20 June 2014

Follow-ups in broadcast political discourse:
speeches, interviews, and parliamentary questions

Peter Bull

Department of Psychology, University of York, York, United Kingdom

Mailing address: Department of Psychology, University of York, Heslington, York YO10 5DD, United Kingdom
E-mail: drpebull@york.ac.uk
Telephone number: +44 (0) 1904 433142
Fax: +44 (0) 1904 433181
The concept of the follow-up as the third element of a sequential triad was originally formulated in the context of classroom discourse by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). In this chapter, it is applied to the analysis of three distinct genres of political discourse: speeches, interviews, and parliamentary questions. Illustrative examples are drawn from television broadcasts with British politicians. It is proposed that the concepts of the follow-up and the sequential triad can be usefully applied to all three genres of political discourse. Their application also highlights significant gaps in the current research literature, most notably, how both interviewers and politicians follow up equivocal and unequivocal responses by politicians to questions. In addition, it is argued that the concept of the follow-up can be usefully extended beyond the sequential triad to analyze not only sequential interactions over time, but also various forms of political action within and outside parliament.
Introduction

“A person who asks a question has a right to talk again, after the other talks” (Sacks, 1992: 49). In Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) analysis of classroom discourse, teaching exchanges can be conceptualized in terms of a sequential triad: opening, answering, and follow-up moves. The follow-up move, which is typically produced by the teacher, takes place after the answering move as a reaction to the student’s response. This move is considered vital in telling the students whether they have done what the teacher wanted them to do. Notably, if the follow-up is withheld, the students might think that they produced the wrong answer or that there is some kind of problem (McCarthy, 1991: 16-17).

In this chapter, it will be argued that the concept of follow-ups is also highly relevant to the analysis of political discourse. Three distinct genres of political communication will be discussed: speeches, interviews, and parliamentary questions. Illustrative examples are drawn from television broadcasts with British politicians. Each genre can be seen as representing a different form of political discourse (Bull & Fetzer, 2010): politicians addressing an audience (monologue), politicians questioned by professional interviewers, and politicians in debate with one another. According to Thibault (2003: 44), “Genres are types. But they are types in a rather peculiar way. Genres do not specify the lexicogrammatical resources of word, phrase, clause, and so on. Instead, they specify the typical ways in which these are combined and deployed so as to enact the typical semiotic action formations of a given community”. Finally, consideration will be given to the wider implications of the concept of follow-up in the analysis of political discourse.
1. Political speeches

Although a political speech is essentially monologic in form, it can also be understood as an interactive event. Notably, Atkinson (e.g., 1983, 1984a, 1984b) compared speaker-audience interaction to the way in which people take turns in conversation, although in the context of a political meeting, audience “turns” are essentially limited to gross displays of approval or disapproval (such as cheering or heckling). He pointed out that audience responses are not random, indeed, they are highly synchronized with speech: typically applause occurs either just before or immediately after a possible completion point by the speaker. This close synchronization suggests that audience members must in some way be able to project possible completion points in advance of their occurrence. According to Atkinson, it is features in the construction of talk itself that indicate to the audience when to applaud. In particular, he identified two distinctive formulaic rhetorical devices: three-part lists and contrasts. In a three-part list, once the listener recognizes that a list is under way, it is possible to anticipate the completion point (the end of the speaker’s utterance), thereby signalling an appropriate place to applaud. The contrast (or antithesis) involves the sequential juxtaposition of an item with its opposite. To be effective, the second part of the contrast should closely resemble the first in the details of its construction and duration, so that the audience can more easily anticipate the point of completion. According to Atkinson, contrasts and three-part lists are by far the most frequently used devices for inviting applause.

If an audience fails to respond to such applause invitation, speakers may actively pursue applause, termed a pursuit by Heritage and Greatbatch (1986). A common method of doing so is to re-complete or simply repeat the previous point. Alternatively, speakers may re-summarize the
gist of a previous point as a means of pursuing applause. A third form of pursuit involves a shift in what Goffman (1979) calls *footing*, for example, a speaker might shift from speaking on his/her own behalf to speaking on behalf of a collectivity (e.g., the government, or the political party s/he represents).

From the perspective outlined above, the pursuit may be regarded as the third part of a triad comparable to that identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975). At the same time, there are several notable differences. Firstly, the second element of this triad actually refers to the absence of a response, that is to say, a lack of applause from the audience, to which the speaker responds with a pursuit. Secondly, the absent response is not verbal, but nonverbal (i.e., applause). Thirdly, the pursuit itself may also be nonverbal as well as verbal, as illustrated below.

The following example of a nonverbal pursuit comes from the leader’s speech delivered by Ed Miliband (EM) to the Labour Party annual conference (Liverpool, 27 September, 2011). Early on in the speech, EM says: “Ask me the three most important things I’ve done this year and I’ll tell you; being at the birth of my second son, Sam”. This extract can be understood in terms of two of the rhetorical devices identified by Heritage and Greatbatch’s (1986) as forms of applause invitation: the *puzzle-solution* and the *headline-punchline*. In the puzzle-solution device, the speaker begins by establishing some kind of puzzle or problem, and then, shortly afterwards, offers the solution - the important and applaudable part of the message. The headline-punchline device is structurally similar to the puzzle-solution format, although somewhat simpler. Here, the speaker proposes to make a declaration, pledge or announcement (headline) and then proceeds to make it (punchline). Thus, EM sets a puzzle (“Ask me the three most
important things I’ve done this year”), and then a headline (“I’ll tell you”); this is followed by the 
solution/punchline (“being at the birth of my second son, Sam”), which should be the applaudable 
part of the message. But the audience do not applaud, there is a pause. Presumably, the 
audience are still waiting for items two and three, because EM has said “Ask me the three most 
important things”). EM then nods his head during the pause, and the audience applaud.
Arguably, the head nod can be understood as a nonverbal form of pursuit, indicating to the 
audience that EM has invited applause at this point.

Hence, the sequential triad (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) in the context of political 
speeches can be extended to include nonverbal as well as verbal communication. As such, this 
application of concept of the sequential triad in the context of political speeches contributes to the 
growing literature on the close interdependence between nonverbal communication and speech 
(e.g., Kendon, 2004; McNeill, 2005; Bull, 2012).

2. Broadcast political interviews

The concept of the sequential triad can also be applied to the analysis of broadcast political 
interviews. Such interviews characteristically take the form of question-response sequences; the 
interviewer is expected to ask questions, the politician is expected to reply (e.g., Greatbatch, 1988; 
Clayman, 1989; Heritage, Clayman & Zimmerman, 1988). This is the principal means used by 
interviewers for creating and sustaining talk (Schegloff, 1989), although they may also engage in 
non-questioning actions to open and close the interview (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1991).

A notable feature of broadcast political interviews is the extent to which politicians 
equivocate in response to interviewer questions. For example, Bull (1994) analyzed 33 broadcast 
interviews with British political leaders, broadcast between 1987 and 1992. Results showed a
reply rate of only 46%, based on the analysis of 1,026 questions. (Reply rate was defined as the proportion of questions to which the politician gave a full reply). The results are notably similar to those of a completely independent study by Harris (1991), who found a reply rate of 39% with a different set of broadcast interviews, principally with Margaret Thatcher (Conservative Prime Minister, 1979-1990), and Neil Kinnock (Leader of the Labour Opposition, 1983-1992).

In comparison, it is interesting to consider reply rates in televised interviews with people who are not politicians. The late Diana, Princess of Wales, in her celebrated interview with Martin Bashir, replied to 78 per cent of questions (Bull, 1997). Louise Woodward, the British au-pair who was convicted for the manslaughter of eight-month-old Matthew Eappen, in an interview with Martin Bashir replied to 70 per cent of questions (Bull, 2000). Monica Lewinsky replied to 89 per cent of questions posed by Jon Snow in an interview concerning her affair with President Clinton (Bull, 2000). The mean reply rate of 79 per cent across all three interviews is significantly higher than the mean reply rate of 46 per cent for the 33 political interviews reported above (Bull, 2000).

How interviewers respond to equivocation by the politicians can be regarded as a follow-up in terms of Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) sequential triad. For example, one distinctive form of equivocation used by Neil Kinnock was to make use of what were termed negative answers, in which he would state what would not happen instead of what would happen (Bull & Mayer, 1993). Negative answers can be seen as a particularly ineffectual form of equivocation, because they simply invite the interviewer to follow up with a request for a positive answer (e.g., “That is why I'm asking what you would do”, Sir Robin Day, interview with Neil Kinnock (1st June, 1987, BBC1 Panorama, general election campaign). In contrast, a distinctive
form of equivocation used by Margaret Thatcher was to make personal attacks on the interviewer (Bull & Mayer, 1993). In most cases, following a personal attack, interviewers typically asked a new question (in 83 per cent of cases) rather than following up the original question. Thus, whereas Margaret Thatcher's aggressive tactics had the effect of inhibiting the interviewers from pursuing follow-ups, the defensive tactics of Neil Kinnock simply invited further questioning on the same topic.

The above incidents are intended to illustrate how particular follow-ups utilized by interviewers can be related to a politician’s interview style. But these are only illustrative examples. Whereas the author has devised an equivocation typology which systematically distinguishes between 35 different ways of not replying to questions (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, 2003), there has been no comparable systematic analysis of interviewer follow-ups in response to equivocation by the politicians.

Arguably, how best to handle equivocation by the politicians is an important aspect of an interviewer’s communicative skills (cf. Bull & Elliott, 1998; Elliott & Bull, 1996). Furthermore, this aspect of interviewer skill can be evaluated more effectively through the identification and analysis of different follow-up techniques used in response to political equivocation. In this respect, the application of the concept of follow-ups to broadcast political interviews is particularly useful, because it highlights an important aspect of interviewer communicative skill which has been largely neglected up till now in the research literature.

3. Parliamentary questions

3.1 Prime Minister’s Questions
Prime Minister’s Questions (PMQs) are by far the most well-known form of parliamentary questions in the UK House of Commons; these can also usefully be analyzed in terms of follow-ups. Like a broadcast political interview, PMQs take the form of question-response sequences. The principal difference is that the questions in PMQs are posed by politicians, not by professional political interviewer. Thus, whereas interviewers in broadcast interviews are expected to be impartial, there is no such requirement in PMQs. Indeed, Members of Parliament (MPs) can be as partial and as unashamedly partisan as they choose. Thus, opposition MPs can ask difficult and challenging questions, while government MPs can flatter the Prime Minister (PM) with toady and obsequious questions.

PMQs take place while Parliament is sitting once a week every Wednesday, lasting for just 30 minutes. They always begin with the same tabled question to the PM, asking if s/he will list his/her official engagements for the day. All other questions are supplementary, hence they may have the important elements of unpredictability and surprise. MPs are protected by parliamentary privilege, which allows them to speak freely in the House of Commons without fear of legal action for slander. But they are also expected to observe certain traditions and conventions regarding what is termed “unparliamentary language”. Specifically, they should not be abusive or insulting, call another member a liar, suggest another MP has false motives, or misrepresent another MP. The Speaker (who presides over House of Commons debates) may ask an MP to withdraw an objectionable utterance, or even name an MP, i.e., suspend the MP from the House for a specified period of time. Thus, in summary, MPs in PMQs must orient both to the expectation that dialogue should follow a question-answer pattern, and that they should refrain from unacceptable unparliamentary language. Nevertheless, within the constraint of these
conventions, the discourse of PMQs has been shown to be highly face-threatening (Harris, 2001; Bull & Wells, 2012).

The procedure of PMQs is as follows. Backbench MPs wishing to ask a question must enter their names on the Order Paper. (In the Westminster system, the Order Paper states the parliamentary business for the day. Backbench MPs are Members of Parliament who neither hold governmental office nor are spokespersons (frontbenchers) for the Opposition). The names of entrants are shuffled in a ballot to produce a random order in which they will be called by the Speaker. The Speaker then calls on MPs to put their questions, usually in an alternating fashion: one MP from the government benches is followed by one from the opposition benches.

Notably, backbench MPs are limited to one question each. Thus, in terms of Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) sequential triad, follow-ups from backbench MPs are not possible, because they are explicitly not permitted to pursue the PM’s response with any further utterance (Harris, 2001).

However, this is very much not the case for the Leader of the Opposition (LO), who may ask up to six questions at PMQs, either as a whole block or in two separate groups of three. (The LO is conventionally the leader of the largest opposition party, currently the Labour Party). This means that the LO can pursue a specific topic through a series of questions. If the PM equivocates in response to a particular question, it is perfectly possible for the LO to follow up that particular issue in the next question. Conversely, if the PM replies to a particular question, it is of interest to analyze how this may be followed up by attacks on other aspects of government policy or performance.
PMQs are notorious for their adversarial discourse, and have been widely criticized on this account. Notably, when Cameron became Leader of the Conservative Party (6 December, 2005) he pledged to put an end to “the Punch and Judy politics of Westminster, the name calling, backbiting, point scoring, finger pointing” [Punch and Judy is a traditional popular British puppet show, which features domestic strife and violence between the two central characters, Mr. Punch and his wife Judy]. Subsequently, Cameron admitted that he had not kept this pledge, blaming the adversarial nature of PMQs (29 April, 2008). Similarly, according to John Bercow (2010), the current Speaker [the Speaker chairs the debates in the House of Commons], MPs “yell and heckle in a thoroughly unbecoming manner” providing “scrutiny by screech”. Again, according to Simon Hoggart (2011), distinguished political columnist of The Guardian newspaper, “Prime Minister’s Questions is increasingly like an unpleasant football match, in which the game played publicly is accompanied by all sorts of secret grudge matches, settlement of scores and covert fouls committed when the players hope the ref is not looking”.

The authors of a recent academic study of PMQs (Bates, Kerr, Byrne & Stanley 2012, 2) summarize as follows:

.... there appears to be a general opinion among commentators, bloggers and viewers that PMQs has turned, from a relatively ‘civilised’ parliamentary session into something of a rowdy, mud-slinging spectacle catered more towards shallow political point scoring than serious scrutiny of prime ministerial activity.

At the same time, there are also commentators and critics who have spoken in praise of PMQs as a (potential) forum for serious, relevant debate and accountability (e.g., Sedgemore, 1980; The Guardian, 2010), and as a significant form of political opposition (Bull, 2012).
PMQs are now the dominant form of prime ministerial activity in the British parliament and, given the televising of the House of Commons, the highest profile parliamentary event bar none. Despite this prominence, most comment on PMQs has been anecdotal, it has attracted surprisingly little academic research (Bates et al., 2012). However, there have been some studies of PMQs, both quantitative and qualitative.

Quantitative studies can be summarized briefly as follows. Dunleavy and colleagues (Dunleavy, Jones & O’Leary, 1990; Dunleavy, Jones, Burnham, Elgie & Fysh, 1993) analyzed long-term trends in prime ministerial activity in the House of Commons. They found that answering questions has become more than four times as common as other modes of parliamentary intervention, which they claimed was principally due to the influence of PMQs. Giddings and Irwin (2005) found that the number of questions receiving an oral answer in PMQs in 2004 was less than half that in 1964; furthermore, whereas in 1964 there was a preponderance of backbench questions, by 2004 PMQs was dominated by the party leaders. Irwin, Kennon, Natzler and Rogers (1993) compared the number of questions tabled for PMQs in 1982 and 1989, and found a sharp increase in the number of oral questions tabled but a sharp decrease in the percentage of these which were substantive, rather than open questions. However, apart from the work of Irwin et al., these analyses tell us little about the content and structure of questions (e.g., the nature of the questions posed, and the nature of the answers given).

Qualitative studies of PMQs have been conducted by both Harris (2001), and Bull and Wells (2012). In the context of Brown and Levinson’s (1978, 1987) theory of politeness, Harris argued that much of the discourse of PMQs is composed of intentional and explicitly face-threatening acts (FTAs). She provided illustrative examples of a number of techniques
whereby FTAs may be performed, such as asking disingenuous questions to which the questioner already knows the answer.

Bull and Wells (2012) conducted a more systematic investigation of different types of facework in PMQs, in which they identified six distinctive ways in which FTAs are performed in questions, and five in which the PM may counter FTAs in replies. They utilised the term *face aggravation* to refer to the aggressive use of facework, in which antagonists seek to score points at the other’s expense (following Goffman, 1967). Overall, they argued that face aggravation between the PM and LO is not just an acceptable form of parliamentary discourse, it is both sanctioned and rewarded, a means whereby the LO may enhance his/her own status. They further argued that PMQs should be regarded as another of the situations identified by Culpeper (1996), where impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but central to the interaction that takes place.

Utilising both quantitative and qualitative techniques, the most substantive (and most recent) study of PMQs has been conducted by Bates et al. (2012). They compared the opening sessions of PMQs for the last five PMs from 1979-2010 (Thatcher, Major, Blair, Brown and Cameron). Their aim was to test a general perception that PMQs have developed into a focal point for shallow political point scoring rather than serious prime ministerial scrutiny. They found that the conduct of PMQs had become rowdier over the period sampled, with weekly sessions increasingly dominated by the leaders of the two main parties to the gradual exclusion of backbenchers.

From all the above research, it can be seen that the reputation of PMQs for adversarial discourse is amply substantiated. Notably, in PMQs the PM can be questioned by any MP on any aspect of government policy or performance. Thus, PMQs provide a unique opportunity for
opposition MPs to call the PM to account, thereby potentially threatening both the PM’s personal face, and that of the government s/he leads. The LO in particular may be seen as failing in his/her job if s/he fails to criticize the PM, hence the systemic and endemically face-threatening nature of their interaction at PMQs.

3.2 The British phone-hacking scandal

The political effectiveness of this adversarial discourse was evaluated in a recent study by the author (Bull, 2013), based on the concept of the follow-up in the context of the British phone-hacking scandal. This has been an ongoing controversy involving the *News of the World* and other British tabloid newspapers published by *News International*. Employees of the newspaper were accused of engaging in phone hacking, police bribery, and exercising improper influence in the pursuit of publishing stories.

Of particular importance was the phone hacking of a 13-year-old English girl, Milly Dowler, who had been abducted on her way home from school (21 March 2002), and was subsequently found murdered (18 September, 2002). On 4 July 2011, The Guardian reported that journalists from the News of the World had hacked into her voicemail. It was further alleged that the reporters deleted messages when the mailbox was getting full, enabling them to listen to new messages, and thereby misleading the missing teenager’s family into thinking that she was still alive. These allegations resulted not only in a huge public outcry but eventually in the closure of the News of the World, it being announced on 7 July 2011 that the paper would print its final edition on 10 July 2011. According to its final editorial: “Phones were hacked, and for that this newspaper is truly sorry... there is no justification for this appalling wrongdoing”. However, although the newspaper admitted to phone-hacking, it did not admit to deleting messages from the
teenager’s voicemail. In fact, according to a subsequent statement from the Metropolitan Police (9 May, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-18002180), some individual voicemails may have been deleted automatically, hence it was not possible to tell whether message deletions were automatic or intentional.

In context of this furore, Miliband launched a wholesale attack on the PM and on News International in two sessions of PMQs (6 & 13 July 2011). There were four principal themes to Miliband’s attack: (1) a demand for a public inquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers; (2) opposition to the News International takeover bid for BSkyB; (3) call for the resignation of Rebekah Brooks (chief executive of News International, and former editor of the News of the World); (4) criticism of Cameron for appointing another former editor of the News of the World (Andy Coulson) as his Director of Communications. Contextual information for each of these four issues is provided below.

3.2.1 Demand for a public enquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers

A Tribunal of Inquiry in the UK is an official review of events or actions ordered by the government, typically into an issue of pressing public concern that must be investigated openly and fairly. Notably, a public inquiry does not necessarily mean that the evidence must all be heard in public, nor that the report will be made public (it may be given in private to the interested minister). However, interested members of the public and organizations may not only make (written) evidential submissions, but also listen to oral evidence given by other parties. The conclusions of the inquiry are delivered in the form of a written report, given first to the government, and soon after published in the public domain. The report will generally make recommendations to improve the future quality of government or management of public
organizations. Notably, oppositional and pressure groups often demand public inquiries, but they are by no means always granted, not least because they may involve considerable expense, particularly in legal fees.

3.2.2. *News International bid for BSkyB*

News International is the main UK subsidiary of News Corporation, which was bidding to take over BSkyB. BSkyB is a British satellite broadcasting, broadband and telephony services company. News International is the second largest media group in the world in terms of revenue. If the bid had been successful, it would have created a media giant in the UK, whose revenues would dwarf all rivals, even the BBC. The takeover bid aroused huge opposition, both within and outside Parliament.

3.2.3. *Resignation of Rebekah Brooks*

Brooks was editor of two News International newspapers: the News of the World (2000-2003) and *The Sun* (2003-2009). Subsequently in 2009, she became chief executive of News International. Notably, the phone-hacking of Milly Dowler’s voicemail took place during her editorship of the News of the World. According to *The New York Times* London reporter Sarah Lyall (2011), this meant “...... either that Ms. Brooks had no idea how the paper she edited was obtaining information about the Dowler family for its articles, or that she knew about the hacking and allowed it”. In this context, Miliband called for her resignation as chief executive of News International.

3.2.4. *Appointment of Andy Coulson as Cameron’s Director of Communications*

Coulson was a former editor of the News of the World (2003-2007), who was
subsequently appointed as Cameron’s Director of Communications in May 2010. Two of the paper’s journalists (royal editor Clive Goodman and private detective Glenn Mulcaire) were jailed for phone hacking in January 2007, the offences having taken place when Coulson was editor. Although Coulson took ultimate responsibility and resigned his editorship, he claimed to know nothing of these offences at the time.

In addition, Coulson was criticized for his dealings with a private investigator called Jonathan Rees. Rees had worked for the News of the World for seven years, but was jailed for planting cocaine on a woman in order to discredit her during divorce proceedings. On release from prison, Rees was re-appointed by Coulson to the News of the World, where he continued to work until April 2008, when he was charged with conspiracy to murder his former business partner (a charge from which he was eventually acquitted for lack of evidence). According to The Guardian (11 March, 2011), Rees used a variety of illegal activities to obtain information while working for the News of the World, including buying information from corrupt police officers. Coulson denied knowledge of any of these activities.

Despite these denials, Coulson continued to be subject to repeated allegations that he was fully aware of phone hacking while editor of the News of the World, and eventually resigned his post as Cameron's Director of Communications (21 January 2011). In this context, Miliband attacked Cameron for showing poor judgement in appointing Coulson to this post. Subsequently (24 July, 2012), Coulson has been arrested and charged with “intercepting communications without lawful authority” (i.e., phone-hacking), and now awaits trial.
The four issues discussed above provide the overall framework for the study conducted by Bull (2013), which presented a detailed analysis of question-response sequences between Miliband and Cameron in two sessions of PMQs (6 and 13 July, 2011).

3.4 Analysis

1. Setting up a public inquiry (Q1, Q2, 6 July; Q3, 13 July)

In Q1 (6 July), Miliband asked for a full independent public inquiry: “Given the gravity of what has occurred, will the Prime Minister support the calls for a full, independent public inquiry to take place as soon as practical into the culture and practices of British newspapers?” Notably, Cameron conceded this straight away without demur (R1): “Let me be very clear. Yes, we do need to have an inquiry, possibly inquiries, as to what has happened”.

In Q2 (6 July), Miliband followed up Cameron’s response by upping his demands with more specific requests:

He should immediately appoint a senior figure, potentially a judge, to lead this inquiry, make it clear that it will have the power to call witnesses under oath, and establish clear terms of reference covering a number of key issues: the culture and practices of the industry, the nature of regulation, which is absolutely crucial, and also the relationship between the police and the media.

In his response (R2), Cameron deferred on the specific details of the inquiry, but said he would consult with colleagues: “..... I don’t want us to rush this decision. I want us to get it right, having discussed it with other party leaders, the Attorney-General and the Cabinet Secretary”.
The following week (13 July), Miliband made a further demand, specifically that politicians (past and present) might be summoned to the inquiry to give evidence under oath (Q3): “Does he agree with me that if we expect editors and members of the press to give evidence under oath, so should current and p-past politicians?” Cameron also conceded this point (R3): “I-I agree with that”.

Immediately following PMQs that day, Cameron made a statement to the House of Commons, announcing a two-part inquiry investigating the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking scandal. The inquiry was to be chaired by a senior judge, Lord Leveson. It would have the power to summon witnesses, including newspaper reporters, management, proprietors, policemen and politicians of all parties to give evidence under oath and in public.

The Leveson Inquiry (as it became known) opened on 11 November, 2011. The formal evidence gathering phase of the inquiry finished on 24 July 2012, the report was published on 29 November 2012.

2. News International bid for BSkyB

In Q3 (6 July), Miliband asked: “Does the Prime Minister agree that the BSkyB bid should now be referred to the Competition Commission, to provide the breathing space that is required?” [The Competition Commission is a public body responsible for investigating mergers, markets and other enquiries related to regulated industries under competition law in the UK]. Cameron made no attempt directly to answer Miliband’s question, claiming (R3) “On the issue of BSkyB, what we have done is follow, absolutely to the letter, the correct legal processes.”

In his next question (Q4), Miliband reiterated the demand: “..... I-I know that this is difficult for him [i.e., the PM] but I strongly urge him to think again and send his decision to the
proper authorities which is the Competition Commission. And as I say, this will provide breathing space for legitimacy and for the proper decisions to be made”. In R4, Cameron simply reiterated his previous response: “I-I-I would say to him [i.e., Miliband] that the decision making has been through the proper processes, that it’s right that the government acts legally in every way and that is what it that is what it has done”.

In his next question (Q5), Miliband reiterated the point for a third time (Q5) “..... I hope that he will go off from this Question Time and think again, because it’s in the interests of the media industry and the British public that this is properly referred to the Competition Commission in the way that all other bids are dealt with”. Miliband then moved on to a different issue, that of the resignation of Rebekah Brooks (see section 3 below). Cameron in his response (R5) to Q5 made no further reference to the BSkyB takeover bid.

Later that same day (6 July), Labour MPs tabled what is termed an Early Day Motion, calling on News Corporation to rescind its offer for BSkyB. [An Early Day Motion is one to be debated “on an early day”, i.e., to be debated at an unspecified date in the future]. Over the next week, there was a huge public outcry against the News Corporation takeover bid, and the Early Day Motion was scheduled for debate the following Wednesday (13 July). At PMQs that day, Miliband put the following question to Cameron (Q2): “And does he further agree that if the House of Commons speaks with one voice today, and I hope he [i.e., the PM] will still come to the debate, that Rupert Murdoch should drop his bid for BSkyB, should recognise the world has changed, and he should listen to this House of Commons?” [N.B. “speaks with one voice” can be understood as referring to the debate on the Early Day Motion]. This time (R2), Cameron agreed with Miliband: “I agree with what the Honourable Gent Right Honourable Gentleman has said,
and I think it’s good that the House of Commons is going to speak with one voice”. Later that same day, shortly before the Early Day Motion was due to be debated, News Corporation announced that it would be withdrawing its proposal to take complete ownership of BskyB.

3. Resignation of Rebekah Brooks

In Q5 (6 July), Miliband shifted his attack from the BSkyB bid to a third issue, the resignation of Rebekah Brooks:

Nobody is denying that Milly Dowler’s phone was hacked and nobody is denying that it happened on the watch of the current chief executive of News International, who was editor of the newspaper at the time. Will the Prime Minister join me, if he believes in people taking responsibility, in saying that she should take responsibility and consider her position?

In response, Cameron (R5) equivocated by deferring responsibility to the police:

.... everyone at News International is subject to one of the largest police investigations underway in this country. What I think is we should let the police do their work. They must follow the evidence wherever it leads and if they find people guilty of wrongdoing, they should have no hesitation but in making sure they’re prosecuted.

Miliband (Q6) followed up this response by explicitly drawing attention to Cameron’s equivocation: “Mr. Speaker I don’t know from that answer whether he [i.e., the PM] says that the chief executive of News International should stand down or not”. Miliband then reiterated his point (“I am clear: she should take responsibility and stand down”), and moved on to another issue, the appointment of Coulson (see section 4 below).
Two days later, in an emergency press conference, (8 July), Cameron stated that “...it’s been reported that she [i.e., Brooks] had offered her resignation over this and in this situation I would have taken it” (transcribed from video, The Guardian, 8 July, 2011). At PMQs the following week (13 July), Miliband again reiterated his demand for Brooks’ resignation (Q1): “Does the Prime Minister now agree with me that it is an insult to the [Dowler] family that Rebekah Brooks, who was editor of the News of the World at the time, is still in her post at News International?” This time, Cameron (R1) gave an unequivocal reply: “I’ve made very clear that she was right to resign, that resignation should have been accepted”. The following day (14 July), the second largest shareholder of News Corporation, the Saudi Prince Al Waleed, called for Brooks’ resignation in a BBC interview. On 15 July, Brooks resigned as chief executive of News International. The following year (15 May 2012), she was formally charged by the police with conspiracy to pervert the course of justice, and now awaits trial.

4. Appointment of Andy Coulson as Cameron’s Director of Communications

In Miliband’s final question (Q6) on 6 July, he asked Cameron to acknowledge that he made a “catastrophic error of judgement by bringing Andy Coulson into the heart of his Downing Street machine”. Cameron in his response (R6) made no specific reference to Coulson, but stated: “I take full responsibility for everyone I employ for everyone I appoint and I take responsibility for everything my government does”. (Two days later (8 July), Coulson was arrested by the police, but was bailed and not charged).

At PMQs the following week (13 July), Miliband asked three further questions about Coulson. In Q4, he pointed out that while Coulson was editor of the News of the World, he had re-hired Jonathan Rees, who had been “jailed for seven years for a criminal conspiracy and who
made payments to police on behalf of the News World”. Miliband pointed out that this information had been passed on by The Guardian newspaper to Cameron’s chief of staff.

Miliband then asked “... can the Prime Minister tell us what happened to that significant information that was given to his chief of staff?” Notably, as part of an extended reply (R4), Cameron stated explicitly that “... this information was not passed on to me...”.

In the light of this response, Miliband pursued this issue in his next question (Q5), alleging that:

.... this evidence [referring to the hiring of Jonathan Rees] casts serious doubt on Mr Coulson’s assurances that the phone hacking over which he resigned was an isolated example of illegal activity. The Prime Minister says his chief of staff did not pass on this very serious information. Can he now tell us what information he proposes to take against his chief of staff?

Cameron in his response (R5) simply ignored Miliband’s question: “..... do you know what, Mr Speaker, I think the public and the victims of this appalling scandal want us to rise above this and deal with the problems that this country faces”.

In his final question (Q6), Miliband demanded that Cameron should “... publish the fullest account of all the information that was provided” and “.... apologise for the catastrophic error of judgment he made in hiring Andy Coulson”. In an extended response, Cameron again made no specific reference to Coulson:

...... what the public want us to do is address this firestorm. They want us to sort out bad practices at the media. They want us to fix the corruption in the police. They want a proper
public inquiry and they are entitled to ask, when these problems went on for so long, for so many years, what was it that happened in the last decade? What was it? When was the police investigation that didn’t work? Where was the public inquiry over the last ten years? We’ve now got a full-on police investigation that will see proper prosecutions and, I hope, proper convictions, and we will have a public inquiry run by a judge to get to the bottom of this issue. That is the leadership I’m determined to provide.

However, at an emergency debate the following week (20 July), Cameron stated in relation to Coulson’s appointment: “I regret, and I am sorry about, the furore it has caused” and that “If it turns out that he [i.e., Coulson] knew about the hacking, that will be a matter of huge regret and a matter for great apology” (as reported in Hansard). As noted above in the Introduction, Coulson has subsequently been charged with phone-hacking (24 July, 2012), and now awaits trial.

Discussion

According to previous research, face aggravation is a salient feature of PMQ discourse (Harris, 2001; Bull & Wells, 2012). As such, PMQs may be regarded as another exemplar of situations described by Culpeper (1996), in which impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but central to the interaction that takes place. The analysis reported in this study is fully consistent with this view. Arguably, Miliband’s questions were enormously face-threatening to Cameron and his government, as illustrated below:

1. Setting up a public inquiry. This demand created an awkward dilemma for Cameron, potentially highly face-damaging, whatever he decided to do. If he declined or equivocated, he might have been seen as failing to respond appropriately to the public outcry regarding the phone-hacking scandal. However, setting up the enquiry created a new political problem for
Cameron, as to whether he should accept Leveson’s recommendations regarding some kind of state regulation of the press. In addition, as noted by the distinguished political columnist Andrew Rawnsley (2012), the inquiry resulted in the publication of emails, phone texts, memos and other communications between the government and News Corporation that were highly embarrassing for Cameron's government.

2. **News International bid for BSkyB.** Miliband’s questions regarding News Corporation’s bid for BSkyB created another awkward dilemma for Cameron. Had he agreed to refer the bid to the Competition Commission, this would have involved a significant climb-down by the government, given previous undertakings not to do so by the Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt (3 March 2011). But given the huge public outcry against the bid, had Cameron not agreed with Miliband that News Corporation should withdraw its offer for BSkyB, he would have been seen as flying in the face of public opinion on a hugely emotive and unpopular issue.

3. **Resignation of Rebekah Brooks.** This created yet another awkward dilemma for Cameron. As texts and emails revealed at the Leveson Inquiry were subsequently to show, Brooks was a close friend and ally of Cameron’s; furthermore, he would have wanted to retain the political support of the powerful and influential Murdoch media empire. But given Brooks’ involvement in the Dowler affair, it was hard for Cameron to continue his support for Brooks without seeming to condone the phone-hacking, which had resulted in such a huge public outcry.

4. **Appointment of Andy Coulson as Cameron’s Director of Communications.** Questions regarding Andy Coulson were hugely face-damaging personally to Cameron. Given the persistent allegations that Coulson was well aware of phone hacking while editor of the News of
the World, his appointment as Cameron’s Director of Communications could be seen to reflect poorly on the PM’s judgement, and therefore on his judged competence.

From the above, it can be seen that all of Miliband’s questions in these two sessions of PMQs can be considered highly face-threatening. They might also be seen as face-enhancing for Miliband, boosting his status as an effective leader of the political opposition. But arguably they did much more than this. PMQs are often castigated as no more than a pointless exercise in political point-scoring, but Miliband’s questions on the phone-hacking scandal relate to substantive political issues. In the UK, phone-hacking represented an illegal intrusion into personal privacy, which furthermore had seemingly had not been investigated properly by the police (hence the justification for a public inquiry). Furthermore, given the involvement of News International in the phone-hacking scandal, it was seriously at issue whether its bid for BSkyB should be allowed to proceed, thereby acquiring for itself such a preponderant control of the British media. In addition, there were issues of public accountability in respect of both Brooks and Coulson, given their respective editorships of the News of the World: Brooks was editor at the time Milly Dowler’s phone was hacked, Coulson when two of the paper’s reporters had been jailed for phone-hacking. Finally, given the persistent allegations that Coulson was fully aware of phone-hacking while editor, his appointment to Cameron’s staff also raised legitimate concerns about the PM’s judgement.

In evaluating the effectiveness of Miliband’s questions, it was argued that in the Introduction that the concept of follow-up (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975) is extremely useful. Notably, it can be applied to both equivocal and unequivocal responses from the PM.
The following example is illustrative of how Miliband followed up an unequivocal reply by Cameron (Bull, 2012). When Cameron (R1, 6 July 2011) conceded to Miliband’s demand (Q1) that the PM set up a public inquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers, Miliband in his next question (Q2) immediately upped his demands by asking for a judge to lead the inquiry with the power to call witnesses under oath. The following week (13 July, Q3), Miliband made a further demand that politicians (past and present) could be summoned to the inquiry to give evidence under oath. Although Cameron did not consent to these new demands immediately, he did concede them all in his statement to the House of Commons following PMQs on 13 July 2011.

The following examples are illustrative of how Miliband followed up equivocal responses by Cameron. When Miliband asked whether the PM would join him in calling for Brooks' resignation (Q5, 6 July 2011), Cameron in his response (R5) neither agreed nor disagreed with Miliband. Miliband in his follow-up question (Q6) explicitly drew attention to Cameron’s equivocation, and at PMQs the next week, Miliband asked again (Q1) whether the PM agreed with him that Brooks should no longer be in her post. This time Cameron gave an explicit reply (R1). Miliband followed up Cameron’s response with an explicit acknowledgment (Q2): “Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for that answer and he’s right to take the position that Rebekah Brooks should go”. However, it should be noted that Miliband’s follow-ups to equivocal responses by Cameron were not always successful. Despite Miliband’s repeated demands that Cameron apologise to the House of Commons for a “catastrophic error of judgement” in appointing Coulson as his Director of Communications, Cameron only eventually admitted that he regretted and was sorry about the furore it had caused (20 July, 2011).
The contrast between Miliband’s follow-ups to these equivocal and unequivocal responses is striking. When Cameron conceded Miliband’s demand for a public enquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers, Miliband followed up with further demands. Conversely, when Cameron equivocated, Miliband followed up by repeating his questions - successfully with regard to Brooks’ resignation, less so with regard to an apology for Coulson’s appointment as Cameron’s Director of Communications. Thus, the application of the concept of follow-ups to PMQ discourse can be seen to highlight the different strategies utilised by Miliband in response to equivocal and unequivocal responses.

The examples above also have implications for extending the concept of follow-up. The sequential triad, as originally identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), comprised three elements (question/response/follow-up) occurring in strict temporal sequence. But in the case of Brooks’ resignation, Miliband could be seen as "following up" his initial question (6 July, Q5) by putting the question again a week later (13 July, Q1). This is not a follow-up in the sense as strictly defined by Sinclair and Coulthard, but arguably represents a useful extension of the concept to the analysis of sequential interaction over time. From this perspective, given that the LO is entitled to ask up to six questions in each session, it is possible to see how topics are developed through all six question-response sequences. Thus, if the PM equivocates in response to a particular question, it is perfectly possible for the LO to follow up that specific issue throughout all the remaining questions. Conversely, if the PM answers the question, it is of interest to analyze how the answer may be followed up by attacks on other aspects of government policy or performance. Furthermore, given that the LO has the opportunity to ask a further six questions the following week, and in future sessions of PMQs, it is possible to investigate how a
particular topic is followed up from one week to another, or over a period of weeks or months, or even years.

The concept of the follow-up can also be extended to the analysis of political action. In the case of the phone-hacking scandal, Miliband achieved substantive political gains with his questions at both sessions of PMQs. Thus, Cameron conceded a formal inquiry chaired by a senior judge, Lord Leveson, with the power to summon witnesses, including newspaper reporters, management, proprietors, policemen and politicians of all parties to give evidence under oath and in public. The bid by News International for BSkyB was withdrawn after a huge public outcry. Brooks resigned as the chief executive of News International. Finally, although Cameron never apologized for appointing Coulson as his Director of Communications, he distanced himself from Coulson in the emergency debate (20 July, 2011), acknowledging that he regretted and was sorry about the furore it had caused.

Of course, it is not possible to say in any of these instances that Miliband’s questions at PMQs actually “caused” these events. But once Cameron had committed himself to setting up an inquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers, it would have been extremely difficult for him to back down without serious loss of face, comparable to what has been referred to figuratively in a different context as ”rhetorical entrapment” (Schimmelfennig, 2001). Similarly, it is open to question whether Brooks would have actually taken the step of stepping down as chief executive of News International had not Miliband so publicly and explicitly called for her resignation.

In addition to the above extensions of the concept of follow-ups, this analysis also has implications for linguistic theories of both politeness (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987) and
impoliteness (Culpeper, 1996). From the perspective of politeness theory (Brown & Levinson, 1978, 1987), Miliband’s questions can undoubtedly be regarded as a series of face-threatening acts. Furthermore, the analysis presented here supports the view (Bull & Wells, 2012) that PMQs can be regarded as another of the situations identified by Culpeper (1996), where impoliteness is not a marginal activity, but central to the interaction that takes place.

However, this study goes well beyond the arguments of Culpeper (1996) and Bull and Wells (2012), in that it seeks to elaborate the political context of the face-threatening discourse of PMQs, and highlight the significant role it plays in political opposition. Adversarial discourse by its very nature is intrinsically face-threatening. But arguably it is not merely about face aggravation, nor is face aggravation necessarily just an end in itself (“rudeness for rudeness’ sake”). Adversarial discourse may do much more than this, it may be understood as a means to an end, namely, the pursuit of particular political policies and political objectives. From this viewpoint, both linguistic theories of politeness and impoliteness, and the concept of follow-ups may be enriched by a deeper understanding of the wider context of political opposition. Furthermore, the application of these theories and concepts can provide deeper insights into the linguistic and communicative skills of the central political protagonists.

Notably, there is nothing comparable to PMQs in the American political system. In the USA, the presidential press conference plays a much prominent role, where journalists have the opportunity to put questions to the president. But the president can “de-select” a journalist by not inviting him/her to future press conferences if s/he poses questions which are too awkward. In contrast, the PM has no right to de-select the LO, who may return to PMQs week after week to persist in posing awkward questions. Despite its many detractors and deficiencies, PMQs offers
a unique degree of political accountability, whereby the leader of the United Kingdom can be
directly questioned, criticized and challenged by the political opposition. Despite much of the
admittedly facile point scoring of PMQs, adversarial questioning can play an important role in
sustaining political dialogue and political accountability. To substantiate these arguments has
been the aim of this paper, through the detailed linguistic analysis of question-response sequences
in PMQs in the context of the 2011 British telephone-hacking scandal.

Conclusions

In this article, it has been argued that the concept of follow-up as originally formulated in
Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) sequential triad is directly applicable to political discourse.
Three distinctive genres have been considered: political speeches, broadcast interviews, and
parliamentary questions.

In the context of political speeches, how politicians invite applause has been analyzed
through the concept of rhetorical devices embedded in the structure of speech (e.g., Atkinson,
1984); if unsuccessful, applause invitations may be followed up through what have been termed
pursuits (Heritage & Greatbatch, 1986). These three elements (applause invitation, absence of
response, and pursuit) were conceptualized in terms of Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) sequential
triad, but with several notable differences. Firstly, the second element of this triad refers not to a
response but to its absence (i.e., the lack of applause). Secondly, the absent response is not
verbal, but nonverbal. Thirdly, the pursuit itself may also be nonverbal, as well as verbal.

In the context of broadcast interviews, the concept of the sequential triad can be used to
highlight substantial gaps in the research literature. Whereas question-response sequences have
been analyzed in considerable depth, there has been little research on the third element of the
triad, on how interviewers follow up the politicians’ responses. Thus, whereas the author has devised an equivocation typology which systematically distinguishes between 35 different ways of not replying to questions (Bull & Mayer, 1993; Bull, 2003), there has been no comparable systematic analysis of how interviewers follow up equivocal responses. Furthermore, it would also be of interest to analyze how interviewers follow up responses where the politician does answer the question. Political interviewing can arguably be conceptualized as a form of communicative skill (cf. Bull, 2011), and from this perspective, the concept of follow-ups highlights significant aspects of interviewer skill which have been largely neglected in the research literature.

In the context of parliamentary questions (PMQs), illustrative examples of notable difference between follow-ups to equivocal and non-equivocal responses by the PM were analyzed, and proposed as a topic for future research. From the analysis of PMQs, it was proposed that the concept of follow-ups could be extended well beyond a strict application of Sinclair and Coulthard’s (1975) sequential triad to include other aspects of political discourse. Follow-ups can be analyzed over time, both within one particular interaction, and between two or more interactions, to investigate how particular political issues are taken up and pursued by the politicians. Another way of extending the concept of follow-ups is to consider the whether the discourse so analyzed results in any significant form of political action, either within and/or outside Parliament. Although these possible extensions of the concept of follow-ups were considered in the context of PMQs, they are of course readily applicable to the genre of broadcast interviews and political speeches as discussed above, and arguably to other forms of political discourse as well.
To summarize, although the concept of follow-ups was originally identified in the context of classroom discourse (Sinclair & Coulthard, 1975), the above analysis has shown how it can readily be applied to three distinct genres of political discourse, and extended to analyze both sequential interchanges over time, and various forms of political action. This analysis has also highlighted significant omissions in the current research literature, and pinpointed interesting topics for future research - in particular, how both interviewers and politicians respond to both the equivocal and unequivocal responses of politicians to questions. From this perspective, it is perhaps not question-response sequences but the sequential triad that should be the primary unit of analysis in the context of broadcast political interviews and parliamentary questions.

The following example is illustrative of how EM followed up an unequivocal reply by David Cameron (DC). EM asked whether the PM would “.....support the calls for a full, independent public inquiry to take place as soon as practical into the culture and practices of British newspapers?” (6 July, 2011). DC conceded this demand immediately, and agreed to setting up a public enquiry. EM’s follow-up response is interesting, because in his next question he immediately upped his demands. “He [i.e., DC] should immediately appoint a senior figure, potentially a judge, to lead this inquiry, make it clear that it will have the power to call witnesses under oath, and establish clear terms of reference covering a number of key issues: the culture and practices of the industry; the nature of regulation, which is absolutely crucial; and the relationship between the police and the media”. Although DC did not consent to these new demands immediately, he did concede them all a week later. Thus, in a statement to the House of Commons (13 July 2011), DC announced an inquiry to investigate the role of the press and police in the phone-hacking scandal, to be chaired by a senior judge (Lord Leveson), with the power to
summon witnesses, including newspaper reporters, management, proprietors, policemen and politicians of all parties to give evidence under oath and in public. The Leveson enquiry (as it has become known) was opened on 11 November, 2011, and is still ongoing.

The second example is illustrative of how EM followed up an equivocal response by DC. Thus, at PMQs on 6 July 2011, EM asked whether the PM would join him in calling for the resignation of Rebekah Brooks, the then chief executive of News International, who was editor of the News of the World when illegal phone hacking was allegedly carried out by the newspaper. In his response, DC neither agreed nor disagreed with EM: “......I think that we should let the police do their work. They must follow the evidence wherever it leads and if they find people guilty of wrongdoing, they should have no hesitation in ensuring that they are prosecuted”. EM in his follow-up question then explicitly drew attention to DC’s equivocation: “I do not know from that answer whether the Prime Minister says that the chief executive of News International should stand down or not. I am clear: she should take responsibility and stand down”.

The sequel to this interchange is interesting. Two days later, at an emergency press conference, (9 July, 2011), DC noticeably shifted his ground. He stated that “....it’s been reported that she [i.e., Rebekah Brooks] had offered her resignation over this and in this situation I would have taken it”. At PMQs the following week (13 July, 2011), EM returned to his question of the previous week, and asked again whether the PM agreed with him that Rebekah Brooks should no longer be in her post. This time DC gave an explicit reply, implicitly referring to his prior statement at the emergency press conference (9 July, 2011): “I have made it very clear that she was right to resign and that that resignation should have been accepted”. This time, EM followed up DC’s response with an explicit acknowledgment: “I thank the Prime Minister for that answer.
He is right to take the position that Rebekah Brooks should go”. The contrast between EM’s
follow-ups to these equivocal and unequivocal responses is striking. When DC conceded EM’s
demand for a public enquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers, EM followed up
with further demands. Conversely, when DC equivocated in response to EM’s question
regarding the resignation of Rebekah Brooks, EM followed up by explicitly drawing attention to
that equivocation, then pursued the issue again the following week (13 July, 2011); this time he
obtained a reply. Notably, the following day (14 July), News Corporation's second largest
shareholder (the Saudi Prince Al Waleed) called for Rebekah Brooks’ resignation in a BBC
interview; she resigned the very next day (15 July). Thus, the application of the concept of
follow-ups to PMQ discourse highlights these different kinds of responses, and the potential for
further research on this topic.

A second important feature of these interchanges is the possibility of extending the
concept of follow-ups beyond the sequential triad as initially identified by Sinclair and Coulthard
(1975). In the case of DC’s equivocal response to EM’s initial question regarding the resignation
of Rebekah Brooks (6 July 2011), EM arguably “follows up” DC’s equivocal response by putting
the question again at PMQs the following week (13 July, 2011). This is not a follow-up as
strictly defined by Sinclair and Coulthard, but by extending the concept of follow-up over time in
this way it can be used usefully to include other features of political discourse.

For example, in the context of PMQs, given that the LO is entitled to ask up to six
questions in each session, it is possible to see how topics are developed through all six
question-response sequences. If the PM equivocates in response to a particular question, it is
perfectly possible for the LO to follow up that particular issue through all the remaining questions.
Conversely, if the PM replies to a particular question, it is of interest to analyze how this may be followed up by attacks on other aspects of government policy or performance. In addition, the LO has the opportunity to ask a further six questions the following week, and in future sessions of PMQs. Hence, it is possible to investigate how a particular topic is followed up from one week to another, or over a period of weeks.

By extending the concept of follow-ups in this way, it is also possible to extend its use to the analysis of questions from backbench MPs. Follow-ups can occur in a variety of ways, for example, if an issue raised in a question by the LO is taken up by a question from a backbencher, or if a backbencher takes up an issue raised by another backbencher, or if a particular issue is pursued by backbenchers over several sessions of PMQs.

All the above examples illustrate how the concept of follow-ups may be used to analyze sequential interchanges over time. Another way of extending this concept is to consider the whether the discourse so analyzed it results in any significant form of political action. In the example above (6 & 13 July 2011), DC conceded EM’s demand for a public enquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers. The Leveson enquiry has caused continued embarrassment to DC’s government. The political damage so inflicted arguably represents a substantive oppositional achievement for EM. In the case of Rebekah Brooks, she handed in her resignation as chief executive for News International nine days after EM’s initial call for her resignation (6 July, 2011). As a former editor of both the *News of the World* and *The Sun*, Rebekah Brooks had been a remarkably powerful and influential figure in the British media. Again, her fall from office represented a remarkable oppositional achievement for EM.
Of course, it is not possible to say in either instance that EM actually “caused” these events. But once DC had committed himself at PMQs (6 July 2011) to setting up an enquiry into the culture and practices of British newspapers, it would have been extremely difficult for him to back down without serious loss of face, comparable to what Schimmelfennig (2001) in a different context has referred to as ”rhetorical entrapment”. Similarly, it is open to question whether Rebekah Brooks would have actually taken the step of stepping down as chief executive of News International had not EM so publicly and explicitly called for her resignation.

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