximizes the possibility of the accomplishment of the actions required in the prior turn while minimizing the gap between its initiation and the prior turn’s completion. By contrast, a dispreferred turn minimizes the possibility of the accomplishment of the required actions and defers a conditionally relevant next turn.

Based on Schegloff (2007) and Pomerantz (1984)’s arguments, the essence of a preferred response is that it gets some activities accomplished and it is usually performed without delay. In contrast, a dispreferred response does not get the required action performed and it is usually delayed in its turn and is prefaced, softened and made indirect. For example, in response to a first speaker’s assessment of someone or something, the recipient can either agree or disagree. Pomerantz (1984, 1978) argues that agreements are preferred and stated explicitly with a minimum gap between the completion of the FPP and the initiation of the SPP, while disagreements are

dispreferred and are usually prefaced and delayed within a turn or over a series of turns.

Example 3 Pomerantz (1984:69)

A: Isn't he cute  
B: O::h he::s a::DORable

Example 4 Pomerantz (1984:70)

A: God izn it dreary.  
(0.6)  
A: [Y'know I don't think-  
B: [. hh It's warm though,

Example 3 illustrates a preferred response with the agreement to an assessment being delivered early in the turn, while example 4 shows a dispreferred response with the disagreement being deferred by a 0.6-second silence. For other first pair parts, such as offers and invitations, acceptance is considered a preferred response and rejection is treated as a dispreferred response (Schegloff, 2007). For requests, granting and acceding are preferred and rejecting and denying are dispreferred (Schegloff, 2007).

The concept of adjacency pairs is used in the analysis of questions and answers throughout the thesis. The notions of conditional relevance and preference organization foreground, in particular, the analysis of the structures of politicians' answers in chapter 3.

### 1.4.3 Quantitative Analysis

In addition to CA, quantitative studies using independent t-test and chi-square test are also employed in this thesis to strengthen the analysis of questions and answers. While the CA approach is dedicated to exploring the design of questions and answers, the quantitative analysis is adopted to show the distributions of different types of questions and answers and to confirm whether there are significant differences in adversarialness between journalists from different backgrounds and in politicians' evasiveness when answering questions of different levels of adversarialness. Combining CA and quantitative analysis allows the researcher to obtain data about both the individual and the broader societal context and thus improving the validity of the research (Dörnyei, 2007).

## **1.5 Structure of the Thesis**

This chapter has presented background information on CPPCs and an overview of previous studies on journalistic adversarialness and politicians' evasiveness in political contexts in relation to my five research questions. I have also discussed the data selection, data transcription and approach to data analysis.

Chapter 2 answers the questions of how journalists pose adversarial questions and whether there is a difference in the level of adversarialness between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries in CPPCs. The analysis will show that journalists from developed countries were found to raise more adversarial questions than Chinese journalists. Possible interpretations of the difference in adversarialness are also discussed in chapter 2.

Chapter 3 answers three research questions: whether the different levels of adversarialness as displayed by the two groups of journalists (Chinese journalists vs. journalists from developed countries) result in different levels of evasiveness in politicians' replies; what is the interactional structure of the politicians' answers; and what techniques do politicians employ to mitigate their evasions in CPPCs. The Chinese politicians were found to evade more questions from the developed countries group. Possible explanations about the difference in the level of evasiveness and relationship between adversarialness and evasiveness are also discussed in this chapter.

Chapter 4 is the conclusion of the thesis. It not only presents the summary of findings and implications of this study, but also some suggestions for future studies in the area of questioning and answering in political settings.



## Chapter 2 Adversarial Questions in CPPCs

### 2.0 Introduction

In CPPCs, the information exchange between journalists and politicians is realized through the question-answer format. Like news interviews, CPPCs are therefore also “question-driven” forms of interaction (Heritage and Roth, 1995). The focus of this chapter is on how journalists posed questions in CPPCs. Previous literature shows a growth in journalistic adversarialness in developed countries including the US (Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a), UK (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b), Australia (Adkins, 1992, Rendle-Short, 2007), and Sweden (Eriksson, 2011) in the past few decades. Adversarial questioning was also observed in my CPPC data, where journalists from a wide range of countries were given opportunities to raise questions. The first research question in this chapter is: what were the structures of journalists’ questions and what strategies did journalists employ to pose adversarial questions in CPPCs?

Previous literature indicates a stark contrast in the adversarialness of journalists’ questioning strategies between a number of developed and developing countries. Journalists from the US, UK, Australia, etc. are found to have taken a quite aggressive role when questioning politicians. Compared with their counterparts in the US and UK, South African journalists are much less challenging when confronted with politicians (Cohen, 1989). Chinese journalists are also found to be far less aggressive in comparison with American journalists (Brislin, 1997, Jiang, 2006). However, there

is a lack of cross-cultural research that confirms the significance of the difference in adversarialness between journalists from developed and developing countries. Situated within the context of CPPCs, my second research question is: Was there a difference in the level of adversarialness between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries?

To answer the first research question, I show the basic structure of journalistic questions in CPPCs (2.1), and analyze three general strategies journalists have utilized to pose questions (2.2) as well as the linguistic realizations of these strategies for posing adversarial questions in particular (2.3). To answer the second research question, I do a quantitative study that compares the level of adversarialness involved in journalistic questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries (2.4).

## **2.1 Basic Structures of Journalistic Questions in CPPCs**

In CPPCs, turns are pre-allocated by the host politician and journalists are restricted to a single turn at talk. Given the large number of journalists bidding for the opportunity to raise a question, no one is given the chance to ask a follow-up question. Therefore, journalistic questions are usually carefully designed and embody complex grammatical and rhetorical constructions in order to exert pressure on the politicians and elicit as much information as possible. A recurring sequential paradigm of the journalistic questions was observed in CPPCs. There are six basic sequences:

- 1) A ‘thank you’ to the host politician;
- 2) Greeting;
- 3) Self-identification;
- 4) Prefatory statement(s);
- 5) Question(s);
- 6) An anticipatory ‘thank you’ to the politician that takes the question.

In general, this sequential paradigm occurred in questions regardless of the journalists’ backgrounds. However, specific differences were observed between Mainland Chinese journalists and foreign journalists. In over 80 percent of the Chinese journalists’ questions in my data, all six sequences were present whereas in over 80 percent of the foreign journalists’ questions, the ‘thank you’ to the host politician’ sequence 1) was missing. The greeting sequence 2) was also missing in nearly 20 percent of the foreign journalists’ questions.

Example 1 (Yang; 2011; China; Chinese)

1. ‘Thank you’ to the host politician	Thank you host.	xie xie zhu chi ren
2. Greeting	Hello, Foreign Minister Yang.	Yang wai zhang ni hao
3. Self-identification	I am from CCTV (China Central Television) and its affiliated website.	wo shi zhong yang dian shi tai he zhong guo wang luo dian shi tai de jie zhe

<p>4. Prefatory statement(s)</p> <p>5. Question(s)</p>	<p>Preface 1) My question is: the sustained, rapid and sound development of China's economy has attracted extensive international attention.</p> <p>Question 1) How does the fast growing China define its position in the world and assume its due international responsibilities?</p> <p>Preface 2) Moreover, we have witnessed continuous profound and complex changes in the international structure.</p> <p>Question 2) What do you think should be done to make the world order and international structure more reasonable?</p>	<p>Preface 1) wo de wen tis hi zhong guo jing ji chi xu kuai su jian kang de fa zhan tai shi rang guo ji she hui guang fan guan zhu</p> <p>Question 1) na zai nin kai lai yi ge kuai su fa zhan de zhong guo ying gai zai guo ji shang ru he que ding zi ji de ding wei bing qie cheng dan qi xiang ying de guo ji ze ren</p> <p>Preface 2) ling wai ne xian zai de guo ji ge ju ji xu fa sheng shen ke er fu za de bian hua</p> <p>Question 2) nin ren wei shen me yang de guo ji zhixu he guo ji ge ju cai shi he li de</p>
<p>6. An anticipatory 'thank you' to the politician that takes the question</p>	<p>Thank you.</p>	<p>Xie xie</p>

Example 1 is a typical question from a Mainland Chinese journalist that involves all the six sequences. As shown at the beginning of the example, Yang was the politician that took the questions; the press conference was held in 2011; the journalist was from the Chinese mainland; and he asked the question in Chinese. The journalist began with a 'thank you' to the host, a greeting token and self-identification, followed by prefatory statements and two questions. The journalist's turn was closed with an anticipatory 'thank you' to the politician that took the question. Example 2 shows a typical question from a foreign journalist.

Example 2 (Wen; 2003; US; English)

1. 'Thank you' to the host politician	
2. Greeting	
3. Self-identification	I am affiliated with CNN.
4. Prefatory statement(s)	Preface: You spoke of your experience in war in your childhood. I also suppose you went through the cultural revolution when you were in your twenties.
5. Question(s)	Question 1) How do these experiences influence the way you view Chinese domestic and foreign affairs problems?  Question 2) Specifically on Iraq, are you, does that make you an anti-war activist?  Question 3) Do you approve or oppose the war in Iraq?
6. An anticipatory 'thank you' to the politician that takes the question	Thank you.

In example 2, the journalist began his question with his self-identification. The ‘thank you’ to the host politician’ and ‘greeting’ sequences were missing. But other components of the sequential paradigm were present in this question.

From the above two typical examples, we can see that some of the sequences are compulsory while others are optional. Among the six sequences, the ‘thank you to the host politician’ 1), ‘greeting’ 2), ‘prefatory statements’ 4) and ‘anticipatory thank you to the politician’ 6) sequences are optional. The ‘self-identification’ 3) and ‘questions’ 5) sequences are the essential components in this paradigm. The ‘prefatory statements’ sequence 4) is optional when the journalist chooses to ask a simple question. The ‘questions’ sequence 5) constitutes the core part of the whole question and is thus indispensable. The ‘self-identification’ sequence 3) was also found to be a required component of this paradigm because if the self-identification was missing, it caused interactional problems. As shown below, when the self-identification was

missing, the politician requested it from the journalists before he proceeded with his answer.

Example 3 (Li; 2005; Hong Kong; Chinese)

1. J	<p>I want to ask a question in relation to China, Japan and the US. Recently, Mr. Minister, Japan and the US have conducted a series of movements including the security cooperation on Diaoyu islands and Okinawa islands.</p> <p>I want to ask if Taiwan independence becomes a reality, how will you assess the reactions of Japan and the US?</p> <p>And how will China respond?</p> <p>How do you evaluate the relations between Japan and the US?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>wo xiang wen zhe ge zhong guo ri ben gen mei guo de wen ti zui jin ne bu zhang xian sheng zhe ge ri ben dui mei guo gen mei guo zuo le yi lian chuan zai you guan dong zuo bao kuo tiao yu tai gen chong shen lie dao gen mei guo da cheng xie zuo</p> <p>wo xiang wen de jiu shi ru guo tai du zhen de fa sheng le na me ni zen me yang qu ping gu ri ben hui he mei guo hui you shen me fan ying</p> <p>na zhong guo you hui zen me yang fang ying</p> <p>ran hou ni zen me ping gu zhe gen ri ben he mei guo de guan xi shi shen me yang</p> <p>xie xie</p>
2. P	<p>Can you please tell me who you are? You already know who I am. Thank you.</p>	<p>ni neng bu neng xian gao su wo ni shi shui ni yi jing zhi dao wo shi shui xie xie</p>
3. J	<p>I am with Oriental Daily. Thank you.</p>	<p>wo shi xiang gang dong fang bao ri ji tuan de jie zhe xie xie</p>

In example 3, the missing self-identification sequence led to an interactional problem. The politician directly asked for the journalist's self-identification before he went on to give an answer to the question (Para. 2). The politician's request indicates that the journalist's self-identification was compulsory for interaction. The journalist already knew who the politician was, however, for the interaction to proceed, the politician needed to know who the journalist was.

## 2.2 Strategies of Questioning in CPPCs

Having discussed the sequential paradigm of journalistic questions in CPPCs, I move on to examine some general strategies journalists employed to pose questions. Clayman and Heritage (2002b) identify three dimensions of journalistic questions in political news interviews: Agenda setting, presuppositions and preference. These dimensions are also involved in journalistic questions in CPPCs. A journalistic question may embody one or two or even all three dimensions.

### 2.2.1 Agenda Setting

Journalistic questions set particular agendas for the ensuing responses. The agenda not only involves a specific topical domain, which sets boundaries to the domain of the response, but also identifies “actions” the answerer should perform in relation to the topical domain. According to Raymond (2003:944), “the action implemented by a first pair part (FPP) makes a limited range of type related responses relevant”. “Action” thus refers to a particular type of response constrained by the interrogative structure of the prior actual question. For example, a yes/no-question calls for a 'yes' or 'no' response and a wh-question calls for some specific information such as time or place.

Example 4 (Li; 2005; China; Chinese)

1. J	Hello, Foreign Minister Li.  I am with CCTV (China Central Television).  With regard to China's foreign policy, there are two utterly different views in	Li wai zhang ni hao  wo shi zhong yang dian shi tai ji zhe  dui yu zhong guo de wai jiao zheng ce xian zai shi jie shang guo ji shang you liang zhong
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	<p>the international stage. Some say China has achieved a lot in its diplomacy, which is becoming increasingly mature. Others say China's diplomacy is very practical.</p> <p>As the foreign minister of China, how do you view these opinions?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>jie ran bu tong de kan fa you ren shuo zhong guo wai jiao qu de le hen duo cheng guo geng jia cheng shu le dan shi ye you ren shuo zhong guo wai jiao shi shi yong wai jiao</p> <p>na me zuo wei wai jiao bu zhang nin zen me kan dai zhe xie kan fa</p> <p>xie xie</p>
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In example 4, the 'how' question functioned like a wh-question that asked for specific information. The journalist requested that the foreign minister give some comments on China's diplomacy. The prefatory statements limited the topical domain of the ensuing response to be relevant to the development, achievement and functions of China's diplomacy. But the actual question allowed a quite broad and general answer as any specific information concerning the topical agenda would suffice as a response to the action agenda. In contrast with example 4, the journalist in example 5 not only set the topical domain within the Cross-strait relations, but also confined the structure of the subsequent response by using yes/no questions.

Example 5 (Zhu; 2000; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	<p>Hello, I am from Taiwan.</p> <p>Recently the mainland side has been emphasizing that the Taiwan issue cannot be dragged on indefinitely. In three days' time, a new president will be elected in Taiwan. If the new president should refuse to have talks with the mainland side concerning China's reunification during his one or two terms of the office, which will last four to eight years, instead he will choose to maintain the status quo,</p>	<p>ni hao wo shi lai zi tai wan lian he bao de ji zhe</p> <p>zhong guo da lu zui jin qiang diao tai wan de wen ti bu neng wu xian qi de tuo yan xia qu er zai tai wan xin de zong tong zai san tian zhi hou xuan chu ru guo zhe ge xin ren de zong tong zai ta wei lai de yi ren huo zhe liang ren qi ye jiu shi zai si nian dao ba nian de ren qi li mian ju jue jiu zhong guo tong yi de wen ti jin xing liang an de tan pan ta xuan ze wei chi xian zhuang</p>
2. J	<p>Will this lead to a war across the Taiwan strait?</p>	<p>zhe yang shi fou hui dao zhi liang an chu xian zhan zheng de jie guo</p>



	<p>Will the mainland side make a timetable to achieve reunification?</p> <p>It is just three days before the election. Will the mainland side do some military exercises in the three days such as test launch of missiles, which the mainland side did in 1996, to exert her influence over the situation?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>zhong guo da lu zai zhe ge tong yi de wen ti shang shi fou hui zhi ding yi ge shi jian biao</p> <p>hai you san tian de xuan ju zai zhe san tian zhi nei zhong guo da lu shi fou hui cai qu jun shi yan xi li ru dao dan shi she de zhe ge xing dong li ru xiang 96 nian de na me yi ci xing dong yi fa hui ta de ying xiang li</p> <p>xie xie</p>
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In example 5, after the long prefatory statements that established the context, the journalist asked three related yes/no questions (Para. 2). Raymond (2003) points out that any responses with 'yes' or 'no' to yes/no-questions are termed type-conforming responses, and those without are termed type non-conforming responses. He further argues that type non-conforming responses indicate a recipient's trouble with the yes/no-question. In this case, to address both the topical and action agenda set by the journalist, the politician had to provide a 'yes' or 'no' to all three yes/no questions as well as some relevant information. Thus agenda setting constrains both the topical and the action domain of the ensuing response. Example 4 and 5 show that within clear topical domains set by the question prefaces, the degree to which different question types constrain the action agenda can vary. More detailed discussion about how agenda setting is linguistically realized in different types of questions is presented in section 2.3.

### 2.2.2 Presuppositions

In addition to setting agendas, Clayman and Heritage (2002b) point out that questions (including the prefatory statement if they are complex questions) can also embody

presuppositions and assert propositions with varying degrees of explicitness. The explicitness can be measured by considering whether the respondent can address a question's presupposition and respond to its topical and action agenda at the same time. The most explicit presuppositions are usually also the focus of the actual question and thus can be easily addressed within a response that aligns with the action agenda of the actual question.

Example 6 (Wen; 2011; China; Chinese)

1. J	<p>Thank you host. Hello, Premier.</p> <p>I am with Xinhua News Agency and China Xinhua news network corporation.</p> <p>Last year farmers' incomes, for the first time in 27 years, grew faster than urban residents' incomes.</p> <p>Can I please ask the Premier, does it indicate a reversal of the widening gap between urban and rural area?... (text omitted)</p>	<p>xie xie zhu chi ren zong li ni hao</p> <p>wo shi xin hua she ji zhe ye shi zhong guo xin hua xin wen dian shi wang de ji zhe</p> <p>qu nian nong min shou ru de zeng zhang shi 27 nian lai shou ci chao guo le cheng zhen ju min</p> <p>qing wen zong li zhe shi fou yi wei zhe zai niu chuan cheng xiang cha ju kuo da de jin cheng dang zhong chu xian le yi ge guai dian...(text omitted)</p>
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In example 6, the journalist made the proposition in the prefatory statement that the increase rate of farmer's revenue had exceeded that of the urban residents for the first time in 27 years. The preface embodied the presupposition that this was a sign of the decreasing difference between urban and rural areas. The subsequent question built from the presupposition and requested the politician's confirmation. Therefore, the presupposition itself became the focus of the actual question. The politician was able to address the presupposition and the agenda of the actual question at the same time within a type-conforming 'yes' or 'no' answer. However, politicians might find it

difficult to address deeply embedded presuppositions while still responding to the question's agenda.

Example 7 (Yang; 2011; US; Chinese)

1. J	<p>... (text omitted) My second question is that due to the tense internal situation, some foreign journalists have encountered difficulties and restrictions in their reporting activities and some of them were even beaten (by Chinese Police).</p> <p>What is your view on this?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>... (text omitted) di er ge wen ti shi zui jin yin wei guo nei de shi tai bi jiao jin zhang you yi xie wai guo ji zhe zai yi xie cai fang zhong yu dao yi xie kun nan xian zhi sheng zhi you wai guo ji zhe bei ou da de</p> <p>ni shi zen me kan zhe xie shi qing de</p> <p>xiexie</p>
2. P	<p>You said that the domestic situation is quite tense in China. I have not seen any signs of tension... (text omitted) I do not want anyone to make up things that do not exist. China is a country under the rule of law and we abide by the law. We are always following the laws and regulations in managing the matters related to foreign journalists. We will continue to provide convenience to foreign journalists in conducting legal reporting activities... (text omitted)</p>	<p>ni shuo zui jin guo nei a hao xiang bi jiao jin zhang wo mei kan dao shen me jin zhang...wo men bu xi wang ren he ren wu shi zhao shi... (text omitted) zhong guo shi fa zhi guo jia wo men yi fa ban shi wo men yi guan yi fa lai zuo ji zhe de guan li gong zuo tong shi wei ji zhe he fa he li de cai fang ti gong ge fang mian de bian li... (text omitted)</p>
3. P	<p>We hope that foreign journalists will abide by the Chinese laws and regulations... (text omitted) There is no such issue as Chinese police beating foreign journalists.</p>	<p>xi wang ji zhe wai guo ji zhe neng zun shou zhong guo de fa lv fa gui... (text omitted) bu cun zai jing cha ou da wai guo ji zhe wen ti</p>

In example 7, a presupposition about the tense internal situation and the foreign journalists beaten (by the Chinese police) was embedded in the prefatory statements. The journalist took the presupposition as given information and requested the politician's comments in the subsequent question. In his answer, the foreign minister failed to make any comments concerning the question's agenda.

Instead he contested the presupposition by clarifying that the incident mentioned by the journalists had not happened. Clayman and Heritage (2002b) argue that wh-questions provide the most hospitable environment for the deeply embedded propositions that leave the respondent in a dilemma. In this case, making any comments on the issue mentioned by the journalist meant that the foreign minister agreed with the journalist's presupposition, which was undesirable. To demonstrate his position, the foreign minister had to digress from the frame of the question and reject the presupposition. Under most circumstances as in example 6, presuppositions are shared by both the journalists and the respondents, and are usually taken for granted. But embedded presuppositions are more visible when they are utilized to do adversarial questioning and thus rejected by the respondents (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b) as shown in example 7.

### **2.2.3 Preference**

The third general strategy of questioning is to incorporate the journalist's own preference into the question so as to favor one type of answer over another (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b). Preference is not universal in journalistic questions. Questions that request specific information and comments are generally quite neutral and do not involve any preference. In the previous example, although the presupposition that foreign journalists were beaten involves criticism of the government, the journalist did not show any preference toward a particular type of answer in the actual question that asked for the foreign minister's general comments. Any relevant comments

would suffice as an answer. Yet questions that ask for clarification or confirmation of particular issues usually embody journalistic preferences to some degree.

Example 8 (Zhu; 2000; UK; English)

1. J	<p>I am from the financial times.</p> <p>Premier Zhu, there have been some Chinese academics recently suggest you that China announce a timetable for the liberalization of the capital account.</p>	
2. J	<p>In this connection, I would like to ask, is this a good idea?</p> <p>When would China allow foreign mutual funds to invest in the local markets?</p> <p>When would China merge the A and B shares stock markets?</p> <p>And when will China allow the full convertibility of the RMB?</p>	

The first question in example 8 is a yes/no question. According to Raymond (2003), type-conforming answers, which involve ‘yes’ or ‘no’ token are preferred responses to yes/no questions. By asking a yes/no question, the journalist limited the scope of the ensuing response. Moreover, the question ‘Is this a good idea’ was based on the statement that some Chinese academics had suggested that the government should announce a timetable for the liberalization of the capital account. The Chinese academics’ support largely increased the feasibility of the liberalization of the capital account. In other words, the journalist’s own preference toward a ‘yes’ answer to the question was backed up by the Chinese academics. Pomerantz (1975:66) argues that “massively throughout conversational materials, agreements are organized as preferred activities and disagreements as dispreferred activities”. Sacks (1987) also

proposes that a preference for agreement is embodied in the different practices for producing agreement and disagreement that include built-in methods for achieving agreement over disagreement. In this example, the journalist exerted pressure on the Premier to answer in agreement with both the Chinese academics and his own preference. The preference for agreement was confirmed by the fact that all the three following ‘when’ questions were based on a ‘yes’ answer to the first question. Example 8 is a typical case where yes/no question was used together with a tilted preface to favor one particular answer over another. More detailed discussion is presented in section 2.3 about how preference is incorporated into questions to make questions more adversarial.

#### **2.2.4 Summary**

Setting agendas, incorporating presuppositions and preference into questions are three general strategies that journalists employed when asking questions in CPPCs. Agenda setting constrains the topical and action domain of the ensuing response. Presuppositions are very hard to address directly when deeply embedded in a question and are thus taken as given information. Journalistic preference that is incorporated into a question exerts pressure on politicians in the hope that their answers align with the journalists’ views. In addition to making questions more complex and carefully designed, these three strategies are also very useful in adversarial questioning. In the following section, I examine how the three strategies are embodied in various linguistic formations to create adversarial questions in CPPCs.

## **2.3 Linguistic Realizations of Adversarial Questioning Strategies**

With the increasingly adversarial journalistic treatment of politicians in most developed countries and regions, adversarial questioning was also observed in CPPCs, where journalists from all over the world had chances to raise questions. Having discussed the basic structure of questions in CPPCs and three general questioning strategies, I move on to analyze how journalists make use of agenda setting, presuppositions and preference to make their questions more adversarial and the various linguistic realizations of adversarial questioning. Based on existing studies and a thorough analysis of my data, I propose that the journalists in my data did adversarial questioning through 1) the use of question prefaces that set the topical domain and involved presuppositions; 2) the use of various types of interrogatives that showed the journalist's preference to varying degrees; and 3) the lexical choice that constituted an offense to the politicians or the party and government they represent.

### **2.3.1 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Question Prefaces**

Prefatory statements are very useful to construct a context and establish the relevance of the subsequent question. These prefaces can be neutral, favorable or unfavorable to the politician or the party and government they represent. As Clayman and Heritage (2002b:195) assert, "prefaced question designs give interviewers room to maneuver". A neutral prefatory statement may merely perform the function of setting the context for the question to follow. However, an unfavorable preface can add to the adversarialness regardless of the type of the subsequent question. Prefacing questions

with an unfavorable statement was thus frequently used to pose a challenge to the politicians in CPPCs.

Example 9 (Wen; 2008; US; English)

1. J	<p>I'm Jimmy Walker with CNN.</p> <p>Premier Wen, you have the biggest and toughest job in the world. I want to ask a question about two issues that begin with the English letter T. One is Tibet. There is turmoil and violence in Tibet. And China is accused of cracking down on peaceful demonstrations there. The Dalai Lama calls it a cultural genocide. In the latest development, some are advocating a boycott of the Olympics</p> <p>What do you say to these?</p> <p>The other question is Taiwan...(text omitted)</p>	
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In example 9, the journalist from CNN asked two heavily prefaced questions about Tibet and Taiwan. In the preface of the first question, the journalist brought up a series of incidents in Tibet that tarnished the image of the Chinese government. Even though the question itself was not tilted to favor a particular type of answer, the adversarialness was built up in the preface by accusing the Chinese government of cracking down peaceful demonstrations and cultural genocide in Tibet.

Example 10 (Wen; 2008; UK; English)

1. J	<p>Thank you, Premier.</p> <p>Financial Times.</p> <p>I have two questions, only one of them beginning with T...(text omitted)</p>	
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	Second question: I was struck by your introduction, in which you said Chinese leadership no longer blindly follows old conventions. It has always been a convention as far as I remember in China, never to talk directly to the Dalai Lama. If you look at other countries, where they have long-running internal problems, like South Africa and Northern Ireland for example, they have only been settled by leaders of vision who agreed to talk to their enemies or their opponents.	
2. J	On the basis that the Dalai Lama is not seeking independence, would Chinese leaders be showing greater vision to invite him to Beijing for direct talks?	

In example 10, the British journalist made two propositions in the question preface. He pointed out an inconsistency between what the politician had just said and the treatment of Dalai Lama. He then used leaders in other countries that had successfully solved similar problems through peaceful talk as models for the Chinese leaders to follow. The implication was that if the Chinese leaders would not follow the models to encourage talks with Dalai Lama, they did not have vision and they just blindly followed old conventions. Based on the two adversarial propositions, the actual question ‘would Chinese leaders be showing greater vision to invite him to Beijing for direct talks’, called for agreement and strongly favored an affirmative answer from the politician. Compared with example 9, where the actual question requested the politician’s general view, the actual question in example 10, together with its preface, exerted more pressure on the politician to give an answer that aligned with the journalist’s preference. As can be seen from the two examples, unfavorable question prefaces can build the overall adversarialness of a question. But the adversarialness

can only be brought to full play when they are used together with particular types of questions.

### 2.3.2 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Interrogatives

Adversarialness can be conveyed through different types of questions. Although seeking information is an important function of questions, it is by no means the only function. Interrogatively formatted utterances can make assertions (Sidnell, 2009), perform requests and challenges (Koshik, 2002), express entitlement, hostility, or deference (Gnisci and Pontecorvo, 2004, Rendle-Short, 2007), and support and attack face (Gnisci, 2008). The major classes of question types identified by different researchers (Bull, 1994, Heritage and Roth, 1995, Quirk et al., 1985) are yes/no-, tag, wh-, alternative and declarative questions (Table 1). As no tag questions were found in the CPPC data, I will focus on the other four types of questions and examine how they can be utilized to perform challenges and convey adversarialness.

**Table 1. Different Types of Questions and Their Functions**

Question Types	Functions
Yes/no questions (Negated yes/no questions)	1) Constrain topical/action agenda 2) Show preference for an answer that has damaging implication to the politician when combined with unfavorable question prefaces
Wh- questions	1) Create conducive environment for deeply embedded presuppositions 2) Vehicles of accusation
Alternative questions	1) Place politicians in a dilemma by making all the alternatives undesirable
Declarative questions	1) Extremely coercive
Tag questions	1) Show strong preference for a particular

	type of answer
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### 2.3.2.1 Yes/no Questions

Yes/no-questions exert pressure on politicians as they constrain both the topical and action domains of the ensuing response. As have been discussed in section 2.2, according to Raymond (2003), yes/no-questions show a preference toward type-conforming responses, which contain a 'yes' or 'no' because they accept the terms and presuppositions embodied in the prior questions. Nonconforming responses however, reject the design and the embedded propositions in the yes/no-questions and therefore indicate the answerer's trouble in answering them. When used together with a challenging prefatory statement, yes/no-questions appear more assertive (Clayman et al., 2007) and may manage to convey preference toward one type of answer over another, hence even more pressure on the politician.

Example 11 (Wen; 2005; US; Chinese)

1. J	<p>Hello, Premier Wen. I am Zheng Qian with Bloomberg. Thank you spokesperson for giving me this opportunity to ask a question.</p> <p>Premier Wen, a lot of social problems have cropped up in the course of rapid economic development in China, one of them is the wealth gap. To address problems facing agriculture, rural areas and farmers is on top of your agenda.</p>	<p>Wen zong ni hao wo shi zheng qian mei guo peng bo xin wen xie xie fa yan ren gei wo zhe ge ji hui ti ge wen ti</p> <p>wen zong zhong guo jing ji zai kuai su fa zhan zhong chu xian le hen duo she hui wen ti bao kuo pin fu cha ju jie jue san nong wen ti shi nin zui da de yuan wang</p>
2. J	<p>But some experts say unless farmers are granted the right to use land, or are allowed to own land, it is impossible to solve the problems they face.</p>	<p>ke shi you zhuan jia shuo chu fei jia qiang nong min tu di shi yong quan huo zhe huan gei nong min tu di chan quan 'san nong' wen ti ke neng hen nan de dao jie jue</p> <p>nin ren wei ba tu di chan quan huan gei nong</p>

	Do you think it is possible to give them land ownership?	min shi ke neng de ma
3. P	China's reform started in the countryside. China's rural reform started with giving farmers the land management right. Rural land is under collective ownership.	zhong guo de gai ge shi cong nong cun kai shi de nong cun de gai ge shi cong tu di de jing ying quan kais hi de nong min de tu di shi ji ti suo you
4. P	In the early days of reform and opening-up, the first step we took in the countryside was to establish the household contract responsibility system. Farmers were given the right to manage their land, and such right of the farmers has been extended again and again. Now I can answer you directly that farmers' autonomy of production and management will not change for a long time. Actually, it will never change.	wo men zai gai ge kai shi de shi hou jiu shi xing le jia ting cheng bao jing ying de ji ben jing ji zhi du jiu shi shuo nong min you you dui tu di de sheng chan he jing ying zi zhu quan yi hou zhe ge quan li bu duan de dao yan chang xian zai wo ke yi zhi jie hui da ni nong min dui tu di de jing ying sheng chan zi zhu quan chang qi bu bian ye jiu shi yong yuan bu bian

In the question preface of example 11, the journalist brought up a social problem that was on top of the premier's agenda (Para. 1) and at the same time suggested a possible solution, which was advocated by some experts (Para. 2). The subsequent yes/no question requested the premier's confirmation on whether the suggested solution would possibly be accepted by the premier (Para. 2). A simple type-conforming 'yes' or 'no' would suffice as a full answer to the question despite the fact that the journalist also showed a preference toward agreement or a 'yes' answer, which was supported by some experts. However, the premier's non-conforming response<sup>3</sup> indicated his trouble in answering the question (Para. 3, 4). He emphasized that the farmers' right to land use would never change in order to downplay the fact that 'rural land is under collective ownership', which, in other words, meant that farmers did not have land ownership. By saying that the farmers' right to land use

<sup>3</sup> The politician's answer is examined here in order to analyze how yes/no questions constrain the response and show the journalist's preference. How politicians answer questions is discussed in more detail in chapter 3.

would never change also indicated that the existing land policy was not going to change (Para. 4). It is obvious that the answer was actually negative. As the design of the question exerted pressure on the premier by making a direct ‘no’ a dispreferred answer, the premier had to provide a non-conforming answer to avoid the damaging effects of a ‘no’ answer.

Compared to ordinary yes/no-questions, negated yes/no questions that begin with ‘Isn’t it...’ or ‘Doesn’t that...’ are even more effective in performing challenges and exerting pressure. They operate on the preferences embedded in questions and are a very strong way to project an expected answer (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b). Therefore, negated yes/no questions are treated as assertions of opinions and positions rather than questions (Heritage, 2002). Heritage (2002) further argues that neither questioners nor answerers treat negated yes/no questions as doing questioning. Questioners use negated yes/no questions to express an opinion or criticism of the answer's position while answerers respond to them by showing agreement or disagreement with the questioner. Although negated yes/no interrogatives are grammatically formed as questions, their status as questions are denied. They are employed as adversarial questioning strategy in news interviews and press conferences as they are highly assertive and display a strong preference toward one particular answer over another.

Example 12 (Wen; 2011; UK; English)

1. J	<p>Good morning, Premier Wen. Jeff Tyre from the Financial Times.</p> <p>I'd like to ask a question about the Chinese currency policy. The economy is now growing very</p>	
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	strongly in China. You've recovered very quickly. And the inflation is now rising almost close to the 3% target you set for the year. So regardless of pressure and comments from other countries,	
2. J	isn't it now in China's interest to begin appreciating your currency?  Thank you.	
3. P	First I don't think the RMB is undervalued. Let's take a look at a set of figures here. We did a survey on the exports of 37 countries to China last year. Sixteen out of the 37 countries saw an increase in their exports to China. The total exports of European Union, where you are from, dropped by 20.3%, yet its exports to China only fell by 1.53%...(text omitted)	di yi wo ren wei ren min bi de bi zhi mei you di gu rang wo men kan yi zu shu ju qu nian wo men tong ji le 37 ge guo jia dui zhong guo de chu kou qing kuang qi zhong you 16 ge guo jia dui zhong guo de chu kou shi zeng zhang de jiu shi xian sheng suo zai de ou meng di qu chu kou zong ti xia jiang 20.3% dan shi dui zhong guo de chu kou zhi xia jiang 15.3%...(text omitted)

In example 12, the British journalist embedded the presupposition that it was the right time for the Chinese currency (RMB) to appreciate by referring to China's recent economic situation (Para. 1). Instead of asking for the premier's opinion, the subsequent negative yes/no question asserted that 'it is now in China's own interest to begin appreciating the currency'. In example 11, in spite of the journalist's preference toward a positive answer that would align with the presupposition in the question preface, a type-conforming 'no' would still suffice as a preferred way of answering. However in this case, the use of negated yes/no question displayed a much stronger preference for an affirmative response (Para. 2). The journalist was actually criticizing China for delaying the appreciation of the Chinese currency when there was so much pressure from other countries and when appreciation was in China's own interest. The politician did not answer the question with a yes or no. He refuted the journalist's

assertion by stating the fact that the RMB was not undervalued (Para. 3).

### 2.3.2.2 *Wh-questions*

While yes/no-questions limit both the topical and action agenda and exert pressure on the politicians by conveying preference toward one particular answer, wh-questions create an hospitable environment for deeply embedded presuppositions that can be put to damaging effect (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b) and also act as vehicles of accusation.

Example 13 (Wen; 2004; Germany; English)

1. J	<p>Hello. I'm with Air de German which translates de guo dian shi yi tai er tai ye you.</p> <p>About the constitution, I was impressed to see how little Chinese citizens seem to care for the changes in the constitution. Wherever we talked to them in the last weeks and months, they told us that the constitution and rights and freedom that are guaranteed on paper don't mean much to them, as long as the Communist Party, the ruling party, considers itself above the law. So people complained in reality that even though the constitution is modern and progressive, there is still no right to assembly, no real right to freedom of speech and no real right to press freedom.</p>	
2. J	<p>So my question is what do you, Premier Wen plan to do to make sure that in the future the law is above the Communist Party rather than today that the Communist Party seems to be above the law?</p> <p>Thanks.</p>	

In example 13, the whole question preface was a criticism of the reality that the Communist Party overrode the law and that the Chinese people’s rights to assembly and freedom of speech were not real (Para. 1). But the following wh-question invited the Premier to talk about what could be done to change the reality rather than asking for the Premier’s views on the issue (Para. 2). The criticism was deeply embedded in the question and thus much harder to be addressed directly. Compared with yes/no questions that give chances to the politicians to directly respond to the presuppositions, wh-questions take the presupposition for granted, distance the presupposition away from the surface of the question, and therefore, preempt the politician’s disagreement with and attack on the presupposition.

Moreover, wh- especially ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions can be employed to perform accusations rather than seeking information. The ‘how could you’ and ‘why did you’ question formats are in essence accountability questions, which under the guise of calling for the answerer's account for their problematic activities, imply that these questions are unanswerable as no such account can be given (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b, Emmertsen, 2007). These accountability questions are highly confrontational and involve high level of adversarialness.

Example 14 (Wen; 2008; France; English)

1. J	<p>Thank you very much. I'm with AFP (L'Agence France-Presse).</p> <p>Many of the people in this room would love to get on an airplane to Lhasa right now to see what's going on up there. We are hearing that foreigners are not being allowed into Tibet and some journalists have already been expelled. This comes</p>	
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	despite increasing calls overseas for foreign media and independent observers to be allowed in there to assess what has really happened.	
2. J	<p>What's your response to these calls to let independent eyes in there?</p> <p>And if China is so sure of its version of events there, why not let the outside world in to see what's happening? Thank you.</p>	
3. P	We understand the international news media are following the situation in Lhasa. I can tell you that the incident in Lhasa is basically resolved. Lhasa will be open. We will consider organizing foreign media to visit Tibet and find out the actual situation there.	wo men li jie ge guo xin wen mei ti dui la sa ju shi de guan zhu wo ke yi gen da jia jiang la sa zhe ci shi jian yi jing ji ben de dao ping xi la sa bi jiang shi kai fang de

No ‘why did you’ or ‘how could you’ question was found in my data. But I did find this ‘why not’ question shown in example 14 quite similar to an accountability question. The journalist made two propositions in the question preface: 1) Many international journalists were very concerned about and would love to know what was happening in Tibet, and 2) Some foreign journalists had been expelled and foreigners were not allowed into Tibet, which was opposed to what the international society called for (Para. 1). Two questions were asked, the latter of which implied that there was no reason for China to stop foreign journalist from visiting Tibet if China was doing the right thing there (Para. 2). In other words, the fact that foreign journalist were not allowed into Tibet indicated problems. The ‘why not’ question acted both as an accusation against the Chinese government’s unreasonable treatment of foreign journalists and a call for the government to remove the travel bans on foreign journalists. The premier’s subsequent response showed that he took the question as an accusation and a suggestion. He did not answer the question by providing reasons

why foreign journalists had not been allowed into Tibet. Instead, he showed his understanding for foreign journalists’ concerns and also he would consider allowing them into Tibet in the near future.

### 2.3.2.3 *Alternative Questions*

Unlike wh-questions that act as vehicles of accusation, alternative questions or disjunctive questions are used to place the politician in what Clayman and Heritage (2002b) call a “fork”, which means the alternatives given to the politicians are all undesirable and whichever alternative the politician takes will lead to undesirable consequences.

Example 15 (Li; 2005; US; English)

1. J	<p>Thank you. I’m from Associated Press.</p> <p>If I may ask another question about the North Korea nuclear talks. You have been trying for several months now to arrange a new round of talks with no apparent success. China has quite a lot of influence over North Korea as is its main supplier of aid.</p>	
2. J	<p>If North Korea appears to be completely unwilling to take part in these talks, what steps will China be willing to take to compel North Korea to participate?</p>	
3. J	<p>For instance, will China be willing to cut off shipments of oil or other aid or what other steps might China be willing to take to get North Korea to participate and to reach a settlement?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	

4. P	I want to answer your question in a very simple way. The United States of America is a sovereign state. Democratic People’s Republic of Korea is also a sovereign state... (text omitted) You just mentioned a hypothetical scenario. You said ‘to take part in bla bla’. Normally, I do not answer hypothetical questions.	wo zhi xiang jian dan de gao su ni mei guo shi yi ge zhu quan guo jia chao xian min zhu zhu yi gong he guo ye shi yi ge zhu quan guo jia...(text omitted) ni gang cai ti dao le yi ge jia she de wen ti ni shuo jia ru ru he ru he wo yi ban de bu hui da jia she xing wen ti
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In example 15, based on the fact that China failed to arrange a new round of North Korea nuclear talks, the US journalist posed a question concerning what actions China would be willing to take if North Korea completely refused to take part in these talks (Para. 1, 2). The journalist further provided different alternatives to the Chinese Foreign Minister (Para. 3). Making explicit statements of either cutting off shipment of oil or other aid to North Korea, or taking other actions was not desirable for China because China and North Korea had quite good relations. However, by saying no such actions China would be willing to take was also problematic since that might indicate that China did not take the due responsibility for maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula. In response, the foreign minister refused to choose any of these alternatives, arguing instead that the questions were hypothetical.

**2.3.2.4 Declarative Questions**

Finally, declarative questions are also used to do adversarial questioning by some journalists in CPPCs. According to Quirk et al. (1985:814), declarative questions are characterized by final rising intonation. Danet and Bogoch (1980) examine how different types of questions coerce an answer and find that declarative questions are the most coercive because they make a statement rather than ask a real question. In my data, declarative questions were posed by both English-speaking and Chinese-

speaking journalists. The journalists explicitly pointed out that the statements they made were questions, even though these declarative questions were not characterized by final rising intonation for the case of English, and by higher phrase curve and higher pitch of sentence final syllable (Yuan et al., 2002) for Chinese.

Example 16 (Wen; 2009; UK; English)

1. J	Premier Wen, I'm with Financial Times.  You have mentioned in your previous response, China has huge domestic needs for spending, particularly in rural areas.	
2. J	In that context, it doesn't make sense for China to have two trillions dollars of reserves, which is the money you effectively lend to richer countries. Second question...	

In example 16, the first actual question did not sound like a question at all due to its falling intonation. But the journalist made it very clear when he commenced the second question that the statement ‘it doesn’t make sense for China to have two trillions dollars of reserves...’ was in fact to be treated as a question (Para. 2). The journalist was accusing the Chinese government of holding huge foreign exchange reserves when there was a huge demand for investment in China’s rural areas (Para.1). This question was very adversarial in that the journalist was actually making assertions instead of asking questions. There was also a Chinese declarative question in my data.

Example 17 (Wen 2006; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	I know that I have to apologize to Premier Wen for my rude behavior	wo zi ji zhi dao wo shi ying gai xiang wen zong li biao shi dao qian gang cai wo zhe ge
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	just now.	cu ye de dong
2. J	<p>I want to ask a question about environmental pollution. As we all know, China is now a country with solid foundation of technology. As far as I am concerned, the amount of waste, my pronunciation (of waste) is not standard, that is produced every day reaches 17, 857 metric tons.</p> <p>Second, each person produces 1.28 kilos of waste and this number is increasing by 10% (every year). I am from Shanghai. In Shanghai the water is no longer drinkable and the color is yellow. No matter what kind of achievements we can score in terms of industrial development,</p>	<p>zuo wo suo yao ti de wen ti shi huan jing wu ran wen ti wo men zhi dao jin tian zhong guo shi yi ge fei chang ju you ke ji de ji chu de guo jia zai wo zhe li suo zhi dao mei tian xian zai zhi zao de la se dang ran wo de fa yin bu yi ding biao zhun le se 17857 gong dun</p> <p>di erg e mei ren mei tian yao zhi zao 1.28 gong jin er qie xian zai zhe ge le se zai yi 10% de bi li xiang shang shang sheng wo shi cong shang hai lai de shang hai de shui jian zhi jiu bu neng chi le er qie dou shi huang de wo men jin tian de gong ye fa zhan de zai hao</p>
3. J	<p>if the water in the cities of the country is no longer drinkable, Mr. Premier, think about it, probably your achievements at the end of the term of the office will dwindle into nothing. This is my question.</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>lian wo men min zhong chi de shui dou you wen ti de hua zong li xian sheng ni xiang yi xiang ni de jiang lai feng gong wei ye ke neng ye jiu hua wei wu you le↓ zhe shi wo de wen ti</p> <p>xie xie ni</p>
4. P	Please tell me which news agency you are affiliated with?	ni shuo xia ni shi na ge xin wen dan wei de
5. J	Let me tell you now. I am from Taiwan with Human Rights News Agency.	wo xian zai jiang wo shi tai wan lai de ren quan xin wen tong xun she

Like the declarative question in example 16, it is very hard to tell if the journalist was asking a question or stating all the numbers and facts so as to accuse the government before he explicitly pointed out at the end that ‘this is my question’. Both declarative questions in example 16 and 17 were highly adversarial as they made very strong assertions that had damaging effects on the Chinese government.

### 2.3.2.5 Summary

To sum up, in CPPCs, different types of interrogatives were utilized to do adversarial questioning. Yes/no and negated yes/no questions can exert a lot of pressure on the politicians by constraining the topical and action agendas of the question as well as conveying the journalists' preferences toward one type of answer over another. Wh-questions provide a hospitable environment for deeply embedded presuppositions that can however, be put to damaging effect. The 'why did you' and 'how could you' formats can perform accusatory function and are thus very confrontational and hostile. Alternative questions can be employed to place the politician in a dilemma, where choosing either alternative will lead to undesirable consequences. Declarative questions can be used to make strong and hostile statements and coerce an answer from the politician.

### 2.3.3 Adversarial Questioning through the Use of Certain Lexicon

In the previous two sections, I have discussed hostile questioning through the use of prefatory statements and different types of questions. The combination of hostile prefaces and a question, which involves damaging presuppositions or shows preference toward a particular answer, adds to the adversarialness of the whole question. But that does not necessarily mean simple questions are less adversarial than prefaced complex questions. Journalists can ask very hostile simple questions through the choice of their lexicon.

Example 18 (Jiang; 2002; Hong Kong; Chinese)

1. J	At such an early time, you said that you support Mr. Tung (for the renewal of term of office), does it indicate that Mr. Tung has already	xian zai na me zao ni men jiu shuo zhi chi dong xian sheng hui bu hui gei ren gan jue shi <b>nei ding qin dian</b> le dong xian sheng ne
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	been reappointed (by the higher level of authorities of the Communist Party)?	
2. P	Everything has been done according to Hong Kong's basic law and the election law... (text omitted) I think you news media people still have much to learn. You are very familiar with the western practices. But you are too young. Do you understand? ... (text omitted) But the questions you ask over and over again are too simple, sometimes naïve, you understand? ... (text omitted) You have to be responsible for any inappropriateness in your reporting in future. I did not say we have reappointed Mr, Tung or anything that indicates that... (text omitted) You are naïve.	ren he de shi hai shi an zhao xiang gang de ji ben fa an zhao xuan ju fa... (text omitted) wo gan jue ni men xin wen jie hai yao xue xi ni men fei chang shu xi xi fang de yi tao li lun dan ni men bi jing hai too young ming bai zhe yi si ma... (text omitted) dan wen lai wen qu de wen ti a jiu too simple sometimes naïve dong le mei you... (text omitted) zai xuan chuan shang jiang lai ru guo ni men bao dao you pian cha ni men yao fu ze de wo mei you shuo yao qin ding mei you ren he zhe ge yi si... (text omitted) ni men a naïve

In example 18, the Hong Kong journalist only asked a simple question. However, it was quite adversarial because the use of the words ‘nei ding’ (decided at the higher level of authorities but not yet officially announced) and ‘qin dian’ (originally means ‘appointed by the emperor’, the connotation here is ‘appointed by the higher level of authorities of the Communist Party’). These two words are very offensive because they indicate that the chief executive of Hong Kong was appointed by the Communist Party leaders rather than elected through procedures according to the law. The use of the two words offended the politician and the government he represented, especially as they were making efforts to build a democratic image. The offensiveness of the question was shown in the politician’s emotional response where he attacked the journalist.

Adversarialness can therefore be conveyed through the journalist’s lexical choice as well as the use of prefatory statements and various types of questions that either show journalistic preference or put the politician in a dilemma. It can also be conveyed

through the combination of the above three strategies. Now that we have an idea of how journalists do adversarial questioning, I move on to answer the second research question in this chapter. Did journalists present at CPPCs behave in line with the literature that shows journalists from developed countries are more adversarial than their counterparts from developing countries? To answer this question, I carried out a quantitative study to investigate the difference in the level of adversarialness of questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries in CPPCs.

## **2.4 A Comparison of the Adversarialness of Questions from Journalists of Different backgrounds**

The previous research suggests a stark contrast between journalists from developed and developing countries regarding the level of adversarialness involved in their questioning strategies (Adkins, 1992, Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Cohen, 1989, Eriksson, 2011, Jiang, 2006, Rendle-Short, 2007). However, not much research has been done that compares the adversarialness of questions from journalists of different backgrounds. The present study aims to fill this gap by comparing the adversarialness of the questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries in CPPCs, where both domestic and foreign journalists had chances to ask questions. Based on the literature, it is expected that there would be a major difference between the adversarialness involved in the questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries. My research hypothesis therefore is: Journalists from developed countries generally asked more adversarial questions than Chinese journalists.



### 2.4.1 Methodology

The independent variables of this study are two groups of journalists. Chinese journalists refer to the journalists that are affiliated with any Mainland China-based media corporations. Journalists from developed countries refer to the journalists who are affiliated with any organization in countries or regions that are classified into the “developed regions” according to UN Statistics Division data (2011). The developed regions listed by the UN Statistics Division data are North America, Europe excluding countries of Eastern Europe and of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Japan, Australia and New Zealand. In this study, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau are also included in the developed countries group instead of the Chinese group. Despite the fact that Taiwan was handed back to China (Republic of China, now referred to as Taiwan) after WWII, and Hong Kong and Macau were handed over to China (People’s Republic of China) more than 10 years ago, the socio-political and economic situations<sup>4</sup> in these three regions are still very different from those in mainland China due to their colonial experiences and different government policies. Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau have been practicing capitalist economic and political systems whereas Mainland China uses a socialist system.

The data for this study were drawn from 15 recorded press conferences held during NPC and CPPCC sessions between 1998, 2000-2011.<sup>5</sup> The government officials that took questions in the data were two premiers, Zhu Rongji and Wen Jiabao, and two foreign ministers, Li Zhaoxing and Yang Jiechi. In total, there were 51 questions from the developed countries group and 50 questions from the Chinese group. The 51

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<sup>4</sup> The GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP) per capita of China was USD 4,400 in 2010, as compared with USD 35, 700 (2010) of Taiwan, USD 45, 900 (2010) of Hong Kong, and USD 33, 000 (2009) of Macau (CIA The World Factbook, 2011).

<sup>5</sup> The 1999 conference was not included as it is not available on the relevant websites.

questions posed by journalists from developed countries were from the years 1998, 2000, 2001<sup>6</sup>, 2003, 2005, 2007, 2009, 2010 and 2011. The 50 questions from Chinese journalists were from all the years between 1998 and 2011 except 1999 in order to get similar number of questions to the developed countries group. The reason for including more years for the Chinese group is that in every press conference, they were given fewer chances to ask questions than the developed countries group. All the Chinese journalists asked questions in Mandarin Chinese while journalists from developed countries either used Chinese or English to pose their questions. As the press conferences were bilingual, all questions were consecutively interpreted by an interpreter. In my analysis, I focused on the original questions rather than analyzing the interpreter's version, be they in Chinese or English.

The dependent variable of this study is the level of adversarialness of the journalistic questions. All 50 questions from 50 different Chinese journalists were compared with the 51 questions from 51 different journalists from developed countries on their level of adversarialness. The level of adversarialness was operationalized in terms of various question design and content features based on a question analysis system developed by Clayman and Heritage (2002a) and Clayman et al. (2006). As all the features identified in Clayman et al.'s question analysis system can be found and are acceptable in the Chinese language and questioning practice, this system, including the coding standards, was used to assess both English and Chinese questions.

Every question was assessed for their level of adversarialness on four dimensions: initiative; directness; assertiveness; and adversarialness. These dimensions are further

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<sup>6</sup> Only 35 minutes, which is about a quarter, of the 2001 conference data are available on the websites.

decomposed into various indicators related to question design and content features (Table 2.). *Initiative* is decomposed into statement preface, multiple questions and follow-up questions. In terms of coding, the presence of prefaces and follow-up questions were given 1 whereas the absence of them resulted in 0. The coding of multiple questions ranged from 0 to 2. A single question was given 0 and two questions were given 1. Asking more than two questions resulted in 2.<sup>7</sup>

**Table 2. The Question Analysis System**

(Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a)

Dimension	Indicator	Sub-categories	Coding
Initiative	Statement preface	No preface	0
		Preface	1
	Multiple questions	1 Q	0
		2 Qs	1
		≥ 2 Qs	2
	Follow-up questions	Not a follow-up Q	0
		Follow-up Q	1
Directness	Other-referencing frames	Willingness	0
		Ability	1
		No frame	2
	Self-referencing frames	Permission ‘Can I/could I/ May I’	0
		Intension ‘I’d like to ask/I want to ask’	1
		Intension ‘I wonder’	2
		No frame	3
Assertiveness	Preface tilt	No tilt	0
		Innocuous tilt	1
		Unfavorable tilt	2
	Negative questions	Not a negative Q	0
Adversarialness	Preface adversarialness	1 negative Q	1
		Non adversarial preface	0
		oppositional preface focus of Q	1
		Oppositional preface presupposed	2

<sup>7</sup> The coding of ‘Multiple questions’ was slightly different from Clayman and Heritage’s question analysis system. Instead of giving 0 to ‘single question’ and 1 to ‘2 questions’, the range was enlarged from 0 to 2 by including ‘≥ 2 questions’. This was because asking 2 questions was the norm accepted by both the politicians and most journalists in CPPCs. Asking more than 2 questions was coded 2.

	Global adversarialness	Not oppositional overall	0
		Oppositional overall	1
	Accountability questions	Not an accountability Q	0
		Milder form ‘Why did you...’	1
		More hostile form ‘How could you...’	2

*Directness* is decomposed into other-referencing and self-referencing frames. Other-referencing frames involve some reference to the politician’s ability or willingness to answer the question. According to Clayman and Heritage (2002a), willingness frames are more deferential than ability frames. Reference to willingness (coded 0) can be embodied in the forms of ‘will you/would you’ in English and ‘nin ke bu ke yi’ in Chinese. Reference to ability (coded 1) can take the form of ‘can you/could you’ in English and ‘nin neng bu neng/nin neng fou’ in Chinese. If no frame was used, it was coded 2. Self-referencing frames involve some reference to the journalist’s own intentions or capacity to ask a question. Clayman et al. (2006) treat ‘Can I/May I’ (‘Wo neng bu neng/ (wo) qing wen in Chinese’) forms (coded 0) as more deferential than ‘I’d like to ask/I want to ask’ (‘wo xiang wen’ in Chinese) (coded 1), which again show more respect than ‘I wonder’ (‘(wo) you yi ge wen ti’ in Chinese) (coded 2). If no frame was used, it was coded 3.

*Assertiveness* is measured in terms of negative questions and preface tilt. In terms of coding, the presence of a negative question was given 1 whereas the absence of it was given 0. Preface tilt involves the preference toward a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer embedded in the question preface. Preface tilt can be either innocuous (coded 1), which means the tilt is not damaging to the politician, or unfavorable (coded 2), which means the preface tilts toward a proposition that is damaging to the politician or government. No tilt was given 0.

The last dimension *adversarialness* is decomposed into preface adversarialness, global adversarialness and accountability questions. Preface adversarialness concerns whether the content is critical of the politician or the government in general. There are different levels of preface adversarialness. When the question merely invites the politician to respond to the criticism contained in the preface, the preface is just the focus of question (coded 1), which is not as adversarial as when the criticism is presupposed in the preface (coded 2). A non-adversarial preface was given 0. Clayman and Heritage (2002a) also point out that global adversarialness requires both the preface and question to be hostile if it is not a simple question. The coding was 1 only when both the preface and actual question were oppositional. Global adversarialness usually occurs when the topic of a question is hostile and politically sensitive. Any other situation was given 0. Accountability questions take the forms of ‘why did you’ and ‘how could you’ in English and ‘ni wei shen me’ and ‘ni zen me ke yi/neng’ in Chinese. Clayman also argues that the ‘why did you’ form (coded 1) is milder than the ‘how could you’ form (coded 2). No accountability question resulted in 0.

Every question was examined carefully and given a code for each indicator, which then was added up for a total score, ranging from 0 to 25. The higher the total score, the more adversarial the question is. Example 19 shows how the coding system works.

Example 19 (Wen 2003 US Chinese)

1. J	Hello Mr. Premier, thank you.  I want to ask, with the deepening of China’s reform and opening up, are you going to remove the	Ni hao zong li xie xie  Wo xiang wen yi xia sui zhe zhong guo yue lai yue kai fang de zhe ge ju shi nin hui bu hui yao qiu zhen dui Zhao Ziyang
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	<p>restrictions of personal freedom placed on Zhang Ziyang, the former premier, with whom you once worked, and also let him come back to work?</p> <p>And I also want to ask about the latest development of the Iraq issue, any comments?</p> <p>Thank you.</p>	<p>xian sheng jiu shi ni ceng jing bang mang gong zuo guo de qian zhong hua ren min gong he guo zong li dui ta yao qiu qu xiao dui ta ge ren zi you de yi xie xian zhi rang ta hui fu zheng chang gong zuo</p> <p>hai you xiang wen zhen dui yi la ke wen ti zui xin de zhuang tai, you he ping lun</p> <p>xie xie</p>
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The question in example 19 was prefaced with a short statement of the current political situation, therefore it was coded 1 for “statement preface”. The journalist asked 2 questions in one turn (coded 1). No follow-up question was allowed (coded 0). In terms of directness, the journalist used self-referencing frame ‘I want to...’ (coded 1), while other referencing frames were absent (coded 2). Regarding assertiveness, the journalist used a short but tilted prefatory statement. By referring to the deepening of reform and opening up in China, the journalist was trying to indicate that keeping the restriction on personal freedom of the former premier was inappropriate and should thus be lifted. As the journalist showed preference for a ‘yes’ answer from the politician, this prefatory statement, combined with the ensuing question, was classified as showing unfavorable tilt (coded 2). No negative question was used (coded 0). In terms of adversarialness, the prefatory statement was not adversarial by itself. As mentioned above, it was assertive when combined with the following yes/no questions. Therefore it was coded 0 for “preface adversarialness”. However, this question displayed a high level of “global adversarialness” in that the topic, June Fourth Incident, was and still is controversial in China. In all official contexts including the history textbooks in schools, very little information was provided, asking such a question was thus considered very challenging (coded 1). In addition,

no accountability question was posed (coded 0). Adding up the score for each indicator (shaded in Table 3.), the total score is 8 for the question in example 19.

**Table 3. The Adversarialness Score of the Question in Example 19**

Dimension	Indicator	Sub-categories	Coding
Initiative	Statement preface	No preface	0
		Preface	1
	Multiple questions	1 Q	0
		2 Qs	1
		≥ 2 Qs	2
	Follow-up questions	Not a follow-up Q	0
		Follow-up Q	1
Directness	Other-referencing frames	Willingness	0
		Ability	1
		No frame	2
	Self-referencing frames	Permission ‘Can I/could I/ May I’	0
		Intension ‘I’d like to ask/I want to ask’	1
		Intension ‘I wonder’	2
		No frame	3
Assertiveness	Preface tilt	No tilt	0
		Innocuous tilt	1
		Unfavorable tilt	2
	Negative questions	Not a negative Q	0
		1 negative Q	1
Adversarialness	Preface adversarialness	Non adversarial preface	0
		oppositional preface focus of Q	1
		Oppositional preface presupposed	2
	Global adversarialness	Not oppositional overall	0
		Oppositional overall	1
	Accountability questions	Not an accountability Q	0
		Milder form ‘Why did you...’	1
		More hostile form ‘How could you...’	2
Total			8

## 2.4.2 Results

An independent t-test was carried out to show the difference between the two groups ( $t = -7.811$ ,  $df = 99$ , and  $p = 0.000$ ). This shows that there was a highly significant difference in scores of adversarialness between the questions from the Chinese and the developed countries group. In terms of the direction of the difference, questions from the developed countries group were more adversarial in general because the mean of their questions was much higher than that of their Chinese counterparts (Developed countries: mean=7.78, Chinese: mean=4.82). Therefore, the research hypothesis that questions from the developed countries group were generally more adversarial than those from Chinese journalists can be accepted.

In both groups of journalistic questions, there were not any follow-up questions by the same journalist or accountability questions. Only one negative question from the developed countries group was observed among the 101 questions. All the journalists invariably used prefatory statement to establish the relevance of their questions with one exception in the developed countries group (see Table 4.). However, the two groups of journalists appeared to differ a lot on all the other indicators of adversarialness. On the indicators ‘multiple questions’ and ‘other-referencing frames’, the total of Chinese journalists’ scores were 50 and 93 as opposed to 75 and 97 for journalists from developed countries. They differed even more on the use of ‘self-referencing frames’, ‘preface tilt’, ‘preface adversarialness’ as well as ‘global adversarialness’, with Chinese journalists scored 31, 4, 8, 4 respectively and their counterparts from developed countries scored 83, 28, 42, and 20.

**Table 4. Scores of Adversarialness Indicators for the Two Groups of Journalists**

	Scores of the Chinese Group	Scores of the Developed
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	based on 50 questions	Countries Group based on 51 questions
Statement preface	50	50
Multiple questions	50	75
Follow-up questions	0	0
Other-referencing frames	93	97
Self-referencing frames	31	83
Preface tilt	4	28
Negative questions	0	1
Preface adversarialness	8	42
Global adversarialness	4	20
Accountability questions	0	0

### 2.4.3 Discussion

The results of the quantitative study showed that Chinese journalists asked fewer questions in one turn, used more polite language and showed least damaging influence on politicians as compared with journalists from developed countries. This indicated that questions from the developed countries group were generally more adversarial than those from Chinese journalists. This finding is consistent with the literature that documents a growth in adversarialness in journalistic questions over the years in most developed countries (Adkins, 1992, Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Eriksson, 2011, Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004, Rendle-Short, 2007) and the literature that shows journalists from developing countries are still paying much homage to politicians (Brislin, 1997, Cohen, 1989, Jiang, 2006). The cultural and socio-political differences, particularly the state-media relationship, provide some possible interpretations of the significant difference in the adversarialness level between the two groups of journalists.

If we look at each indicator separately, there are some similarities in the Chinese and developed countries data. As I have mentioned in the results, no follow-up questions and accountability questions were found in the two groups. Only one negative question was observed from a journalist in the developed countries group. Greatbatch (Greatbatch, 1988) proposes that forms of talk can be arrayed along a continuum in terms of the structures of their turn-taking systems. At one end of this continuum is mundane conversation where turn taking is locally managed. At the other end are rituals and ceremonies whose turn-taking systems pre-specify the order in which turns should be taken as well as almost all the other important features that are locally managed in mundane conversations. CPPCs are at this end of the continuum, where turns were pre-allocated by the host politician and journalists were restricted to a single turn at talk although they could elaborate their turns in different ways. Given the large number of journalists bidding for the opportunity to raise a question, no journalists were given the chance to regain the floor and ask a follow-up question.

Regarding negative and accountability questions, as they do not occur frequently even in press conferences in the US (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a), it is not surprising that they were not found in CPPCs. Journalists from developed countries in China were more or less bound to show respect for the Chinese culture and values, which consider confrontations and conflicts undesirable (Chen et al., 1995) and place much emphasis on politeness, listening-centeredness and respect for people of higher social status (Gao, 1998). Furthermore, nearly half of the journalists from developed countries raised questions in Chinese instead of their native language. This might have made them more aware of the Chinese speaking practices. The cultural differences can also account for the Chinese journalists' more frequent use of other-referencing and self-

referencing frames (See Table 4.) when questioning politicians, compared to their counterparts from developed countries. However, Chinese journalists were observed to use self-referencing frames much more frequently than other-referencing frames (See Table 4.), whereas as native mandarin Chinese speakers, Taiwanese journalists showed a preference for other-referencing frames (5 out of 8 Taiwanese journalists in the data used other-referencing frames, with two of them using both self-referencing and other-referencing frames in their questions). This may result from the evolving differences between Peking Mandarin and Taiwan Mandarin. Compared with Peking Mandarin, which the vast majority of mainland Chinese journalists spoke, Taiwan Mandarin is found to have taken elements from different southern varieties of Chinese (Cheng, 1985). The differences in language use between the mainland and Taiwan may also be attributed to Taiwan's geographical isolation from the mainland and political isolation for more than 30 years.

Journalists from developed countries scored higher on all other indicators except 'follow-up questions', 'negative questions', 'accountability questions', which have been discussed above, in addition to 'statement preface'. Although all journalists prefaced their questions with statements, the functions of those statements varied. There were many more cases where journalists from developed countries combined the preface with yes/no questions. Clayman et al. (2007) argue that combining adversarial prefaces with yes/no questions shows a journalist's strong preference toward a particular type of answer and thus exerts a lot of pressure on the politician. In contrast, despite the fact that a few Chinese journalists used quite unfavorable prefaces to address a social problem or unhealthy economic conditions, they asked for the politician's specific comments on these issues rather than combining them with

yes/no questions to influence politicians. This confirms Jiang's study (2006) that shows that Chinese journalists request more comments while their American counterparts request more clarification and confirmation. And this also explains why there was a huge difference in the score of 'preface tilt' between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries.

Compared with Chinese journalists, journalists from developed countries displayed a much higher level of adversarialness in terms of the content of the questions, as reflected in 'preface adversarialness' and 'global adversarialness'. Journalists from developed countries were more likely to touch on politically controversial topics, embed hostile presuppositions in question prefaces, and raise questions that were oppositional to the politician and government. In China, the state-media relationship can have huge influence on how journalists treat politicians.

Although there may be variations in the level of freedom and openness of media among the developed countries under investigation in this study, the level of freedom and openness is higher in these countries and regions, as compared with China. For instance, US enjoys quite open and pluralistic media system, which is subordinate to the state to a minimum level (Martin and Chaudhary, 1983, Mosco, 1979). However, according to the late Secretary General Deng Xiaoping (1980) and former president Jiang Zeming (1994, 2003), one of the main functions of media and press in China is to publicize the policies and regulations made by the government and educate the public about what is right and what is wrong. In spite of the recent commercialization of newspapers, television, and broadcast stations, which were all state-owned previously, the government still has extensive control over them. Zhao (1998) argues

that the defining feature of the Chinese news media system today is the mix of Party logic and market logic.

Moreover, censorship is strictly and rigorously implemented at different levels in China. The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China commands central, provincial, municipal, county and township government levels vertically and controls print, broadcast media, journals, books, television, movies, literature, arts, and cultural establishments horizontally (Press Conferences, 2011). Given the powerful control and strict censorship in China over the mass media, it is only natural that journalists are particularly concerned with being politically correct and appropriate in their dealings with state leaders and other politicians. Hence, far fewer hostile prefaces were used and politically sensitive topics were not touched on in the questions from Chinese journalists in CPPCs.

Although this study showed a general trend that journalists from developed countries asked more adversarial questions than Chinese journalists, we need to be aware of two major limitations of this study. First, the developed countries group consists of journalists from a few developed countries and regions including US, UK, Germany, France, Japan, Hong Kong, etc. Although the standard deviation of the scores of this group is not dramatically different from that of the Chinese group (SD developed countries= 2.101, SD Chinese= 1.687), I cannot confidently conclude, without a close observation or comparative study, that the variation in adversarialness within the developed countries group was not due to personal styles rather than socio-political and cultural differences in these countries. This issue is particularly acute among Taiwanese journalists. As some of the newspapers and television Channels take a

friendly position toward China while others are quite hostile toward China's central government, the Taiwanese journalists are very likely to show a split in the level of adversarialness in accordance with the position of the organizations they are affiliated with. To investigate the variations within the developed countries group, we need to look at each country separately. If enough questions could be collected from each country, we could have conducted an ANOVA test to see whether the difference in the adversarialness between these questions was significant or not.

Another issue is related to the possible differences between journalists from developed countries based in China and their home countries. The previous literature on journalistic adversarialness in developed countries has been largely based on data from home-based journalists. However, given some of the foreign journalists at CPPCs had been in China for a long period and all journalists were more or less bound by the rules and norms of CPPCs and speaking practices in China, a difference in the level of adversarialness between home-based and China-based journalists may be expected. To confirm this difference, we would need to pick out all the questions raised by, for example, US journalists in CPPCs and compare the adversarialness of these questions with that of questions raised by US journalists in US press conferences.

## **2.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter aimed to show how the journalists in CPPCs posed questions, particularly adversarial questions and whether there was a difference in adversarialness between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries.

In terms of question structure, a sequential paradigm of six sequences was observed and discussed. A detailed discussion of three general questioning strategies, including setting agenda, incorporating presuppositions and preference into the questions, was also provided to foreground the analysis of adversarial questioning techniques. The three general strategies were embodied in various linguistic formations for adversarial questioning. Linguistically, adversarial questioning can be accomplished through the use of question prefaces, different types of questions as well as certain lexical items. In addition, a quantitative study was done in order to assess the level of adversarialness involved in questions and to compare two groups of journalists on the level of question adversarialness. Journalists from the developed countries group were found to pose more adversarial questions than Mainland Chinese journalists.

In the next chapter, I will analyze politicians' responses to journalists' questions in CPPCs. In relation to the result of the quantitative study in this chapter, I am interested in knowing whether the difference in the level of journalistic adversarialness resulted in a difference in the level of politicians' evasiveness. I will also analyze the answers that politicians gave to different questions and see whether they structured different types of answers differently. The techniques politicians utilized to evade questions will also be discussed.

## Chapter 3 Politicians' Answers in CPPCs

### 3.0 Introduction

The previous chapter showed how journalists posed adversarial questions and how the level of adversarialness varied among different groups of journalists. The focus of this chapter is on how Chinese politicians responded to the journalistic questions in terms of the content and structure. In contrast with journalists' brief questions, politicians usually gave quite long and elaborate answers, with very few short answers. However, long elaborate answers do not necessarily equate to full answers. Previous literature on political communication shows that evasiveness has been one of the most salient features of politicians' replies to questions from journalists both in news interviews and in press conferences (Bavelas et al., 1988, Bull and Mayer, 1993, Clayman, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991, Jiang, 2006). Given the increasing adversarialness of journalistic questions (Adkins, 1992, Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002a, Eriksson, 2011, Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004, Rendle-Short, 2007), it is understandable that politicians tend to be evasive, because direct and full answers may inflict damage on the politicians' career prospects, personal reputation and even the government they represent (Clayman, 2001:238). The results of the quantitative study in the last chapter showed that different groups of journalists demonstrated different levels of adversarialness. My third research question in this thesis is: Did that result in different levels of evasiveness of the politicians' answers?



Evasiveness being the salient feature of politicians' answers, there are also many cases where politicians provide non-evasive answers<sup>8</sup>. Compared with non-evasive answers, evasive answers are undesirable and dispreferred from an interactional perspective, because answering questions is considered a "basic moral obligation", not only for public figures in interviews and press conferences, but also for interactional participants more generally (Raymond, 2003, Schegloff, 1968). Based on the notion of "conditional relevance" (Sacks, 1969, Schegloff, 1968), the occurrence of a question makes an answer relevant next. The non-occurrence of the answer will be noted by the hearer (Schegloff, 2007). Moreover, rejecting questions is especially undesirable in the Chinese culture, which places great emphasis on "face" (Chang and Holt, 1994). My fourth research question is: How did the Chinese politicians' design their answers in terms of the structure and were there any differences in the organization between evasive and non-evasive answers? In relation to the negative consequences of evasions from both interactional and cultural perspectives, my last research question is: what kind of mitigating techniques did the Chinese politicians use to minimize the negative effects when they were trying to evade and reject questions?

To answer the third research question, I show the range of answers the Chinese politicians provided in CPPCs. Four types of answers are identified and arranged according to their level of responsiveness: minimal answers, elaborations, implicit answers, and non-replies (3.1). The answers to the 101 questions studied in chapter 2 are analyzed and coded into the four types. A frequency distribution of the four types of answers and a chi-square test reveals whether there was a difference in the level of

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<sup>8</sup> Precise definitions of evasive and non-evasive answers will be given in section 3.2.

evasiveness in the politicians' answers to questions from different groups of journalists (3.2).

To answer the fourth question, the relationship between non-evasive/evasive answers and preferred/dispreferred responses (refer to chapter 1 for definitions) are discussed in detail in order to justify the use of preference organization in analyzing the structures of non-evasive/evasive answers. Examples are given to illustrate how non-evasive answers were organized and how evasive answers were constructed (3.3). The analysis in 3.3 also shows some slight differences in answer structures in the Chinese context and the literature that is based predominantly on western data.

To answer the last research question, detailed analysis is provided of three major mitigating techniques that the politicians frequently employed to reduce the negative effects of evading and resisting questions (3.4).

### **3.1 The Range of Chinese Politicians' Replies**

It may initially seem easy to identify a full reply when the politician gives all the required information and a non-reply when the politician explicitly refuses to answer a question. But there are additional cases where the politicians provide some but not all the information relevant to the question. According to Philips (1984, 1987), answers can only be defined by starting from the questions. Bull (1994:122) also points out that "the criteria for deciding what constitutes a reply vary according to the structure of the question". Philips (1984, 1987) further argues that answers can be classified on the basis of how much they copy the question. An answer copies a

question when the answer remains within the syntactic and semantic frame of the question, and does not copy the question when the answer digresses from this frame. Based on Philips (1984, 1987) and Bull’s discussion, Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003) have identified four types of answers according to their level of responsiveness (Table 1.). “Minimal answers” are the most responsive and “non-replies” are the least. They also point out that “minimal answers” and “elaborations” belong to what Philips (1984, 1987) calls “copy answers” while “implicit answers” and “non-replies” have decreasing level of copy-effect. In chapter 2, four question types were identified in CPPCs: Yes/no, wh-, alternative and declarative questions. In this section, politicians’ replies are categorized in relation to the four question types. The categorization is later used to code the answers to the 101 questions in chapter 2 with the purpose of showing the frequency distribution of these answers.

**Table 1. Definitions of Different Types of Answers**

(Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003:397)

Minimal answers	Provide only one of the canonical answers projected by the question, thus providing a perfect copy effect
Elaborations	Provide one of the canonical answers projected by the question, as well as additional syntactic and semantic information, providing a partial copy-effect.
Implicit answers	Directly provide only additional information that implicitly includes the canonical answers, thus providing a deleted copy-effect.
Non-replies	Do not answer the request of the question because they are different from all the canonical answers projected by the question, thus providing a no copy-effect

### 3.1.1 Minimal Answers

According to the definition given by Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003), minimal answers are strictly constrained by the syntactic and semantic frames of the prior questions.

(a) Minimal answers to yes/no questions not only address the topical agenda but the action agenda of the prior questions. A ‘yes’ or ‘no’ token is a required part of the minimal answer (Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003). Moreover, no additional information is provided in response to the yes/no question. In CPPCs, no minimal answers to either non-negated or negated yes/no questions were found. Politicians tended to give elaborate, implicit answers and even non-replies to yes/no questions rather than minimal answers.

(b) In contrast with yes/no questions, wh-questions constrain the semantic frames of the subsequent response more than its syntactic frames. An answer that provides only the missing variable in the prior wh-question can be considered a minimal answer. Different types of wh-questions have different missing variables. “What” asks for information specifying something; “when” asks for a specific time point; “why” requests the reason or purpose; “who” asks what or which person or people; “which” asks for information specifying one or more people or things from a definite set; “where” asks in or to what place or position; and “how” asks in what way or manner. In CPPCs, although the politicians showed a preference for long elaborate answers, minimal answers to wh-questions were not uncommon.

Example 1 (Wen; 2006; China; Chinese)

1. J	... (text omitted) Can I please ask why it is necessary to specially set forth the policy of building a new socialist countryside now? Thank you!	...(text omitted) qing wen zong li xian zai wei he hai yao zhuan men ti chu jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun
2. P	The issues concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers are fundamental ones that have bearing on China's overall modernization drive. To answer this question, I would like to share with you our three major considerations in establishing the policy of building a new socialist countryside.	nong ye nong cun he nong min wen ti shi guan xi xian dai hua jian she quan ju de gen ben xing wen ti wo xiang tan y ixia guan yu jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun de sheng ceng ci de san dian kao lv
3. P	First, in terms of building a new socialist countryside, we mean to place agricultural and rural work in a more prominent position on our modernization agenda...	Di yi jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun jiu shi ba nong ye he nong cun gong zuo fang zai xiandai hua jian she quan ju de geng jia tu chu de wei zhi
4. P	Second...(text omitted)	Di er...(text omitted)

In example 1, the journalist asked a ‘why’ question requesting the reasons for setting forth the policy of building a new socialist countryside (Para.1). In response to this question, the Premier stated at the very beginning of his turn that ‘the issues concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers are fundamental ones that have bearing on China's overall modernization drive’. He continued to provide three specific considerations in formulating the policy (Para. 2, 3, 4). The clear-cut answer fully addressed the topical agenda of the wh-question. No additional information was provided. Therefore, the Premier’s reply in example 1 is a typical minimal answer to a wh-question.

(c) The third type of question, alternative or disjunctive questions, provide the politician with two or more alternatives. Choosing any of the alternatives provided in

the question constitutes a minimal answer. In CPPCs, alternative questions were quite rare. There were no minimal answers to alternative questions.

(d) The fourth type of question, declarative questions, are very different from the aforementioned three types of questions in that they lack interrogative syntax. Harris (1991) states that most declarative utterances are put forward for agreement or disagreement, and thus can be treated as a form of yes/no questions. Bull (1994) further argues that all the questions without interrogative syntax can be regarded as yes/no, wh-, or alternative questions based on the purposes of the questions. But declarative questions are much more hostile than the other question types. Danet and Bogoch (1980) examine how different types of questions coerce an answer and find that declarative questions are the most coercive.

Example 2 (Wen; 2009; UK; English)

1. J	Premier Wen, I'm with Financial Times.  You have mentioned in your previous response, China has huge domestic needs for spending, particularly in rural areas.	
2. J	In that context, it doesn't make sense for China to have two trillions dollars of reserves, which is the money you effectively lend to richer countries. Second question...(text omitted)	

In example 2, the declarative question could be interpreted as a yes/no question, seeking a yes or no answer (Para. 2). Therefore, a minimal answer to this declarative question is the same to a minimal answer to a relevant yes/no question. However, in my CPPC data, there were no minimal answers and elaborations as well as non-

replies to declarative questions. Only a few examples of implicit answer to declarative questions were found and are discussed in section 3.1.3.

In summary, a minimal answer is strictly constrained by the semantic and syntactic frames of the prior question. It provides the information just as requested. However, in CPPCs, minimal answers were only found in politicians’ replies to wh-questions. There were no minimal answers to yes/no, alternative or declarative questions.

### 3.1.2 Elaborations

Elaborations provide a canonical answer as projected by the question as well as additional syntactic and semantic information (Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003). (a) A canonical answer to yes/no questions includes a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ token. Raymond (2003) argues that yes/no questions show a preference for “type-conforming” response. An answer containing a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, therefore, constitutes a “copy answer” as identified by Philips (1984, 1987). In contrast with minimal answers, elaborations also provide other information that is not required by the prior question, in addition to a ‘yes’ or ‘no’.

Example 3 (Zhu; 2000; US; English)

1. J	... (text omitted) People’s liberation army still operates commercial mobile phone networks using CDMA technology and owns experimental bases in four cities. This seems to be extending to other areas.	
2. J	Do they have a license to do that from the government?  Will they be allowed to operate	

	collective revenue, the military allowed to operate collective revenue from commercial mobile networks?  And is it possible for the military to become a third operator for the mobile phone networks in China	
3. P	Yes. In the past, China Telecom did conduct some pilot programs in four cities in China together with some entities under direct jurisdiction of the PLA (People's Liberation Army) concerning CDMA.	shi de zai guo qu zhong guo dian xin ceng jing he jie fang jun de yi xie xia she dan wei jin xing guo yi xie CDMA de shi dian zai si ge cheng shi
4. P	However, later the military commission made the decision that the PLA should cut off all the business links with all the commercial entities that used to be run under their jurisdiction. We are now still coordinating all the work concerning how CDMA cooperation in China should further proceed... (text omitted) Just be patient, this problem will be solved very soon.	dan shi hou lai jun wei zuo chu le jie fang jun yu ta suo shu de qi ye yao tuo gou...(text omitted) ni bu yong zhao ji zhe ge wen ti hen kuai ke yi jie jue

In example 3, the journalist raised three yes/no questions (Para. 2). The latter two questions were based on an assumed 'yes' answer to the first question. The premier's answer was highly concise. The type-conforming 'yes' token and the acknowledgement (Para. 3) that the army had operated commercial mobile phone networks constituted an official answer to the question about whether the army had license from the government. But in addition to the 'yes' answer projected by the first question, the Premier also provided extra information that the government had decided to cut off the links between the military and the business sector (Para. 4). This extra piece of information made the other two yes/no questions irrelevant, because they were based on the assumption that the military would continue to operate mobile networks. Example 3 is a typical example of "elaborations" where the politician



partially copied the syntactic and semantic frame of the question but at the same time added new and different syntactic and semantic structures.

(b) Elaborations to the second group of questions, wh-questions, involve the missing variable as well as additional syntactic and semantic structures, as compared with minimal answers that provide only the missing variable.

Example 4 (Wen; 2004; India; English)

1. J	How do you evaluate India-China relations during the past year? And I'd like to know if any positive achievements have been made during the boundary negotiations between our two countries.	
2. P	On this subject I recall one remark I made to the Indian defense minister Fernandes in my conversation with him. I later learned that it has spread to many people in India. I told him that the duration of time when China and India enjoyed friendly relations lasted 2,000 years, or 99.9% of the total time of our interactions. The conflicts between our two countries only lasted two years, or less than 0.01% of the total time of our interactions... (text omitted)	qian liang nian wo tong yin du guo fang bu zhang fei er nan de si tan le yi duan hua hou lai zai yin du ji hu jia yu hu xiao wo shuo zhong yin liang guo you hao de shi jian you 2000 duo nian ke yi shuo zhan 99.9% liang guo de chong tu de shi jian zhi you liang nian shi jian bu dao 0.1%...(text omitted)
3. P	Last year Prime Minister Vajpayee paid a friendly visit to China and that visit was very important. We signed the “Declaration on the Principles and Comprehensive Cooperation in China-India Relations”... (text omitted)	qu nian wa jie pa yi zong li dui zhong guo jin xing le yi ci you hao fang wen zhe shi yi ci fei chang zhong yao de fang wen wo he ta qian shu le “zhong yin guan xi yuan ze he quan mian he zuo xuan yan”... (text omitted)
4. P	Here I also want to say a few words about South Asia. The development of relations between China and South Asian countries does not target on any third country. I note with pleasure the sound and friendly momentum that has lately emerged in India-Pakistan relations. China hopes to see peace	zhe li wo hai xiang shun bian tan yi xia nan ya wen ti wo men tong nan ya guo jia fa zhan guan xi jue dui bu hui zhen dui di san guo wo men gao xing de kan dao yin ba guan xi zui jin chu xian le liang hao de you hao de tai shi wo men xi wang nan ya bao chi he ping he wen ding

	and stability in South Asia.	
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In example 4, the journalist asked a ‘how’ question and requested the Premier’s evaluation of India-China relations in the past year (Para. 1). This was a very broad question. But the journalist limited the topical domain of the ‘how’ question by making a post-question statement that he was interested in knowing if any positive achievements had been made during the boundary negotiations between China and India in the past year (Para. 1). The Premier’s answer to the question can be divided into three parts. In the first part (Para. 2), the Premier emphasized that friendship had been dominating India-China relations in the history. The second part (Para. 3) is the minimal answer to the ‘how’ question. The Premier listed the achievements made in boundary negotiations in the past year. The final part (Para. 4) is additional information that was not projected by the ‘how’ question. Therefore, example 4 is an elaboration to a wh-question as it provided the missing variable as well as additional information.

(c) Elaborations to alternative questions require not only one of the alternatives provided in the question, but additional semantic and syntactical information. In CPPCs, no elaborations to alternative questions were found.<sup>9</sup>

### **3.1.3 Implicit Answers**

Implicit or implicated answers do not give the canonical answers projected by the question. Instead, they provide relevant information that implicitly includes the

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<sup>9</sup> Declarative questions can be treated as other types of interrogatives. As there were no “elaborations” to declarative questions, they are not discussed in this section.

canonical answers. (a) Implicit answers to yes/no questions provide information that indicates a ‘yes’ or ‘no’ without giving an explicit ‘yes’ or ‘no’ token. Implicit answers are what Raymond (2003) calls “type non-conforming answers”.

Example 5 (Wen; 2005; US; Chinese)

1. J	... (text omitted) Premier Wen, a lot of social problems have cropped up in the course of rapid economic development in China, one of them is the wealth gap. To address problems facing agriculture, rural areas and farmers is on top of your agenda.	...(text omitted) wen zong zhong guo jing ji zai kuai su fa zhan zhong chu xian le hen duo she hui wen ti bao kuo pin fu cha ju jie jue san nong wen ti shi nin zui da de yuan wang
2. J	But some experts say unless farmers are granted the right to land use, or allowed to own land, it is impossible to solve the problems they face.  Do you think it is possible to give them land ownership?	ke shi you zhuan jia shuo chu fei jia qiang nong min tu di shi yong quan huo zhe huan gei nong min tu di chan quan ‘san nong’ wen ti ke neng hen nan de dao jie jue  nin ren wei ba tu di chan quan huan gei nong min shi ke neng de ma
3. P	China's reform started in the countryside. China's rural reform started with giving farmers the land management right. Rural land is under collective ownership.	zhong guo de gai ge shi cong nong cun kai shi de nong cun de gai ge shi cong tu di de jing ying quan kais hi de nong min de tu di shi ji ti suo you
4. P	In the early days of reform and opening-up, the first step we took in the countryside was to establish the household contract responsibility system. Farmers were given the right to manage their land, and such right of the farmers has been extended again and again. Now I can answer you directly that farmers' autonomy of production and management will not change for a long time. Actually, it will never change.	wo men zai gai ge kai shi de shi hou jiu shi xing le jia ting cheng bao jing ying de ji ben jing ji zhi du jiu shi shuo nong min you you dui tu di de sheng chan he jing ying zi zhu quan yi hou zhe ge quan li bu duan de dao yan chang xian zai wo ke yi zhi jie hui da ni nong min dui tu di de jing ying sheng chan zi zhu quan chang qi bu bian ye jiu shi yong yuan bu bian

In example 5, the Premier did not give an explicit ‘yes’ or ‘no’ token in his reply. However, by emphasizing that the farmers’ right to using the land would never

change (Para. 4), he indicated that the existing land policy was not going to change. Under the existing land policy, ‘rural land is under collective ownership’ (Para. 3). In other words, farmers would not be granted individual land ownership for a long time. The Premier’s answer to the yes/no question was clearly negative. But in this case, giving either ‘yes’ or ‘no’ answer was inappropriate as saying ‘yes’ would be lying while directly saying no was detrimental to the government image. What the Premier wanted to emphasize was that although farmers did not have individual land ownership, their right to land use would never change. Therefore, an implicit answer that indicated ‘no’ while downplaying the possible negative effects of a ‘no’ answer was the best choice.

(b) Implicit answers to wh-questions do not provide explicitly the missing variable in the question, but give relevant information that addresses the topical agenda of the question.

Example 6 (Zhu; 2000; Denmark; English)

1. J	With the unquestionable success of what is called grass root democracy in China, meaning the direct and multi-candidate elections to governments in the lowest level.	
2. J	How many years do you think it takes before China will upgrade that system to city level, provisional level, to the national people’s congress level?	
3. P	Thank you for all your positive remarks on the village election in China. As to when such a system can be extended to a higher level and finally to which level, I hope the sooner the better.	hen gan xie ni dui yu wo men cun xuan ju de hao de ping jia zhi yu he shi ke yi tui guang dao geng gao de ceng ci dao shen me ceng ci wo xi wang yue kuai yue hao

In example 6, the journalist asked a ‘how’ question (Para. 2) requesting the time it took before China upgraded direct elections to a higher level. A minimal answer or elaboration would explicitly include the time period required. The Premier, however, addressed the topical agenda of the question by expressing his hope instead of giving an estimated number.

(c) Concerning the third group of alternative questions, if the politician does not choose an alternative provided by the question, but provides another alternative, this constitutes an implicit answer. In CPPCs, implicit answers to alternative questions were not observed.

(d) As indicated above, declarative questions can be treated as other types of questions with interrogative syntax, the structure and content of an implicit answer to declarative questions are the same as those of other question types. In CPPCs, one example where the declarative question was treated as a yes/no question was found (Example 2.). The politician’s reply to the question in example 2 constitutes an implicit answer.

Example 7 (Wen; 2009; UK; English)

1. J	Premier Wen, I'm with Financial Times.  You have mentioned in your previous response, China has huge domestic needs for spending, particularly in rural areas.	
2. J	In that context, it doesn't make sense for China to have two trillions dollars of reserves, which is the money you effectively lend to richer countries. Second	

	question...(text omitted)	
3. P	As for your first question, I think I've already given an answer to a similar question raised by Financial Times in UK. I would still like to use this opportunity to further clarify that China's foreign exchange reserves are created by the Chinese people through strenuous effort. The reserves have not only greatly enhanced China's capacity of payment in external transactions but also demonstrated China's economic strength.	guan yu di yi ge wen ti qi shi wo zai ying guo hui da "jin rong shi bao" ji zhe wen ti shi yi jing tan dao le dan shi wo hai xiang shuo ming y ixia zhong guo de wai hui chu bei shi zhong guo ren min tong guo xin qin lao dong er chuang zao chu lai de ta ti gao zhong guo dui wai zhi fu de neng li ye biao ming le zhong guo de jing ji shi li
4. P	However, foreign exchange reserves are actually bank loans rather than fiscal resources. The use of the foreign exchange reserves should remain within foreign investment and trade.	Dan shi wai hui chu bei zi jin shi ji shang shi yin hang de jie dai bus hi cai zheng zi jin wai hui zi jin de shi yong zhu yao hai dei yong yu dui wai tou zi he dui wai mao yi
5. P	We have already introduced a diversified strategy in managing our foreign exchange reserves. Now our holdings are generally safe.	Wo men yi jing cai qu le wai hui chu bei duo yuan hua de jing ying fang zhen cong xian zai kan wo men wai hui zong tis hang shi an quan de
6. P	We have already introduced a diversified strategy in managing our foreign exchange reserves. As far as the current state is concerned, our holdings are generally safe.	wo men jiang jin yi bu kuo da kai fang li yong liang ge shi chang he liang zhong zi yuan chong fen fa hui wai hui chu bei de zuo yong
7. P	We will further open up to the rest of the world to make full use of...so that the foreign exchange reserves we are holding will not only follow the principle of "good value, safety and liquidity", but also support the national development and improvement of people's living standard.	Wo men jiang jin yi bu kuo da kai fang li yong ... shi wai hui chu bei ji neng zuo dao an quan liu dong he bao zhi you neng zhi chi guo jia jian she he gai shan ren min sheng huo

In example 7, the journalist's declarative question (Para. 2) could be treated as a yes/no question with negative polarity 'doesn't it make sense for China...'. Although an explicit 'yes' or 'no' was not given, it could be inferred that the answer was affirmative. The Premier clarified that foreign exchange reserves were not fiscal resources but bank loans (Para. 4). He further stated that China's foreign exchange

reserves were safe (Para. 6) and played an important role in supporting national development and improving living standards (Para. 7). These two propositions refuted the journalist's statement that 'it doesn't make sense for China to have two trillion dollars of reserves' (Para. 2).

### 3.1.4 Non-replies

Non-replies are the least responsive among the four answer types identified by Gnisci and Bonaiuto (2003). Non-replies do not provide any canonical answers or information that indicates a canonical answer. For example direct refusals and roundabout answers that do not address the topical agenda of the question can be considered non-replies. (a) Non-replies to yes/no questions provide neither a 'yes/no' token, nor any information that indicates an affirmative or negative answer.

Example 8 (Wen; 2003; US; Chinese)

1. J	Hello Mr. Premier, thank you. With the deepening of China's reform and opening up, are you going to remove the restrictions of personal freedom placed on Zhao Ziyang, the former premier, with whom you once worked, and also let him come back to work?... <i>(text omitted)</i>	Ni hao zong li xie xie Wo xiang wen yi xia sui zhe zhong guo yue lai yue kai fang de zhe ge ju shi, nin hui bu hui yao qiu zhen dui Zhao Ziyang xian sheng jiu shi ni ceng jing bang mang gong zuo guo de qian zhong hua ren min gong he guo zong li dui ta yao qiu qu xiao dui ta ge ren zi you de yi xie xian zhi rang ta hui fu zheng chang gong zuo... <i>(text omitted)</i>
2. P	As the Premier of this large country with 1.3 billion people, I am most concerned with the stability and development of China, and I know so well that they do not come easily.	zuo wei yi ge you 13 yi ren kou de da guo de zong li wo zui guan xin de shi zhong guo de wen ding he fa zhan Wo ye shen zhi zhong guo de wen ding he fa zhan lai zhi bu yi
3. P	The end of 1980s and the beginning of 1990s saw highly volatile international situation. The former Soviet Union disintegrated, eastern Europe changed drastically, and political turbulences also occurred in China. The party and government	80 nian dai mo 90 nian dai chu shi jie feng yun bian huan su lian ju bian (0.3) su lian jie ti dou ou ju bian zai zhong guo ye fa sheng le yi chang zheng zhi feng bo dang he zheng fu jin jin yi kao ren min cai qu guo duan cuo shi wen ding le guo nei jus hi bin qie ji xu tui jin gai ge kai fang zou you zhong guo te se de

	relied firmly on the people, took resolute measures and stabilized domestic situation. We also further advanced our reform and opening up and held on to socialism with Chinese characteristics.	she hui zhu yi dao lu
4. P	The tremendous achievements we have scored in the past 13 years prove that stability is of vital importance.	13 nian zhong guo suo qu de de ju da cheng jiu shuo ming wen ding shi zhi guan zhong yao de

In example 8, the journalist's question about whether the Premier was going to remove the restrictions on personal freedom of the former Premier Zhao was concise and clear-cut (Para. 1). Zhao was an advocate of economic and political reform and was purged politically and placed under house arrest after the June Fourth Incident in 1989, which is still a highly sensitive topic in China in 2011. In his response to the question, Premier Wen touched on the June Fourth Incident lightly but placed great emphasis on the importance of stability to China (Para. 2, 3). His answer indicated that what the Chinese government had been doing was good for China's development and prosperity (Para. 4). However, he did not even try to make clear the relationship between the stability of China and the restrictions on Zhao's personal freedom. Nothing could be inferred from Premier Wen's answer about his attitude to Zhao or the possibility of removing the restrictions. The topical agenda of the question was not touched on at all. Therefore, Premier Wen's answer in this example constitutes a non-reply.

(b) Non-replies to wh-questions do not provide any information about the missing variable in the question. In CPPCs, non-replies to wh-questions were observed.

Example 9 (Wen; 2006; France; English)



1. J	...(text omitted) I'd also like to know that in the past few years there are quite a number of major coal mine accidents in this country. Many people believe that the only way out in this context is to allow the workers in the country to organize their own trade unions instead of joining the trade unions that are set up by the companies that they work for.	
2. J	I'd like to know when the Chinese Government will allow the workers to establish independent trade unions?	
3. P	It is true in some industries and in some localities there have been a number of major or sometimes even extraordinary workplace safety accidents. In my government work report, we have already spelt out various measures of how we are going to strengthen workplace safety...(text omitted)	zui jin zi yi xie hang ye he di qu que shi jie lian fa sheng le yi xie zhong te da an quan sheng chan shi gu...wo zai zheng fu bao gao zhong yi jing ti chu le jia qiang an quan sheng chan de ge xiang cuo shi...(text omitted)
4. P	Moreover, I think the trade unions at various levels should play their roles in ensuring safe production so as to protect the interest and safety of the general public.	Ci wai yao fa hui ge ji gong hui zui zhi de zuo yong te bie shi dui an quan sheng chan de jian du zuo yong shi ge ji gong hui neng gou fu qi wei hu qun zhong qie shen li yi he an quan de ze ren
5. P	In China, trade unions are workers' own organizations. They are not established by employers.	zai zhong guo gong hui shi gong ren zi ji zu zhi de bus hi you gu zhu jian li de

In example 9, the ‘when’ question requested a specific time point at which the government would allow the establishment of independent trade unions (Para. 2). The Premier acknowledged the fact that there were a large number of workplace safety accidents in certain industries and areas (Para. 3). He also presented the measures the government had taken to strengthen workplace safety (Para. 3, 4). However, the Premier did not provide the missing variable of the ‘when’ question on the basis that the question contained false information. By stating that trade unions were workers’ own organization (Para. 5), the Premier nullified the ‘when’ question.

(c) In non-replies to the third group of alternative questions, the politicians neither choose the alternatives given in the question nor provide another alternative. In CPPCs, only one example of non-reply to an alternative question was found.

Example 10 (Li; 2005; US; English)

1. J	... (text omitted) If I may ask another question about the North Korea nuclear talks, you have been trying for several months now to arrange a new round of talks with no apparent success. China has quite a lot of influence over North Korea as its main supplier of aid.	
2. J	If North Korea appears to be completely unwilling to take part in these talks, what steps will China be willing to take to compel North Korea to participate?	
3. J	For instance, will China be willing to cut off shipments of oil or other aid or what other steps might China be willing to take to get North Korea to participate and to reach a settlement?	
4. P	I want to answer your question in a very simple way. The United States of America is a sovereign state. Democratic People's Republic of Korea is also a sovereign state... (text omitted) You just mentioned a hypothetical scenario. You said 'to take part in bla bla'. Normally, I do not answer hypothetical questions.	wo zhi xiang jian dan de gao su ni mei guo shi yi ge zhu quan guo jia chao xian min zhu zhu yi gong he guo ye shi yi ge zhu quan guo jia...(text omitted) ni gang cai ti dao le yi ge jia she de wen ti ni shuo jia ru ru he ru he wo yi ban de bu hui da jia she xing wen ti

In example 10, the journalist asked two questions. One of them was a wh-question (Para. 2) and the other was an alternative question that provided multiple alternatives (Para. 3). In response to these two questions, the foreign minister stated his general position but refused to answer both questions on the basis that they were hypothetical

(Para. 4). Without disclosing any relevant information, this reply constitutes a direct refusal and thus a non-reply.

### 3.1.5 Summary

In this section, four types of answers (Table 2.) were discussed in relation to the four different question types identified in chapter 2. The four answer types are presented according to the level of responsiveness with minimal answers showing maximum responsiveness, and non-replies showing minimum responsiveness<sup>10</sup>.

**Table 2. Different Answer Types in Relation to Different Question Types**

	Yes/no questions	Wh-questions	Alternative questions
Minimal answers	Provide a 'yes/no' token and no additional information	Provide only the missing variable	Choose any of the alternatives of the question
Elaborations	Provide a 'yes/no' token and additional information	Provide the missing variable as well as additional information	Choose any of the alternatives of the questions and provide additional information
Implicit answers	Do not provide a 'yes/no' token but relevant information indicating a 'yes/no' answer	Do not provide the missing variable explicitly but information relevant to the missing variable	Do not choose any alternatives of the question but provide another alternative
Non-replies	Do not provide a 'yes/no' token or any information indicating a 'yes/no' answer	Do not provide the missing variable or any information relevant to the missing variable	Do not choose any alternatives of the question or provide other alternatives

<sup>10</sup> As declarative questions can be treated as other question types (Bull, 1994, Harris, 1991), they are not included in Table 2.

In the next section, politicians' answers are examined carefully based on the discussion above to find out the frequency distribution of different types of answers in CPPCs.

### **3.2 Distributions of Answers in CPPCs**

The previous literature has shown that evasiveness has been one of the salient features of politicians' replies to questions in a number of developed countries (Bavelas et al., 1988, Bull and Mayer, 1993, Clayman, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991) as well as in China (Jiang, 2006). However, politicians still answered a small portion of questions. British politicians replied directly to around 40% of questions in political news interviews (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Harris, 1991). The spokespersons of the US Department of State answered around 30% of the journalistic questions directly and their Chinese counterparts gave direct answers to around 10% in a series of press conferences concerning the North Korea nuclear issue (Jiang, 2006). So to what types of questions do politicians usually provide a direct answer? And what types of questions do they usually evade? According to the results of the quantitative study in chapter 2, journalists from developed countries asked more adversarial questions than Chinese journalists. Is there a hidden relationship between adversarial questions and evasive answers? In this section, another small quantitative study was done in order to answer my third research question, which examines whether different levels of adversarialness resulted in different levels of evasiveness of politicians' answers in the CPPC context. The distribution of different answer types in CPPCs is presented before carrying out a chi-square test, which shows whether there was a

significant difference in the proportions of Chinese journalists' questions and questions from journalists from developed countries that elicited evasive answers.

### 3.2.1 The Frequency Distribution of Evasive/non-evasive Answers in CPPCs

The answers to the 101 questions, which were studied in Chapter 2, were analyzed to present the distribution of different answer types in CPPCs. As over 85 percent of the 101 questions involved multiple sub-questions, the number of answers, which were counted in relation to sub-questions, totaled 227. Minimal answers and elaborations were categorized as non-evasive answers given that they provided one of the canonical answers projected by the question. Implicit answers and non-replies were classified as evasive answers as they did not provide any of the canonical answers.

Table 3 shows the distribution of the 227 answers to the 101 questions in terms of the four answer types discussed in the previous section. Based on the numbers shown in Table 3, the percentages of evasive and non-evasive answers out of the total number of answers were calculated and were shown in Table 4.

**Table 3. Distribution of the 227 Answers from CPPCs**

	Non-evasive answers		Evasive answers		Total
	Minimal answers	Elaborations	Implicit answers	Non-replies	
Answers to questions from Chinese journalists	51	12	18	16	97
Answers to questions from the developed countries group	30	19	42	39	130

Total	81	31	60	55	227
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**Table 4. Percentages of Evasive/non-evasive Answers out of All Answers**

	Non-evasive answers	Evasive answers
Answers to all journalists' questions	49.3%	50.7%

Table 3 & 4 demonstrate that generally speaking, Chinese politicians did not show a preference for evasive answers, which include implicit answers and non-replies. The percentages of non-evasive answers (49.3%) and evasive answers (50.7%) are very close to each other (Table 4). The percentage of non-evasive answers (49.3%) in this study is dramatically different from Jiang's findings that showed Chinese politicians gave direct answers to only 10.6% of the questions put to them (Jiang, 2006). It is also much larger than the British data, which showed politicians only replied directly to around 40% of questions (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Harris, 1991); the US data, which showed spokespersons of the US Department of State answered only 30.3% in press conferences; and the Italian data, which revealed Italian politicians provided non-evasive answers to 43.7% of the questions in television interviews. Some possible explanations of this difference are provided in section 3.2.3.

However, there was a split in evasiveness between answers to questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries. Table 5 shows the percentages of evasive and non-evasive answers within the Chinese group and the developed countries group.

**Table 5. Percentages of Evasive/non-evasive Answers within Sub-groups**

	Non-evasive answers	Evasive answers
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Answers to questions from Chinese journalists	64.9%	35.1%
Answers to questions from the developed countries group	37.7%	62.3%

As shown in Table 5, evasive answers occupy only 35.1% of all answers to Chinese journalists' questions. But they take up nearly 62.3% of the total answers to questions from the developed countries group. In other words, the politicians in my data provided direct and full answers to 64.9% of the Chinese journalists' questions, but only to 37.7% of the questions from journalists from developed countries. A chi-square test was run to show whether there was a significant difference between answers to Chinese journalists' questions and questions from the developed countries group.

### **3.2.2 The Difference between Answers to Different Groups of Journalists' Questions**

In order to carry out a chi-square test, I needed to ensure there was an equal number of questions and answers. As one whole journalistic question usually contained sub-questions, and as answers were counted in relation to sub-questions, there were 227 answers to the 101 questions. Therefore, the 227 answers were recoded for the purpose of the chi-square test. As above, the answers were either non-evasive or evasive. The coding principles were as follows: 1) if a journalist only asked one question, the answer was coded according to its original answer type; 2) if a journalist asked two questions with both the answers falling into the evasive category, they were coded as an evasive answer. If a journalist asked two questions, with one answer

being non-evasive and the other being evasive, this journalist was taken out of the data set<sup>11</sup>. 3) If a journalist asked three questions, with two of the answers being evasive and one being non-evasive, the answers were coded as an evasive answer. In a nutshell, if a journalist asked a question that contained a number of sub-questions, the coded answer was the same as the type of the majority answers. But the journalistic question was taken out of the data set if there was an even number of evasive and non-evasive answers. 23 journalists' questions and their corresponding answers were taken out of the data set, leaving 78 questions and coded answers for the chi-square test.

The results of the chi-square test showed (Yates correction value)  $\chi^2 = 8.672$ ,  $df = 1$ ,  $p = 0.003$ . Therefore, there was a significant difference between the politicians' answers to questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries. Although the chi-square test results do not show the direction of the difference, we can confidently conclude that the politicians evaded more questions from the developed countries group than those from the Chinese group, taking into account the frequency distribution of evasive and non-evasive answers within the two groups.

### **3.2.3 Discussion**

The frequency distribution of the answers and the chi-square test results revealed three major findings. First, the Chinese politicians answered and evaded nearly the same number of questions from journalists in general. This was dramatically different from the findings of Jiang's study (2006), which showed that Chinese politicians gave

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<sup>11</sup> As the answers to the two questions cancel out the differences, taking these journalists out of the data set did not influence the results of the chi-square test.



direct answers to only 10.6% of the questions in press conferences. Second, the Chinese politicians were found to be more responsive to journalists' questions than their counterparts in a number of developed countries (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991, Jiang, 2006). Third, the politicians gave more non-evasive answers to questions from Chinese journalists than to those from the developed countries group. In relation to these three findings, I try to answer three questions in this section: 1) Why was there a huge difference between the findings of the current study and Jiang's study (2006)? 2) What made Chinese politicians more responsive to journalists' questions than their counterparts in developed countries? 3) Why did the politicians give more non-evasive answers to questions from Chinese journalists? Some possible explanations are provided. However, they are tentative and are in need of further examination.

The huge difference between the results of Jiang's study and the current study can be explained from the following two aspects. First and foremost, the data used in the current study were totally different from Jiang's data. The current study focused on all answers to questions from 15 NPC and CPPCC press conferences held between 1998, 2000-2011. However, Jiang picked out question-answer sequences relevant to the North Korea nuclear issue from press conferences held by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs between 17 October 2002 and 11 March 2003. Compared with the comprehensive data set of the current study, Jiang's data were more focused and thus relatively less representative. As Jiang (2006:242) said,

“Due to the diffusion of attention by the major international focus on the prospect of war against Iraq and other international affairs during that period of time, the policies towards the North Korea nuclear issue were in the process of formation and, in fact, these policies are still evolving and changing. The presentation of new information at each conference was very limited which, to some extent, demonstrated the fact that Chinese and US perspectives on the issue were still in development.”

It is understandable that a smaller portion of questions got non-evasive responses in Jiang's study, which was based on data focusing on a particular issue, compared to the current study, whose data covered a wide range of topics.

Moreover, the difference was also likely to result from the different coding practices in the two studies. In Jiang's study, answers were classified into seven categories with regard to various refusal strategies such as "direct refusal", "reason", "insufficient answer", etc. In the current study, the answers were categorized in relation to the structure of the prior questions. Jiang's categorization placed more emphasis on the content while the categorization in the current study was more structure-focused. The different categorization might also have caused slight differences in the results.

Another finding of the present study was that the Chinese politicians gave more non-evasive answers to questions from Chinese journalists than to those from the developed countries group. The Chinese politicians were also found to be more responsive to journalists' questions (they answered 49.3% of journalists' questions) than their counterparts (they answered fewer than 40% of journalists' questions) in a number of developed countries (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991, Jiang, 2006). Some researchers attribute politicians' evasiveness to their personal characteristics. Graber (1976:11) believes that there is a sound base for the statement that "politicians intend to hide realities and perceptions rather than to disclose them". Does that mean the politicians in developed countries were by nature more evasive than the Chinese politicians? Then how can we account for the different levels of evasiveness displayed by the same Chinese politicians faced with questions from different groups of journalists?

Research on political equivocation reveals that evasive answers are a function, not of the individual, but of the individual's communicative situation (Bavelas, 1985). Equivocation is non-straightforward communication and includes such speech acts as “self-contradictions, inconsistencies, subject switches, tangentializations, incomplete sentences, etc.” (Watzalwick et al., 1967:76). The notion of equivocation covers the categories involved in the 'evasive answers' in the current study. Based on two experiments conducted in the laboratory, one with students in an imaginary political setting and the other in an actual political setting, Bavelas et al. (1988) proposed that equivocal speech occurred in communicative avoidance-avoidance conflicts, where a speaker was faced with two unattractive communicative alternatives, whatever he or she said would lead to negative consequences.

In the context of press conferences, adversarial questions are more likely to place politicians in a dilemma, where either answering or rejecting questions risks offence. Given the fact that journalists from developed countries generally asked more adversarial questions, compared to Chinese journalists, it was reasonable for the Chinese politicians to be more evasive when confronted with questions from the developed countries group.

By the same token, without taking cultural differences and personal styles into consideration, politicians in developed countries are not by nature more evasive than Chinese politicians, or vice versa. Given the increasing independence and adversarialness in journalists' treatment of politicians since the 1950s in the developed countries (Clayman et al., 2006), it is understandable that the politicians in developed countries were more evasive than their Chinese counterparts, who had to deal with

fewer adversarial questions in the current study. This can also be confirmed by the results of this study showing that the Chinese politicians provided non-evasive answers to 37.7% (Table 5) of the questions from the developed countries group. This number is very close to that of politicians in some developed countries (Bull and Mayer, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991, Jiang, 2006).

The previous two sections showed that the Chinese politicians provided more non-evasive answers to Chinese journalists than to journalists from developed countries, who asked more adversarial questions. The next section answers my fourth research question that examines how the politicians designed and structured their answers and whether there was a structural difference between non-evasive and evasive answers.

### **3.3 Interactional Structures of Different Types of Answers**

The notion “preference organization”, which was discussed in chapter 1, needs to be briefly reviewed in order to analyze the interactional structures of non-evasive and evasive answers in CPPCs. Schegloff (2007) and Pomerantz (1984) distinguish preferred and dispreferred responses in terms of whether the required action is performed and how the turn is structured. A preferred response is one that gets some activities accomplished and is routinely performed without delay. In contrast, a dispreferred response does not get the required action performed and it is usually delayed in its turn and is usually prefaced softened and made indirect. The type of the prior FPP and the context prescribe what suffices as a preferred response. For instance, in response to a FPP that invites assessments on a particular issue, agreements are considered preferred and given immediately after the completion of the FPP, while

disagreements are dispreferred and are usually prefaced and delayed within a turn or over a series of turns (Pomerantz, 1984). However, Pomerantz (1984) also argues that in response to FPPs that contain self-deprecations, disagreements are preferred and provided without delay, whereas agreements are dispreferred and deferred. For other FPPs such as requests, granting and acceding are preferred and rejecting and denying are dispreferred (Schegloff, 2007).

In CPPCs, the vast majority of FPPs are journalists' questions requesting information, confirmation, clarification or comments. As Harris (1991) suggests, in political interviews, questions can pragmatically be defined as requests. Bull (1994) also argues that questions can be functionally defined as requests to provide information. Therefore, the majority of the journalist's questions in CPPCs can be treated as requests for information. In line with Schegloff (2007) and Pomerantz (1984)'s argument, providing requested information accomplishes the required action and is therefore a preferred response trajectory while refusing to disclose requested information does not have the action accomplished and is thus dispreferred. But how do the notions of preferred/dispreferred responses relate to non-evasive and evasive answers?

As indicated in section 3.1, non-evasive answers include minimal answers and elaborations, which provide one of the canonical responses as requested by the question, whereas evasive answers include implicit answers, which provide only some relevant information, and non-replies, which do not give any canonical answers or relevant information. Compared with the definitions of non-evasive and evasive answers that lay more emphasis on the form of answers, the definitions of

preferred/dispreferred responses put a heavier focus on the content of answers. Although the notions of preferred/dispreferred responses do not exactly correspond to those of non-evasive/evasive answers, they can be employed to analyze the sequential structures of non-evasive/evasive answers on the basis that in CPPCs non-evasive answers are appreciated and preferred, whereas evasive answers are dispreferred from both interactional (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007) and cultural (Chang and Holt, 1994) perspectives. In the next two sections, I analyze how non-evasive/evasive answers were constructed sequentially using the notion of preference organization. Were non-evasive answers, like preferred responses, given with a minimum gap between the completion of the journalist question (FPP) and the initiation of the SPP? And were evasive answers, like dispreferred responses, routinely delayed in their turns?

### **3.3.1 The Structures of Non-evasive Answers**

As noted above, preferred responses are usually given without delay. Schegloff (2007) further states that preferred responses are usually delivered immediately after what is treated by participants as a “normal” transition space. However, this feature is not relevant to question-answer sequences in CPPCs, because an interpreter interprets the journalists’ questions before the politicians give the answers. The interpreter thus breaks the contiguity of the question-answer sequence and leaves the politicians more time than the ‘normal’ transition space to organize their answers. Compared with everyday conversations, where the transition space is between the first and second pair part speakers, in CPPCs, it is between the interpreter and the politicians (politicians are SPP speakers and journalists are FPP speakers). As a result, starting the responsive turn within the “normal” transition space between the interpreter and

the SPP does not indicate any interactional problem. Based on a close examination of question-answer sequences in the corpus, over 76 percent of the cases have a transition space that lasts around two seconds between the interpreters' and politicians' turns. Therefore, two seconds is taken as the "normal" transition space in question-answer sequences in CPPCs.

Moreover, Pomerantz (1984) and Sacks (1987) also point out that preferred SPPs come early in their turns with no turn-internal initial delays. That is to say SPP speakers usually perform the actions or provide information as requested directly at the turn beginning rather than using discourse markers or providing roundabout answers. The features of minimum inter-turn gaps and turn-internal initial delays, as observed in preferred responses, have also been found in non-evasive answers in CPPCs.

Example 11 (Wen; 2006; China; Chinese)

1. J	... (text omitted) Can I please ask why it is necessary to specially set forth the policy of building a new socialist countryside now? Thank you!	...(text omitted) qing wen zong li xian zai wei he hai yao zhuan men ti chu jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun  <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>
2. P	(0.25) The issues concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers are fundamental ones that have bearing on China's overall modernization drive. To answer this question, I would like to share with you our three major considerations in establishing the policy of building a new socialist countryside.	(0.25) nong ye nong cun he nong min wen ti shi guan xi xian dai hua jian she quan ju de gen ben xing wen ti wo xiang tan y ixia guan yu jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun de sheng ceng ci de san dian kao lv  <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>

3. P	First, in terms of building a new socialist countryside, we mean to place agricultural and rural work in a more prominent position on our modernization agenda...	Di yi jian she she hui zhu yi xin nong cun jiu shi ba nong ye he nong cun gong zuo fang zai xiandai hua jian she quan ju de geng jia tu chu de wei zhi...
4. P	Second...(text omitted)	Di er...(text omitted) <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>

In the question (FPP) in example 11, the journalist asked a “why” question requesting the reasons for setting forth the policy of building a new socialist countryside. After the interpreter interpreted the question, the politician immediately provided the requested variable at the turn-initial position of the SPP (Para. 2). The pause between the completion of the interpreter’s turn and the initiation of the politician’s turn was 0.25 seconds (Para. 2), which could be considered as within the “normal” transition space. This example demonstrates that the non-evasive answer was delivered after a “normal” transition space between the interpreter and the initiation of the SPP and also it was delivered without delay within their turns. However, there were also cases where non-evasive answers were deferred.

Example 12 (Wen; 2004; India; English)

1. J	How do you evaluate India-China relations during the past year? And I'd like to know if any positive achievements have been made during the boundary negotiations between our two countries.	<i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>
2. P	On this subject I recall one remark I made to the Indian defense minister Fernandes in my conversation with him. I later learned that it has spread to many people in India. I told him that the duration of time when China and India enjoyed friendly relations lasted 2,000 years, or 99.9% of the	qian liang nian wo tong yin du guo fang bu zhang fei er nan de si tan le yi duan hua hou lai zai yin du ji hu jia yu hu xiao wo shuo zhong yin liang guo you hao de shi jian you 2000 duo nian ke yi shuo zhan 99.9% liang guo de chong tu de shi jian zhi you liang nian shi jian bu dao 0.1%...(text omitted)



	total time of our interactions. The conflicts between our two countries only lasted two years, or less than 0.01% of the total time of our interactions... (text omitted)	
3. P	Last year Prime Minister Vajpayee paid a friendly visit to China and that visit was very important. We signed the “Declaration on the Principles and Comprehensive Cooperation in China-India Relations”... (text omitted)	qu nian wa jie pa yi zong li dui zhong guo jin xing le yi ci you hao fang wen zhe shi yi ci fei chang zhong yao de fang wen wo he ta qian shu le “zhong yin guan xi yuan ze he quan mian he zuo xuan yan”... (text omitted)
4. P	Here I also want to say a few words about South Asia. The development of relations between China and South Asian countries does not target on any third country. I note with pleasure the sound and friendly momentum that has lately emerged in India-Pakistan relations. China hopes to see peace and stability in South Asia.	zhe li wo hai xiang shun bian tan yi xia nan ya wen ti wo men tong nan ya guo jia fa zhan guan xi jue dui bu hui zhen dui di san guo wo men gao xing de kan dao yin ba guan xi zui jin chu xian le liang hao de you hao de tai shi wo men xi wang nan ya bao chi he ping he wen ding ( <i>The interpreter starts to interpret.</i> )

In example 12, the journalist requested comments about the positive achievements that had been made during the boundary negotiations between China and India in the past year (Para. 1). The response constituted a non-evasive answer because the politician responded to the question as requested by listing the achievements made in boundary negotiations last year (Para. 3). However, it was a deferred answer. Before the politician responded to the question itself, he emphasized that friendship had been dominating India-China relations in the history, which was not directly relevant to the question (Para. 2). Unlike mundane conversations, in which preferred responses are routinely performed without delay, it was not uncommon that non-evasive answers were deferred in CPPCs.

Example 13 (Wen; 2004; Russia; Chinese)

1. J	I'm with Interfax.	guo ji wen chuan
	Premier Wen, could you identify to us	wen zong qing wen xian zai e luo si yu zhong

	<p>the major international issues where China and Russia share the same positions?</p> <p>Could you update us about the development of energy cooperation between our two countries and what is the prospect of such cooperation? Thank you!</p>	<p>guo zai na xie zhong yao de guo ji wen ti shang chi you xiang tong de li chang</p> <p>E luo si he zhong guo zai neng yuan fang mian de he zuo qing kuang ru he qian jing zen yang xie xie</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>
2. P	<p>China and Russia are friendly neighbors to each other. As a Russian saying goes: "We are predestined to be each other's neighbor." Our two countries share a common boundary line of more than 4,300 kilometers and indeed our two countries should be friends forever and never fight against each other.</p>	<p>Zhong e liang guo shi you hao ling bang e luo si you ju yan yu shuo shi shang di rang wo men liang guo cheng wei ling ju wo men you 4300 gong li de bian jie xian que shi ying gai yong yuan you hao yong bu zai zhan</p>
3. P	<p>At present there is a sound momentum in the development of China-Russia relations. We set our objective of establishing a strategic partnership of cooperation. We put in place a mechanism... (text omitted) Although some problems have occurred in the oil pipeline issue, we are still confident about energy cooperation between our two countries. I trust that... (text omitted)</p>	<p>Mu qian zhong e liang guo guan xi a fa zhan de shi tou liang hao wo men que li le yi ge mu biao zhe jiu shi jian li (0.3) zhan lv xie zuo huo ban guan xi wo men que li le yi ge ji zhi...(text omitted) sui ran zhong e shi you guan dao wen ti chu xian yi xie bo zhe dan shi wo dui zhong e de neng yuan he zuo hai shi bao you xin xin de wo xiang xin... (text omitted)</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>

Example 13 is another case where a non-evasive answer was delayed. The journalist asked two questions: 1) what are the major international issues where China and Russia share the same positions; and 2) what is the development and prospect of energy cooperation between the two countries (Para. 1). In response to the first question, the politician elaborated on the content of the strategic partnership between China and Russia (Para. 3). After that, he also addressed the recent development and prospects of energy cooperation between the two countries. However, like example 4, the non-evasive answer was delivered after the politician's brief review of the friendship between China and Russia. In my corpus, "friendship building" was found

in around 40% of the deferred non-evasive answers. Other things that deferred a non-evasive answer included emphasis on the importance of peace and the territorial integrity, etc. The deferred non-evasive answers showed that in CPPCs, the politicians not only took questions from journalists, but also made efforts to make clear the government's general positions where appropriate. Friendship building and emphasis on peace indicate China's adherence to "peaceful rise", which may in turn improve China's international image and reduce the negative effects of the China threat theory. On the other hand, the reiteration on the territorial integrity showed China's increasing national power, government's firm position and eager for more international recognition.

To sum up, the sequential organization of non-evasive answers in CPPCs are not totally consistent with the previous literature on preferred/dispreferred responses (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), which asserts that preferred responses utilize minimization of gap between their initiation and the prior turn's completion. In CPPCs, non-evasive answers were performed either with or without delay for particular political purposes.

### **3.3.2 The Structures of Evasive Answers**

In mundane conversations, dispreferred responses are usually delayed in their turns (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007). According to Schegloff (2007:67-69), Pomerantz (1984) and Davidson (1984), various practices are employed to break the contiguity of the first and second pair parts so that a dispreferred response can be delayed to a later point. 1) "Inter-turn gaps" such as silence are noticeable in

dispreferred responses. 2) “Turn initial delay”, which takes the form of discourse markers or partial repeats, is also frequently used by participants in conversations. 3) “Accounts” including accounts, excuses, and appreciations are provided early in the turn and serve to delay the SPP. 4) “Pro forma” agreements are agreements that intervene between FPPs and dispreferred SPPs to break the contiguity.<sup>12</sup>

The four practices that are used to defer dispreferred responses were also observed in evasive answers in CPPCs. The politicians’ evasions were usually preceded by noticeable silence, accompanied by accounts, or prefaced by repetition of the question or agreement tokens. Additionally, the presence of an interpreter at CPPCs allowed the politicians to pause at any time if they needed more time to organize their answers. Therefore, 5) turn-internal gap that is filled by the interpreter has been a unique practice to break contiguity in CPPCs.

### ***3.3.2.1 Inter-turn Gaps***

Inter-turn gaps refer to the overlong transition space between the first and second pair parts (Schegloff, 2007). In mundane conversations, the gap usually takes the form of silence that breaks the contiguity of first and second pair parts. In other words, the recipient of the FPP does not start their turn within the “normal” transition space. In CPPCs, as mentioned above, the transition space is between the interpreter and the politicians (politicians are SPP speakers and journalists are FPP speakers). As a result,

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<sup>12</sup> While the practices 1) – 4) are employed by the SPP speaker, the FPP speaker can also elicit a preferred response in conversations. For example, after a request that can be taken as displaying either potential or actual rejection, the FPP speaker can initiate a subsequent version of the previous request with preference reversal to get a preferred response (Davidson, 1984). Nevertheless, as turns are pre-allocated and no follow-up questions are allowed in CPPCs, journalists are restricted to asking questions in a single turn. They do not have any opportunity to reformulate their requests if the politician displays potential or actual rejection of the original one. So my analysis focuses on the other four practices to see how they are realized in CPPCs and how they are different in more spontaneous forms of talks.

starting the responsive turn within the “normal” transition space (identified as around 2 seconds) between the interpreter and the SPP does not indicate any interactional problem. Nevertheless, there were a few cases of evasive answers where the gap was noticeable between the interpreter’s interpretation of the journalists’ questions and the politicians’ turns to answer in CPPCs.

Example 14 (Wen; 2007; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	...(text omitted)Now that chartered flights are opened for Taiwanese business people on the mainland and fruits from Taiwan can be sold to the mainland, people in Taiwan are now showing a great interest in the possibility of mainland tourists visiting Taiwan.	... (text omitted) na me ji kai fang tai shang bao ji he tui dong tai wan shui guo jin kou zhi hou tai wan min zhong xian zai fei chang guan xin de da lu ju min dao zhe ge tai wan lai guan guang
2. J	When will such visits take place?  What other steps are you going to take to advance Cross-Strait relations?  With the upcoming Olympics Games in Beijing and election in Taiwan, the year 2008 is also a crucial year. What is your view on and expectation of the future of Cross-strait relations?	ri cheng shen me shi hou kai shi zheng shi kai fang he shi shi  er wei le jin yi bu tui dong liang an guan xi hai you na xie ju ti cuo shi he gou xiang  yi ji 2008 nian ye shi guan jian de yi nian wo men kan dao zai Beijing you ao yun zai Taiwan you da xuan dui yu wei lai de liang an guan xi zong li nin de qi dai he kan fa shi shen me xiexie  <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>
3. P	(4.0) You mentioned that the years 2007 and 2008 are very crucial for Cross-strait relations. Why are they crucial? Because these two years are critical to upholding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. In my Government Work Report, I reiterated our firm opposition to all forms of separatist activities, including "de jure Taiwan independence"... (text omitted)	(4.0) ni shuo zhe liang nian shi ha ixia guan xi shi fen guan jian de shi ke guan jian zai na li guan jian zai wei hu tai hai de he ping he wen ding wo zai wo de zheng fu gong zuo bao gao li yi jing zai ci chong shen wo men jian jue fan dui tai wan “fa li du li” deng ren he xing shi de fen lie huo dong... (text omitted)
4. P	You are right that more and more Taiwanese business people have come to the mainland... (text omitted) We are firm in protecting the lawful rights and interests of Taiwanese business	ni shuo de hen dui xian zai tai shang zai da lu fa zhan de yue lai yue duo...(text omitted) wo men jiang bao hu tai shang yi ji Taiwan tong bao zai da lu jiu xue, lv you deng ge fang mian de li yi

	people and Taiwan compatriots in making investments, studying and traveling on the mainland.	
5. P	We will actively promote comprehensive, direct and two-way links between the two sides, namely "the three direct links"... (text omitted) People on the mainland have longed to make visits to Taiwan, and much preparation has been made. We hope that their wish can be realized at an early time...(text omitted)	Wo men ji ji tui jin quan mian de zhi jie de shuang xiang "san tong"...(text omitted) da lu tong bao dao Taiwan lv you yi jing qi pan duo shi le zhun bei duo ri le wo men xi wang zao ri shi xian zhe ge yuan wang...(text omitted)  <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>

Example 14 is a typical evasive answer as none of the three questions (Para. 2) posed by the journalist were given a canonical answer. The journalist requested information concerning the schedule of visits to Taiwan by mainland tourists, steps to advance Cross-strait relations, and the Premier's expectation on future Cross-strait relations (Para. 2). However, the focus of the Premier's answer was on maintaining peaceful Cross-strait relations, which was the government's general position on the Taiwan issue that had been repeated in nearly every year's press conference (Para. 3). It did not suffice as an answer to the third question. Only loosely relevant information was given regarding the first two questions (Para. 4, 5). In this evasive answer, there was a noticeable gap that lasted 4 seconds before the Premier started his turn (Para. 3). The silence, together with the interpreter's translation broke the contiguity of the journalist's question and the Premier's response.

In addition, example 14 demonstrates what Sacks (1987) calls "preference for contiguity", despite the fact that the contiguity of the first and second pair parts was interrupted by both the interpretation and the overlong inter-turn gap. Sacks (1987) argues that an interesting result of preference for contiguity is that if two questions are asked in a turn, the last question usually gets answered first. In example 14, although

the information provided earlier in the Premier's response (Para. 3) did not suffice as an answer, it was at least relevant to the last question posed by the journalist (Para. 2). This could be confirmed by the fact that the first and second questions were addressed later in his response (Para. 4, 5). Whereas the inter-turn silence served to break the contiguity between the first and second pair parts, it did not seem to have any influence on the contiguity between the adjacent question and answer. In spite of the overlong silence in example 14, the last question still got answered first.

### ***3.3.2.2 Turn-initial Delay***

Turn beginnings have long been recognized as a significant and strategic aspect of turn design (Sacks et al., 1974, Schegloff, 1996, Schegloff, 1987, Lerner, 1996) Turn-initial delay means that the turn beginning is occupied with things other than the SPP itself (Schegloff, 2007). Schegloff (1987) argues that turn beginnings often project the planned shape and trajectory of the remainder of the response, thus informing the audience of the action under construction and the possible ways the action can be accomplished. Turn-initial delays, including partial repeats of the first pair part and discourse markers, are used to displace and defer the SPP and thereby breaking the contiguity of the first and second pair parts.

In CPPCs, partial repeats of journalists' questions in the responsive turn were very common. Sometimes politicians reformulated questions instead of simply repeating to make their answers appear more responsive. Either repeating or reformulating the questions serves to undermine a contiguous relationship between the first and second pair parts. In example 14, in addition to the inter-turn silence discussed above, the

politician also partially repeated some words used by the journalist and reformulated the question to accommodate his subsequent answer (Para. 3). While inter-turn gaps and repetition of the FPP physically displace the second pair part to break the contiguity, the reformulation of questions not only defers the SPP in terms of its position within the turn, it also changes the constraint on the SPP in terms of content.

Moreover, a dispreferred response can also be delayed through the use of discourse markers. For example, in the English-speaking context, some discourse markers such as “well” and “uh” are found to display reluctance and discomfort (Davidson, 1984, Pomerantz, 1984, Schiffrin, 1987). These discourse markers, when occur at turn-initial positions, break the contiguity of the first and second pair parts and indicate a dispreferred response to follow. In political news interviews in the US and UK, the use of discourse markers is very common (Clayman and Heritage, 2002b). Nevertheless, in both non-evasive and evasive answers in CPPCs, the use of discourse markers at turn-initial positions was very rare in spite of their frequent occurrence within the turn. This is because the question-answer format in CPPCs is much less spontaneous with the interpreter’s turn occurring between the first and second pair parts. In line with the previous literature on dispreferred responses in mundane conversations, Chinese politicians also delayed evasive answers at turn beginnings through partial repeats or question reformulation. But turn-initial discourse markers, which are frequently used in conversations as well as political news interviews, were very rare in the highly institutionalized CPPCs.

### ***3.3.2.3 Accounts***



In addition to inter-turn gaps and turn-initial delay, dispreferred responses are usually accompanied by accounts, excuses, and appreciations that are positioned early in the turn (Schegloff, 2007). Like inter-turn silence and turn initial delays, these kinds of accounts or appreciations are also employed to delay the SPP and break the contiguity between the first and second pair parts. In CPPCs, the politicians were observed to provide accounts for not answering the questions, to appreciate the questions, to claim that the question was hard to answer, etc. as ways to defer evasive answers. Example 15 shows how appreciation was used to defer an evasive SPP.

Example 15 (Zhu, 2000; Denmark; English)

1. J	With the unquestionable success of what is called grass root democracy in China, meaning the direct and multi-candidate elections to governments in the lowest level.	
2. J	How many years do you think it takes before China will upgrade that system to city level, provisional level, to the national people's congress level?	<i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>
3. P	Thank you for all your positive remarks on the village election in China. As to when such a system can be extended to a higher level and finally to which level, I hope the sooner the better.	hen gan xie ni dui yu wo men cun xuan ju de hao de ping jia zhi yu he shi ke yi tui guang dao geng gao de ceng ci dao shen me ceng ci wo xi wang yue kuai yue hao <i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i>

In example 15, the journalist asked a 'how' question (Para. 2) requesting the time it took before China upgraded direct elections to a higher level. At the turn-initial position, the politician expressed his appreciation for the journalist's comments on 'grass root democracy' and thereby delayed an evasive answer, in which the variable requested in the "how many years" question was not given (Para. 3). The appreciation thus broke contiguity by coming between the FPP and its SPP.

### 3.3.2.4 “Pro forma” Agreements

The fourth contiguity-breaking practice in conversations is to preface dispreferred second pair parts with agreeing responses. In the package of “agreement + disagreement”, the agreeing response serves to delay the dispreferred response (Schegloff, 2007). In CPPCs, “pro forma” agreements were also employed by the politicians to defer evasive answers.

Example 16 (Zhu; 2000; UK; English)

1. J	<p>I am from the financial times.</p> <p>Premier Zhu, there have been some Chinese academics recently suggest you that China announce a timetable for the liberalization of the capital account.</p>	
2. J	<p>In this connection, I would like to ask, is this a good idea?</p> <p>When would China allow foreign mutual funds to invest in the local markets?</p> <p>When would China merge the A and B shares stock markets?</p> <p>And when will China allow the full convertibility of the RMB?</p>	<p>(The interpreter starts to intperet.)</p>
3. P	<p>China has already achieved the free convertibility of the RMB under the current account. As I always say, we will achieve the free convertibility of the RMB under the capital account. But that takes time.</p>	<p>Wo men yi jing shi xing le (5.0) uh (2.0) ai yao wo yi xia zi xiang bu chu (2.0) jing chang zi ben fang mian de ke dui huan wo ye yi zhi jiang wo men yi ding hui shi xing zhe ge gu ding zi ben fang mian de ke dui huan dan shi xu yao shi jian</p> <p>(The interpreter starts to intperet.)</p>
4. P	<p>However, in order to achieve the free convertibility of the RMB under the capital account, we must have the capability to exercise much stronger supervision. We do not actually have the adequate conditions to do that. I am not able to reveal to you the</p>	<p>dan shi yao shi xing zi ben shi chang de ke zi you dui huan bi xu yao you zu gou de jian guan de neng li que shi wo men zai zhe yi fang mian tiao jian hai bu ju bei wo xian zai ye mei ban fa gao su ni zhe ge shi jian biao</p> <p>(The interpreter starts to intperet.)</p>

timetable.	
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In example 16, the journalist posed four questions with the latter three basing themselves on a “yes” answer to the first question (Para. 3). The politician’s answer was clearly evasive because no canonical answer to the yes/no question or wh-questions was given (Para. 4). However, the evasion was deferred to the end of the turn by a preceding agreeing response (Para. 3). In response to the journalist’ first question, the politician listed what the government had achieved and what they aimed to achieve to show his support of liberalization of the capital account. But immediately after the agreement, the politician pointed out that liberalization of the capital account could only be realized under the condition of strong supervision, which China lacked (Para. 4). In this case, the agreeing response was merely a turn-initial component that intervened between the question and the evasive answer.

### ***3.3.2.5 Turn-internal Gaps***

In mundane conversations and news interviews, internal gaps are usually occupied with discourse markers such as “uh” or simply silence. They do not necessarily serve to break the contiguity between the first and second pair parts. But in CPPCs, the turn-internal gaps filled by the interpreter serve this purpose, especially when the interpreter comes early in the politician’s responsive turn. Under normal circumstances, the interpreter starts to interpret after the politician has produced a paragraph of speech. However, sometimes, the politician pauses after just one sentence and allows the interpreter to start much earlier than usual. This usually indicates an evasive answer to follow because these turn-internal gaps are very similar to inter-turn gaps that serve to undermine the contiguous relationship between first

and second pair parts. The presence of an interpreter allows the inter-turn gaps, which manifest interactional problems, to be deferred to a later point so that the question-answer sequence appears smoother and the evasion appears less salient.

Example 17 (Zhu; 2000; China; Chinese)

1. J	<p>What's your comment on the development of the securities market in China in the past decade?</p> <p>And the SOE (State-owned Enterprises) reform is entering a decisive stage this year. What services can the securities market provide to facilitate the SOE reform?</p>	<p>Qing wen zhu zong li dui zhong guo zheng quan shi chang zai zhe shi duo nian lai de fa zhan you he ping jia</p> <p>guo qi gai ge jin nian yi jing jin ru jue zhan nian nin ren wei zhong guo zheng quan shi chang dui guo qi gai ge neng zai zuo na xie fu wu</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>
2. P	<p>(3.0)</p> <p>You've asked a very difficult question to answer.</p> <p>he he heheh</p>	<p>(3.0)</p> <p>hen nan hui da</p> <p>he he heheh</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>
3. P	<p>The only thing I can say is that China's securities market has developed very rapidly and has achieved significant results. But the operation of the securities market is far from standardized.</p>	<p>wo zhi neng shuo zhong guo de zheng quan shi chang fa zhan hen kuai cheng ji hen da dan hen bu gui fan</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>
4. P	<p>We need to make tremendous efforts to make the stock market trustworthy to the entire Chinese people and to the investors in the securities market.</p>	<p>Yao qu de quan guo ren min de xin ren gu min de xin ren hai yao zuo da liang de gong zuo</p>
5. P	<p>China's securities market is very important, particularly to the reform of state-owned enterprises. Therefore, I hope both foreign and domestic experts in this regard, especially those from Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Singapore can come to help us further standardizing and developing our securities market. If you are willing to come, I will satisfy all your requests concerning salaries.</p>	<p>zhong guo de gu piao shi chang shi fei chang zhong yao de te bie shi dui guo qi de gai ge ju you fei chang zhong da de yi yi suo yi wo xi wang hai nei wai de zhuan jia te bie shi xiang gang de zhuan jia tai wan de zhuan jia xin jia po de zhuan jia dou neng gou lai bang zhu wo men lai gui fan he fa zhan wo men de zheng quan shi chang ni men yao duo shao gong zi wo jiu gei duo shao gong zi zhi yao ni men yuan yi lai</p> <p><i>(The interpreter starts to interpret.)</i></p>

In example 17, the journalist asked two questions in his turn, one requesting the politician's comments on the development of China's securities market in the past ten years, and the other requesting information about what services the securities market could provide in relation to the reform of state-owned enterprises (Para. 1). In response to these questions, the politician paused after he commented on the questions themselves followed by his laugh (Para. 2). Within the "normal" transition space, the interpreter started to interpret this sentence. It was clear that the subsequent information was insufficient to be taken as a non-evasive answer (Para 3, 4, 5). In this example, the interpreter's cut in not only managed to break the contiguity between the journalist's question and the evasive answer, but also increased the smoothness of the question-answer sequence by bridging the gap with the interpretation.

### **3.3.3 Summary**

Using the notion of preference organization, this section focused on the organization of politicians' answers, specifically how non-evasive and evasive answers were structured sequentially in CPPCs. In contrast with the literature (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), which shows that preferred responses are usually delivered without delay, non-evasive answers were found to be either performed with or without delay in CPPCs. In line with the literature on dispreferred responses (Davidson, 1984, Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), evasive answers in CPPCs were also realized through inter-turn gaps, turn initial delay, accounts and "pro forma" agreements. In addition, given the presence of an interpreter, the turn-internal gap that was filled by the interpreter was also a unique practice to defer an evasive answer in CPPCs. Having analyzed the sequential structures of non-evasive and evasive answers, the

next section will answer my last research question that examines some mitigating techniques the Chinese politicians used when they were trying to sidestep and reject questions.

### **3.4 Techniques for Evading Questions**

According to the discussions in section 3.2, Chinese politicians evaded and resisted roughly half of the total journalistic questions put to them. They evaded even more when they were replying to questions from journalists from developed countries. But Clayman (2001) argues that evading and resisting questions can be costly in that the journalists and the audience, as well as the subsequent media coverage, monitor politicians' evasiveness. Answering questions is considered a "basic moral obligation", not only for public figures in interviews and press conferences, but also for interactional participants more generally (Raymond, 2003, Schegloff, 1968).

Moreover, in Chinese culture, much emphasis is laid on the maintenance of face both in private and public settings. Chang and Holt (1994) argue that Chinese "face" is based on human feelings as an appeal to preserve a harmonious interpersonal relationship. Maintaining one's own face as well as the face of the others are two important components of Chinese face-oriented communication. Direct refusals to answer questions are very confrontational and face-threatening (Brown and Levinson, 1987). In terms of structural features, an evasive answer is usually delayed in its turn, which, more or less, downplays possible confrontations. This section analyzes in detail three techniques frequently used in CPPCs when the politicians were trying to

evade and resist questions in order to reduce the negative effects and maintain their own face and the face of the journalists.

### 3.4.1 Justifying Evasions

One way in which Chinese politicians made themselves appear less evasive was to “justify the agenda shift” (Clayman, 2001:419). For instance, a shift can be justified on the basis that the journalistic question has been answered on a different occasion. Alternatively, the politicians can simply claim that they do not have sufficient information to answer the question. Sometimes additional information that is not requested by the journalist is provided on the basis that it has a significant impact on the overarching topic. By providing reasons for the shift of the agenda, politicians acknowledge the fact that they are breaching the interactional etiquette but present the breach in a favorable light (Clayman, 2001).

Example 18 (Wen; 2004; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	<p>Taiwan is going to hold an election and a referendum on March 20th.</p> <p>What will be the effects of the referendum and election on Cross-straits relations?</p> <p>Are you following these developments of the election in Taiwan?</p> <p>How do you perceive the prospects for the cross-Straits relations after the election and referendum this year?</p>	<p>...(text omitted) 3 yue 20 ri tai wan yao yu xing da xuan hai yao jin xing gong</p> <p>tou nin ren wei gong tou dui liang an guan xi hui chan sheng shen me yang de ying xiang</p> <p>ni guan zhu tai wan da xuan me</p> <p>nin dui da xuan yi hou jin nian liang an guan xi de qian jing you shen me kan fa xie xie</p>
2. P	<p>As for the issue of the referendum, I have made the position of the Chinese government very clear. Here, I would like to say a few</p>	<p>guan yu gong tou de wen ti wo yi jing qing chu de biao ming le zhong guo zheng fu de li chang xian zai wo xiang tong guo “lian he bao” de ji zhe xiang tai wan tong bao shuo ji</p>

	words to our Taiwan compatriots through your newspaper.	ju hua
3. P	There is only one China in the world. The Chinese people, whether living on the mainland or living in Taiwan, are linked together by flesh and blood...(text omitted)	Shi jie shang zhi you yi ge zhong guo wu lun shi da lu hai shi tai wan tong bao de xue mai shi xiang lian de...(text omitted)
4. P	Next year marks the 110th anniversary of the Shimonoseki Treaty. This reminded me of a poem composed of 28 Chinese characters, written by a poet from Taiwan with blood and tears on April 17 <sup>th</sup> , 1896... (text omitted)	ming nian shi "ma guan tiao yue" qian shu 110 zhou nian zhe li wo xiang qi le 1896 nian 4 yue 17 ri yi wei tai wan shi ren ji hu shi yong xue he lei xie de 28 ge zi de shi... (text omitted)
5. P	The reason why we put forward the policies of peaceful reunification and "one country, two systems" is that we believe this policy is in the immediate and long-term interests of all the Chinese people on the mainland and in Taiwan ...(text omitted)	wo men zhi suo yi ti chu "he ping tong yi yi guo liang zhi" de fang zheng jiu shi ren wei zhe yang de fang zhen fu he zu guo da lu he tai wan tong bao de xian shi li yi he chang yuan li yi... (text omitted)
6. P	We firmly oppose "Taiwan independence". We firmly oppose any attempt by any people to split Taiwan from the rest of China through any means. I think that is also the common will of all Chinese people, including our Taiwan compatriots.	wo men jian jue fan dui tai du fan dui ren he ren yi ren he fang shi ba tai wan cong zhong guo fen ge chu qu zhe shi bao kuo tai wan ren min zai nei de zheng ge zhong hua er nv de gong tong yuan wang

In example 18, the Taiwanese journalist asked two questions about the coming referendum and election (Para. 1) and one question about the Cross-strait relations after the referendum and election (Para. 1). However, the Premier did not try to address any of the three questions. He stated that he had made the position of the Chinese government very clear on a different occasion. This justified his non-reply to this similar question and his shift to a slightly different topic (Para. 2). By referring to the shared history and literature (Para. 4), the Premier emphasized the very close



relationship between China and Taiwan and made his point that “Taiwan Independence” was firmly opposed and reunification was a common will (Para. 6). The Premier also argued that the additional information was of greater importance to the Taiwanese people and government. Whatever the results of the referendum and election, Taiwan shall remain a part of China.

Another mitigating technique is to claim insufficient knowledge on a particular issue so as to evade or resist questions. Pomerantz (1984:59) argues that “the speakers’ claiming insufficient knowledge serves as a warrant for their not giving assessments because assessments are properly based on the speakers’ knowledge of what they assess.” Drew (1984:129) also points out that in claiming insufficient knowledge instead of unwillingness to do something, the politician can externalize the responsibility for the failure to do what he or she is asked to do. Example 12 shows how the Chinese politician evaded questions on the basis of insufficient knowledge.

Example 19 (Li; 2005; Japan; English)

1. J	... (text omitted) DPRK declared that they have nuclear weapons. What do you think about that information? Another is uranium program. So I think some of the media said China thinks DPRK has nuclear weapons. So it is true or not? OK.	
2. P	Regarding whether the DPRK has already possessed nuclear weapons or has done anything concerning enriched uranium, I think you probably know more than I do.	guan yu chao xian shi fou yi jing you le he wu qi hai you zai nong suo you wen ti shang you shen me shi qing wo xiang zhe fang mian ni ke neng zhi dao de bi wo geng duo huan ju hua shuo wo bu bi ni zhi dao de geng duo

3.	There is another piece of news I can offer. After receiving the oral message from President Hu Jintao, the supreme leader of the DPRK said that they still pursue a Korean Peninsula free of nuclear weapons. They remain willing to continue to participate in the Six Party talks. And the DPRK side has also expressed their wish that the relevant countries can display more sincerity.	you yi tiao xiao xi ke yi ti shi yi xia na jiu shi chao xian zui gao ling dao ren zai jie dao Hu Jintao zhu xi de you guan kou xin hou chao fang ceng jing biao shi chao xian ren ran jian chi ban dao wu he hua de mu biao chao xian ren ran yuan yi ji xu can jia liu fang hui tan chao xian xi wang ge fang neng xian shi chu zu gou de huo zhe geng duo de cheng yi lai
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In example 19, the Japanese journalist asked a question that involved several sub-questions concerning the DPRK nuclear issues (Para. 1). In response, the foreign minister claimed that the journalist probably had more information of the DPRK nuclear weapons and the Uranium program than he did (Para. 2). China and North Korea had been generally on friendly terms. Making an official conjecture that North Korea had nuclear weapons did no good to China-North Korea relations. Meanwhile, denying the fact that they probably had nuclear weapons was not convincing at all. Beach and Metzger (1997) argue that claiming insufficient knowledge constructs a neutral position that mitigates agreement and disagreement by seeking closure on other-initiated topics. The foreign minister closed the topic and constructed a neutral position based on his claim of insufficient knowledge on the DPRK nuclear issue. He also justified his evasion of the question and avoided negative effects of answering the question directly. However, according to Greatbatch (1986), to decline to answer a question altogether is totally different from making some effort to answer the question before proceeding to shift the topic. The final additional piece of information mitigated the foreign minister's refusal to answer by citing some relevant news. But this piece of news also failed to present China's assessment of whether the DPRK had

nuclear weapons or not. Instead, it indicated China’s important role in and contribution to pushing North Korea to participate in the Six-party talks (Para. 3).

Example 18 and 19 demonstrate how Chinese politicians justified their refusal of the questions and their shifts to other topics. They mitigated their evasions by 1) stating that a question had been answered on a different occasion; 2) simply claiming insufficient knowledge on a particular issue; and 3) providing additional relevant information to make up for their non-reply. Under some circumstances, Chinese politicians were also observed to justify their refusals by attacking the journalistic questions. In spite of the adversarialness involved in attacking journalists’ questions, this technique still provides accounts for the refusals, which function as “conflict-avoidance procedures” that “maintain social solidarity” (Heritage, 1984:272).

Example 20 (Zhu; 2000; Taiwan; Chinese)

1. J	<p>Hello, I am from Taiwan.</p> <p>Recently the mainland side has been emphasizing that the Taiwan issue cannot be dragged on indefinitely. In three days’ time, a new president will be elected in Taiwan. If the new president should refuse to have talks with the mainland side concerning China’s reunification during his one or two terms of the office, which will last four to eight years, instead he will choose to maintain the status quo,</p>	<p>ni hao wo shi lai zi tai wan lian he bao de ji zhe</p> <p>zhong guo da lu zui jin qiang diao tai wan de wen ti bu neng wu xian qi de tuo yan xia qu er zai tai wan xin de zong tong zai san tian zhi hou xuan chu ru guo zhe ge xin ren de zong tong zai ta wei lai de yi ren huo zhe liang ren qi ye jiu shi zai si nian dao ba nian de ren qi li mian ju jue jiu zhong guo tong yi de wen ti jin xing liang an de tan pan ta xuan ze wei chi xian zhuang</p>
2. J	<p>Will this lead to a war across the Taiwan strait?</p> <p>Will the mainland side make a timetable to achieve reunification?</p> <p>It is just three days before the election. Will the mainland side do</p>	<p>zhe yang shi fou hui dao zhi liang an chu xian zhan zheng de jie guo</p> <p>zhong guo da lu zai zhe ge tong yi de wen ti shang shi fou hui zhi ding yi ge shi jian biao</p> <p>hai you san tian de xuan ju zai zhe san tian zhi nei zhong guo da lu shi fou hui cai qu jun</p>

	some military exercises in the three days such as test launch of missiles, which the mainland side did in 1996, to exert her influence over the situation?  Thank you.	shi yan xi li ru dao dan shi she de zhe ge xing dong li ru xiang 96 nian de na me yi ci xing dong yi fa hui ta de ying xiang li  xie xie
3. P	Regarding the Taiwan issue, I think I have made myself more than clear. There is no need to answer any hypothetical questions. As to whether there will be military exercises, please wait and see. There is only two days left.	guan yu tai wan wen ti wo ren wei wo gang cai yi jing jiang de hen qing chu mei you bi yao zai hui da jia she de wen ti zhi yu shi bus hi hui juxing jun shi yan xi qing ni deng zhe qiao zhi you liang tian

In example 20, the Premier refused to answer the first two questions (Para. 2) on the basis that he had made his position on the Taiwan issue very clear in his previous talk and that these two questions were hypothetical (Para. 3). He also refused to reply to the third question. Instead, he asked the journalist to wait and see what would happen in two days (Para. 3). Refusing to answer questions on the basis that they were hypothetical was frequently observed in CPPCs. Moreover, politicians also rejected questions on the basis that they contained inaccurate or false information.

Example 21 (Yang; 2011; US; Chinese)

1. J	... (text omitted) My second question is that due to the tense internal situation, some foreign journalists have encountered difficulties and restrictions in their reporting activities and some of them were even beaten (by Chinese Police).  What is your view on this?	... (text omitted) di er ge wen ti shi zui jin yin wei guo nei de shi tai bi jiao jin zhang you yi xie wai guo ji zhe zai yi xie cai fang zhong yu dao yi xie kun nan xian zhi sheng zhi you wai guo ji zhe bei ou da de  ni shi zen me kan zhe xie shi qing de
2. P	You said that the domestic situation is quite tense in China. I have not seen any signs of tension... (text omitted) I do not want anyone to make up things that do not exist.	ni shuo zui jin guo nei a hao xiang bi jiao jin zhang wo mei kan dao shen me jin zhang...(text omitted) wo men bu xi wang ren he ren wu shi zhao shi

3. P	China is a country under the rule of law and we abide by the law. We are always following the laws and regulations in managing the matters related to foreign journalists. We will continue to provide convenience to foreign journalists in conducting legal reporting activities... (text omitted) We hope that foreign journalists will abide by the Chinese laws and regulations... (text omitted) There is no such issue as Chinese police beating foreign journalists.	zhong guo shi fa zhi guo jia wo men yi fa ban shi wo men yi guan yi fa lai zuo ji zhe de guan li gong zuo tong shi wei ji zhe he fa he li de cai fang ti gong ge fang mian de bian li...(text omitted) xi wang ji zhe wai guo ji zhe neng zun shou zhong guo de fa lv fa gui...(text omitted) bu cun zai jing cha ou da wai guo ji zhe wen ti
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In example 21, the US journalist requested the foreign minister’s comments on the fact that some foreign journalists had encountered difficulties in their reporting activities and some of them were beaten by Chinese Police (Para. 1). The foreign minister did not make any comments as had been requested. He nullified the question by denying the existence of issues such as Chinese police beating foreign journalists and by emphasizing that the government had been following the laws in dealing with matters related to foreign journalists (Para. 2, 3). In this case, the foreign minister justified his refusal to answer the question on the basis that the question involved false information.

To sum up, Chinese politicians mitigated their evasions and refusals of journalistic questions by making various justifications in press conferences. They avoided answering questions on the basis that 1) the questions had already been answered on a different occasion; 2) they did not have sufficient information to answer the questions; 3) additional relevant information, which was not required by the prior question, was provided to make up for their refusal; and 4) the questions contained hypothetical or inaccurate information.

### 3.4.2 Making Political Points

Another mitigating technique that Chinese politicians used was to “make a political point” (Bull and Mayer, 1993:659) highly relevant to the topical agenda in order to evade or resist questions. Making a political point involves presenting policy or government position, attacking the opposition or political enemies, appealing to nationalism etc. (Bull and Mayer, 1993). Making political points are especially useful when politicians encounter highly adversarial questions. It enables politicians to respond to the form of the question without addressing the content of the question. This technique was found to be used quite frequently in CPPC.

Example 22 (Wen; 2004; US; English)

1. J	Premier Wen, you firmly promise to make ordinary people your priority. One of the things that have been discussed among them in recent days is Dr. Jiang Yanyong's letter. "I'm asking the government to declare the 1989 Tiananmen demonstrations a patriotic movement and to admit that it made a mistake by crashing them."	
2. J	What's the government's response to this and how is China going to address people's concern about this?  And also are you going to declare the 1989 demonstrations a patriotic movement?	
3. P	I have addressed this question many times. But I still would like to give you an answer.	zhe ge wen ti wo yi jing hui da duo ci le dan shi wo hai shi yuan yi hui da ni
4. P	At the end of 1980s and in the beginning of 1990s, China faced a very serious political disturbance. At that time, the Soviet Union disintegrated and drastic changes took place in Eastern Europe. At that critical moment, the Party's Central	Shang ge shi ji 80 nian dai mo 90 nian dai chu zai zhong guo fa sheng le yi chang yan zhong de zheng zhi feng bo su lian jie ti dong ou ju bian zai zhe ge guan xi dang he guo jia mingy un de yan zhong shi ke dang zhong yang jin jin yi kao quan dang tong zhi he quan guo ren min jian chi shi yi jie san zhong

	Committee closely rallied the whole party and all the Chinese people together. We adhered to the lines and policies adopted since the 3rd Plenary Session of the 11th Party Central Committee. We successfully stabilized the general situation of reform and opening-up in China and safeguarded the cause of building socialism with Chinese characteristics.	quan hui yi lai de lu xian bu dong yao cheng gong wen zhu le zhong guo gai ge kai fang de da ju han wei le zhong guo te se she hui zhu yi wei da shi ye
5. P	Fifteen years have passed. During this time tremendous achievements were made in China's reform, opening-up and socialist modernization.	15 nian guo qu le zhong guo gai ge kai fang he she hui zhu yi xian dai hua jian she qu de le ju da de cheng jiu zhe shi you mu gong du de
6. P	These achievements are self-evident to all. I think a very important contributing factor is the fact that we have always upheld unity of the party and safeguarded social and political stability in this country... (text omitted) So unity and stability are of overriding importance and they are also what I'm most concerned about as the Premier of this country.	qu de zhe yang zhong da de cheng jiu yi ge zhong yao yuan yin jiu shi wo men jian chi wei hu quan dang de tuan jie he tong yi wei hu le she hui zheng zhi de wen ding... (text omitted) yin ci tuan jie he wen ding que shi bi shen me dou zhong yao zhe ye shi wo yi ge zong li zui wei guan zhu de wen ti

In example 22, the US journalist asked for the Premier's position toward the 1989 demonstrations and asked whether the Premier would declare it a patriotic movement (Para. 2). Although the Premier expressed his willingness to take the question at the very beginning of his response, he did not give a clear 'yes' or 'no' answer to the yes/no question (Para. 3). His answer gave two pieces of information: 1) The Communist Party maintained the stability of the country and did the right thing in 1989 (Para. 4). 2) The achievement China had made during the last 20 years proved the importance of stability (Para. 5, 6). The answer in this example resembles the answer to the question in example 8 in this chapter, where the journalist asked if the Premier was going to remove the restrictions of personal freedom on former premier Zhao Ziyang. Although the questions in example 8 and in this example requested

totally different information, regardless of their similar historical contexts, the answers to these questions were nearly identical. The Premier consistently stated the general position of the government rather than trying to approach the questions specifically.

In addition to generally stating the position of the government, the Chinese politicians were also observed presenting policies, attacking political enemies and appealing to nationalism as a way of evading journalistic questions.

Example 23 (Wen; 2007; Germany; English)

1. J	<p>The Dalai Lama has expressed the hope to come on a pilgrimage to China. But some officials of your government still accuse him of advocating Tibetan independence.</p> <p>Why does the Chinese Government still see the Dalai Lama as a separatist although he says he does not advocate independence anymore?</p> <p>Would you welcome the Dalai Lama on a pilgrimage maybe during the Olympic Games in Beijing?</p>	
2. P	<p>Our policy toward the Dalai Lama is clear and consistent. So long as the Dalai Lama recognizes that Tibet is an inalienable part of China and that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China and stops his separatist activities, we can have a discussion with him about his personal future. The door is always open.</p>	<p>wo men dui dai lai la ma de zheng ce shi ming que he yi guan de jiu shi shuo zhi yao dai lai la ma cheng ren xi zang shi zhong guo bu ke fen ge ling tu de yi bu fen tai wan shi zhong guo bu ke fen ge ling tu de yi bu fen fang qi fen lie huo dong na me wo men jiu ke yi jiu ta ge ren de qian tu wen ti tong ta jin xing xie shang he dui hua zhe ge da men shi zhong shi chang kai de</p>
3. P	<p>Tibet is an autonomous region of China. If you still remember, the Fourteenth Dalai Lama was the chairman of the preparatory committee for establishing the Tibet Autonomous Region in 1956. But he later set up a so-called "Tibetan</p>	<p>Xi zang shi zhong guo de yi ge zi zhi qu da jia ru guo hai ji de de hua 1956 nian xi zang zi zhi qu chou jian de shi hou jiu shi zhe shi sis hi da lai la ma shi dang shi de chou wei hui zhu rend an shi xian zai da lai la ma zai guo wai zui jian lin shi zheng fu qiang diao xi zang de gao du zi zhi sheng zhi yao qiu</p>



	Government in Exile" abroad. He calls for "a high degree of autonomy" in Tibet and even demands that all Chinese troops withdraw from Tibet and that all the Han people and other non-Tibetan ethnic groups in Tibet move out. It is not hard to tell if the Dalai Lama genuinely hopes to see a unified China, or he bends to undermining China's unity?	zhong guo de jun dui cong xi zang quan bu che chu ju zhu zai xi zang de han ren he qi ta min zu ye yao qan bu che chu zhe jiu bu nan kan chu ta shi zhen xin xi wang zu guo de tong yi hai shi po huai zu guo de tong yi
4. P	We will not only hear what the Dalai Lama has to say; more importantly, we will watch what he does. We hope that the Dalai Lama will do something useful for China's unity and the development of Tibet. Thank you	Dui da lai la ma wo men bu jin yao kan ta shuo xie shen me geng yao kan ta zuo xie shen me wo men xi wang da lai la ma neng gou wei le zuo guo de tong yi xi zang de fa zhan duo zuo you yi de shi qing xie xie

In example 23, the German journalist raised two questions. One question requested the reasons why the Chinese government still saw the Dalai Lama as a separatist after he claimed to give up seeking independence (Para. 1). The other question explored the Chinese government's attitude toward a pilgrimage to Beijing by the Dalai Lama during the Olympic Games (Para. 1). In response, the Premier reiterated the policy towards the Dalai Lama before he approached the questions (Para. 2). He then appealed to nationalism and attacked the Dalai Lama by enumerating what the Dalai Lama had been doing over the past years (Para. 3). Various facts showed that the Dalai Lama was, and still is, a separatist and thus the first question, based on the journalist's perception that the Dalai Lama had given up seeking independence, was refuted. Although the Premier did not touch on the second question, the answer to it was self-evident. As the Dalai Lama had been violating government's policy, it was very unlikely that he would be allowed to make a pilgrimage to Beijing. In this example, the Premier managed to avoid addressing the questions directly while still making the government's position very clear through reiterating the relevant policies, appealing to nationalism and attacking the political enemy.

So far two general mitigating techniques for evading questions have been discussed. The politicians either provide justifications for their evasions or refusals, or they muddled the water by making political points. The following section shows how politicians evaded questions by operating on the questions.

### 3.4.3 Question Reformulation

A third technique used frequently by Chinese politicians to evade questions was question reformulation, which is a process whereby politicians paraphrase or slightly modify a question to fit the response they intend to give (Clayman, 1993). Reformulations occur most frequently when there is some discrepancy between “what the question is seeking to obtain” and “what the response actually provides” (Clayman, 1993:165). Question reformulations can minimize the discrepancy by either managing a response trajectory or shifting the topical agenda so that the ensuing answer would appear more responsive (Clayman, 1993). Reformulation enables the politician to shift the topic in the original question to one that is easier to handle. As long as the speaker can relate the new topic to the agenda proposed by the original question, they can conceal the fact that they are sidestepping and trying to avoid providing a full answer to the question. In CPPCs, question reformulation was a very effective and safe technique to evade questions given that no follow-up questions by the same journalist were allowed.

Example 24 (Wen; 2007; France; English)

1. J	Recently in an interview you gave to the People's Daily, you said that socialist system and democratic politics are not mutually exclusive.	
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	You also said that an initial stage of socialism would persist for a hundred years.	
2. J	Do you mean by that there will be no democracy in China for the next one hundred years?	
3. P	In my article, I made the point that socialism and democracy and rule of law are not mutually exclusive. Democracy, legal system, freedom, human rights, equality and fraternity are not peculiar to capitalism. Rather, they are the common achievements of human civilization made in the long course of history and the common values pursued by the entire mankind.	wo zui jin zhe pian wen zhang jiang su le yi ge dao li jiu shi she hui zhu yi min zhu yu fa zhi bus hi bei li de wo shuo min zhu fa zhi zi you ren quan ping deng bo ai zhe bus hi zi ben zhu yi suo te you de zhe shi zheng ge shi jie zai man chang de li shi guo cheng zhong gong tong xing cheng de wen ming cheng guo ye shi ren lei gong tong zhui qiu de jia zhi guan
4. P	I also emphasized in that article that there are over 2,000 ethnic groups in more than 200 countries and regions in the world. As they differ in social condition, history, culture and the level of development, they achieve democracy in different ways and in different forms.	Wo tong shi qiao diao shi jie shang you 2000 duo ge min zu 200 duo ge guo jia he di qu ta men de she hui li shi fa zhan bu tong ta men de fa zhan shui ping bu tong min zhu de xing shi he tu jing ye shi bu xiang tong de
5. P	You are actually asking what socialist democracy means. Let me be very clear about it: Socialist democracy, in essence, is to enable the people to govern themselves. This means we need to ensure people's rights to democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic oversight... (text omitted)	Zhu yu ni ti dao de yi ge he xin wen ti jiu shi she hui zhu yi min zhu shi shen me wo ke yi min que de shuo she hui zhu yi min zhu gui gen jie di shi ren rang min dang jia zuo zhu zhe jiu xu yao bao zheng ren min de min zhu xuan ju min zhu jue ce min zhu guan li he min zhu jian du quan li...(text omitted)

In example 24, the French journalist quoted what the Premier had said in a newspaper article and asked if that meant China did not need democracy in another hundred years (Para. 1, 2). The Premier initially responded to the journalist's quote from his article and provided more relevant information concerning socialism and democracy (Para. 3). He emphasized that capitalism was not the only social system that provided

an environment for democracy and that the form and realization of democracy could vary in different regions (Para. 4). Based on the reiteration of the core points in his article, the Premier offered his own interpretation of the core presupposition of the question and transformed the original yes/no question into a wh-question that requested information about what socialist democracy was (Para. 5). The reformulated version of the question was much easier to handle than the original yes/no question, which was based on the presupposition that democracy did not exist in the initial stages of socialism. The Premier's ensuing response built on his reformulation and provided information as to the nature of a socialist democracy (Para. 5). In this example, the Premier shifted the topic of the original question through question reformulation and thus concealed the fact that he was sidestepping the original question.

#### **3.4.4 Summary**

Evading and resisting questions has negative effects on the politicians' reputation as the journalists, the audience, and also the subsequent media coverage, monitor the politicians' level of evasiveness. In the Chinese culture, where "face" has been consistently emphasized, face-threatening actions such as resisting questions directly is considered undesirable. Therefore, Chinese politicians were found to use three main mitigating techniques when they evaded and resisted journalistic questions in press conferences. They either made justifications for their shift of topic or refusal to answer questions, or they made political points relevant to the topical agenda to conceal the fact that they were sidestepping the questions. In addition, they also reformulated journalistic questions to ones that were less politically sensitive.

### 3.5 Chapter Summary

This chapter aimed to show whether there was a difference in the level of evasiveness of the politicians' answers to questions of different levels of adversarialness. To that end, I examined the range of answers the politicians provided, which fell into four categories: minimal answers, elaborations, implicit answers, and non-replies (Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003). Minimal and elaborations are non-evasive answers given that they provide one of the canonical answers projected by the question. Implicit answers and non-replies are evasive answers as they do not provide the canonical answers. The answers to the 101 questions studied in chapter 2 were examined according to the four types of answers. The distribution of these answers showed that generally there were similar numbers of evasive answers and non-evasive answers. A split in evasiveness was observed between answers to Chinese journalistic questions and to questions from journalists from developed countries. Evasive answers took up 63% of the total answers to questions from journalists from developed countries while they only accounted for 35% of the total answers to Chinese journalistic questions.

The Chinese politicians evaded and resisted roughly half of the journalistic questions put to them generally, and they evaded even more when the questions were from journalists from developed countries. However, evading and resisting questions was undesirable from an interactional perspective and because of the emphasis on "face" within the Chinese culture (Chang and Holt, 1994, Clayman, 2001, Raymond, 2003, Schegloff, 1968). Based on the notion of preference organization, this chapter also examined the interactional structures of non-evasive and evasive answers and the structural differences between the two types of answers. Non-evasive answers were

treated as preferred responses and evasive answers were taken as dispreferred responses. In contrast with the literature (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), which shows that preferred responses are usually delivered without delay, non-evasive answers in CPPCs were found to be performed either with or without delay. However, in the vast majority of the cases in the corpus, the Chinese politicians delayed non-evasive answers for the purpose of friendship building and national image building. In line with the literature (Davidson, 1984, Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), evasive answers in CPPCs were also realized through inter-turn gaps, turn initial delay, accounts and “pro forma” agreements. In addition, given the presence of an interpreter, turn-internal gaps that were filled by the interpreter was also a unique practice to defer an evasive answer in CPPCs. The delay of an evasive answer, to some degree, reduced the negative effects of politicians’ evasions and refusals. In CPPCs, Chinese politicians were also found to use many other techniques to mitigate their evasions and refusals such as offering justifications, making political points and reformulating questions.

## Chapter 4 Conclusion

### 4.0 Introduction

Press conferences have been the most spontaneous interaction between politicians and the media in China. This thesis focused on question-answer format, which is the defining feature of CPPCs. The CA methodological framework was employed to show the various ways in which journalists posed questions and in which politicians responded to the questions in CPPCs. While the structure and content of questions and answers were discussed in general, special attention was given to adversarial questions and evasive answers, regarding the linguistic techniques for posing adversarial questions and mitigating evasive answers. In light of the previous literature on journalistic adversarialness (Clayman et al., 2006, Clayman and Heritage, 2002b, Eriksson, 2011, Rawnsley and Rawnsley, 2004, Rendle-Short, 2007) and politicians' evasiveness (Bavelas et al., 1988, Bull and Mayer, 1993, Clayman, 1993, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Harris, 1991, Jiang, 2006), as well as the author's preliminary observation of the data, differences were expected, in the level of adversarialness of journalists from different economic, socio-political and cultural backgrounds, and in the level of evasiveness of politicians when confronted with questions of different levels of adversarialness. This thesis also included two quantitative studies that confirmed the significance of such differences.

In this chapter, summaries of the main findings of the previous chapters are presented (4.1). Some theoretical and methodological implications of the current study (4.2), the

limitations of the study, and some suggestions for future research in communication in the political contexts are also discussed (4.3).

#### **4.1 Summary of Findings**

In chapter 2, two research questions were answered: 1) what were the structures of journalists' questions and what strategies did journalists employ to pose adversarial questions in CPPCs? 2) Was there a difference in the level of adversarialness between Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries?

A sequential paradigm of six basic sequences was observed in journalists' questions in CPPCs, including a 'thank you' to the host politician; greeting; self-identification; prefatory statement(s); actual question(s); and an anticipatory 'thank you' to the politician that took the question. Nevertheless, there were differences between Mainland Chinese journalists and foreign journalists in terms of this paradigm. All six sequences were present in the vast majority of Chinese journalists' questions, whereas 'thank you' to the host politician and the greeting sequence were missing in some of the foreign journalists' questions.

In chapter 2, there was a brief discussion about the three general strategies that journalists employed when asking questions: Agenda setting, presupposition and preference. These three general questioning strategies can be embodied in various linguistic formations for adversarial questioning. In CPPCs, adversarialness was conveyed through unfavorable question prefaces, which not only established the relevance of the subsequent question, but also added to the overall hostility of the



question. Moreover, different types of interrogatives were also utilized to do adversarial questioning in CPPCs. Yes/no- and negated yes/no questions were used to exert pressure on the politicians by constraining the topical and action agendas of the question as well as conveying the journalists' preferences toward one type of answer over another. Wh-questions were utilized to embed unfavorable presuppositions. Particularly, the 'why did you' and 'how could you' forms were also used to perform accusations. Alternative questions were employed to place the politicians in a dilemma. Declarative questions were employed for making strong and hostile statements. In addition, adversarialness was also conveyed through the journalist's lexical choice, which involved offense to the politicians or the government they represented.

Chapter 2 also included a quantitative study that aimed to show the difference in the level of adversarialness of journalists from China and developed countries. Questions from both groups in CPPCs were compared on the level of adversarialness, which was operationalized in terms of various question design and content features based on a question analysis system developed by Clayman and Heritage (2002a) and Clayman et al.(2006). The independent t-test results revealed that there was a significant difference in the level of adversarialness between questions from Chinese journalists and journalists from developed countries. The difference can be explained by the cultural and socio-political differences between China and most developed countries, particularly regarding the state-media relationship and information censorship.

In chapter 3, the other three research questions were answered: 3) Did the different levels of journalistic adversarialness result in different levels of evasiveness of the

politicians' answers? 4) What were the interactional structures of the Chinese politicians' answers and were there any differences in the organization between evasive and non-evasive answers? 5) What kind of mitigating techniques did the Chinese politicians use to minimize the negative effects when they were trying to evade and reject questions?

In order to find out whether different levels of adversarialness result in different levels of evasiveness, politicians' answers were categorized into four types according to their level of evasiveness: minimal answers, elaborations, implicit answers, and non-replies (Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003). Minimal and elaborations are non-evasive answers given that they provide one of the canonical answers projected by the question. Implicit answers and non-replies are evasive answers as they do not provide the canonical answers. The answers to the questions used for the quantitative study in chapter 2 were analyzed and classified as any of the four types of answers. The frequency distribution of these answers demonstrated that generally there were similar numbers of evasive answers and non-evasive answers. However, a difference in the level of evasiveness was observed between answers to Chinese journalistic questions and to questions from journalists from developed countries. In CPPCs, the politicians evaded more questions from the developed countries group than those from the Chinese group. This difference was confirmed by a chi-square test and could be accounted for by the political equivocation theory (Bavelas, 1985, Bavelas et al., 1988, Bavelas et al., 1990), which states that evasive speech occurs when a speaker is faced with two unattractive communicative alternatives, whatever he or she said would lead to negative consequences. Based on this theory, it was reasonable for the Chinese

politicians to be more evasive when confronted with questions from journalists from developed countries, who asked more adversarial questions.

Chapter 3 also examined the interactional structures of non-evasive and evasive answers and the structural differences between the two types of answers based on the notion of preference organization (Heritage and Atkinson, 1984, Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007, Schegloff and Sacks, 1973, Davidson, 1984). Non-evasive answers were treated as preferred responses and evasive answers were considered as dispreferred responses. In contrast with the literature (Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007), which shows that preferred responses are usually delivered promptly, non-evasive answers in CPPCs were given either with or without delay. The Chinese politicians were found to delay non-evasive answers for the purpose of friendship and national image building. Nevertheless, evasive answers in CPPCs were also realized through inter-turn gaps, turn initial delay, accounts and “pro forma” agreements, in line with what the literature shows (Davidson, 1984, Pomerantz, 1984, Schegloff, 2007). Another unique practice to defer an evasive answer in CPPCs was turn-internal gaps that were filled by the interpreter.

Evading questions was undesirable because of the interaction rules, which require a relevant SPP to a FPP, and the Chinese culture, which places great emphasis on honoring one’s own and others’ “face” (Chang and Holt, 1994, Raymond, 2003, Schegloff, 1968, Clayman, 2001). In addition to reducing the negative effects by deferring an evasive answer, the Chinese politicians were found to use many other techniques to mitigate their evasions and refusals. They either made justifications or reformulated questions for their shift of topic or refusal to answer questions. They

also made political points relevant to the topical agenda to conceal the fact that they were sidestepping the questions.

## **4.2 Implications of the Current Study**

The above analysis has important implications for the understanding of institutional talk in political contexts in general, and politician-media communication in China in particular. It also has a methodological implication for future studies on talk-in-interaction.

This thesis analyzed the structure, form and content of questions and answers in political press conferences. Although political news interviews have been the focus of much previous literature (Bull, 1994, Bull and Mayer, 1993, Clayman, 1988, Clayman, 2001, Clayman and Heritage, 2002b, Cohen, 1989, Eriksson, 2011, Gnisci and Bonaiuto, 2003, Greatbatch, 1988, Harris, 1991, Heritage, 1985), there is a scarcity of research on political press conferences. Clayman, et al. (2006, 2002a) developed a question analysis system to assess the adversarialness of journalists' questions in US presidential press conferences. Jiang (2006) showed some cross cultural pragmatic differences in press conferences in the US and China. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), Bhatia (2006) analyzed textual data from press conferences involving the former Chinese President Jiang Zemin and the US president George W. Bush. Using CA methodology and quantitative analysis, this thesis presented a detailed analysis of question-answer patterns in CPPCs. It adds to our knowledge about press conferences as a formal type of institutional talk, which is

distinguished from mundane talk and political news interviews in terms of the turn-taking system, questioning strategies and answering practices.

This analysis also has important implications for journalists and politicians as well as the general public in China. An understanding of what questioning and answering strategies they have been using, and what are more acceptable and appropriate interactionally and culturally may enable journalists and politicians to improve their performance in face-to-face interactions and thus enhance communication effectiveness. This is particularly important for foreign journalists who are not familiar with the socio-political and cultural environment in China. In addition, during the past few years, there have been persistent calls for reform in the political and media system, and calls for more freedom of speech among the general public in China. In order to explain the phenomenon that journalists from developed countries asked more adversarial questions than Chinese journalists in CPPCs, some crucial differences were discussed between China and western democratic countries regarding the state-media relationship and information censorship. How journalists treat politicians in face-to-face interactions, to some extent indicates the socio-political situation in a country (Clayman et al., 2006). This thesis provides insight into China's current socio-political situation and its position in the democratic process by subjecting politician-media communication in press conferences to close examination and by highlighting some differences between China and western democratic countries in this connection.

In addition to the implications for participants in CPPCs and for our understanding of political communication and the larger socio-political situation in China, the current

study also has methodological implications as it provided an example of mixed methodology, in which both CA and quantitative analysis were used. While the CA approach was employed to explore the design of questions and answers, quantitative analysis was adopted to show the distribution of different types of questions and answers and to confirm whether there were significant differences in adversarialness between journalists from different backgrounds and in politicians' evasiveness when answering questions of different levels of adversarialness. The combination of CA and quantitative analysis in this thesis gave a good example of using "different types of methods at different levels of data aggregation" (Tashakkori, 1998:18). The mixed methodology enabled the author to closely examine individual cases and at the same time gain understanding of the phenomenon in a broader societal context (Dörnyei, 2007).

### **4.3 Limitations and Suggestion for Further Research**

Although the current study was based on over 40 hours of video recordings of CPPCs, the visual information was totally ignored and only the verbal elements of interaction were taken into consideration in the analysis. However, the audio data necessarily misses out on some salient features involved in the management of interaction (Hutchby and Woffitt, 2008). In CPPCs, the journalists' and the politicians' eye gaze, facial expressions, hand and body movement might be better indicators of their attitudes and intentions than verbal elements. Therefore, further research into question-answer format in political contexts may also include analysis of non-verbal

elements to see how they convey journalistic adversarialness and how they imply politicians' evasions of questions.

In addition to the visual information, the interpreter's role was also ignored in this analysis. Nevertheless, previous research (Hatim, 1997, Roy, 1999) that examines the role of the interpreter or translator as linguistic and social intermediary has shown that interpreters are not only converting and conveying the words of others, but also mediating the achievement of interactional goals. In the context of CPPCs, although the interpreters are required to keep a neutral position, they may have subconsciously shaped the original messages in the name of those for whom they spoke for to achieve the interactional goal. Davidson (2000) investigated the interpreter's role in medical interviews and found out that interpreters were not acting as 'neutral' machines of semantic conversion, instead they were active participants in the process of diagnosis. Much research has also addressed interpreters' roles in courtrooms (Berk-Seligson, 2002, Mikkelsen, 1998). However, the interpreter's role in political contexts is underexplored in the existing literature. Future research on interpreter-mediated political communication can examine for example, how the presence of an interpreter changes the adversarialness of journalists' questions.

Moreover, situated within the broader sociopolitical context, the current study analyzed journalistic adversarialness and politicians' evasiveness from a linguistic perspective. The immediate sociopolitical environment of each press conference was not taken into account in the analysis. However, Clayman et al. (2006) argue that some dimensions of adversarialness including "initiative", "assertiveness" and "adversarialness" are sensitive to local conditions. As my data covered press

conferences between 1998 and 2011, important events or incidents in a particular year may have affected journalists' attitudes toward politicians in that year's press conference. Therefore, future research is highly recommended to situate political communication analysis within the broader as well as the immediate sociopolitical contexts.

Given the short time span the data covered, this analysis can be considered a synchronic study of CPPCs, in which some cross-cultural differences between China and western developed countries were discussed. A final thought emerging from the current study is that it should be interesting to conduct a diachronic study of domestic political press conferences that looks at the historical trend of Chinese journalists' treatment of politicians during the past 60 years. This may provide important insight into how the state-media relationship has evolved in the pre-opening up and post-opening up eras, into the change in the level of freedom of speech enjoyed by the press and the general public, and thus into China's progress in the democratic process.



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## Appendix 1: Transcription Conventions

(0.1)	timed pause
↑↓	marked rising and falling shifts in pitch
he he heheh	laughter
...	omission of information
( )	transcriber comments