

Analysis of Effective Questioning Strategies in Television News Interviews (Postprint)

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Abstract

Traditionally, television news has been one of the most important media forms in our country. As the era continues to evolve, today's television news journalists must actively respond to challenges from multi-media journalists, identify new development directions, and enhance their own interviewing capabilities. Regarding questioning, which is a crucial component of interviewing, television news journalists should master questioning techniques with precision and improve the effectiveness of questioning in interviews, thereby effectively enhancing the quality of television news interviews.

Full Text

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Abstract

Television news has long been one of the most important media forms in China. As the era continues to evolve, television journalists today must actively respond to challenges from journalists across various media platforms, identify new development directions, and enhance their interviewing capabilities. Regarding questioning—a crucial component of the interview process—television journalists should accurately grasp questioning techniques and improve the effectiveness of their questions during interviews, thereby elevating the overall quality of television news interviews.

Keywords: TV news; interview; questioning strategies

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Since television news entered people's lives, it has rapidly become an important means for the public to obtain information, establishing itself as a primary channel for information dissemination. Subsequently, the emergence of computer network technology has further diversified news transmission pathways. Today, China's news media industry has evolved into a "tripartite standoff" among radio, television, and the internet [1]. In this context, for television news to achieve sustainable development, it must necessarily leverage its distinctive features and advantages while striving to identify development models suited to contemporary social evolution. Only through such efforts can it secure higher viewership and attention, thereby maintaining its stable growth.

Characteristics of TV News

1. On-Site Nature

Compared to traditional print media and radio, television news's greatest advantage lies in its combination of print media's visual engagement with readers and radio's auditory engagement with audiences. However, despite integrating these strengths from both traditional media forms, television news employs fundamentally different reporting methods. Traditional print and broadcast news typically publish recollections from interviewees in news format. If television media were to imitate this reporting model, it would inevitably forfeit its intrinsic value and fail to capitalize on its unique capabilities. As is well known, although print media represents China's most traditional news form, it suffers from timeliness deficiencies, with reported content typically appearing 24 hours after events. While radio, like television, requires on-site interviews, its inability to show audiences live footage from news scenes results in a lack of authentic presence that fails to satisfy public information needs. Television news effectively compensates for these shortcomings by ensuring both timely news release and visual presentation of news scenes, thereby fulfilling the information acquisition demands of the general public. The emergence of television news has not only profoundly impacted news industries domestically and internationally but has also catalyzed a revolution in journalism. Consequently, television journalists must possess absolute news sensitivity to meet social development demands, arriving at the scene immediately when newsworthy events occur [2].

1.2 Importance of Language

Television news imposes high demands on journalists' comprehensive abilities, with requirements primarily concentrated in two aspects: "listening" and "viewing." The "listening" aspect evaluates whether journalists' pronunciation is accu-

rate and whether their speaking pace is acceptable to audiences. The “viewing” aspect concerns journalists’ physical appearance. Additionally, specific requirements apply to camera angles, editing, and movement processes in on-site reporting. Moreover, considering that television news audiences encompass citizens across all age groups and educational levels, reporters must emphasize colloquial and accessible language in their news delivery. Simultaneously, journalists’ narratives must align closely with visual footage to ensure every television news audience member can immediately grasp essential elements: where the event occurred, what caused it, who was involved, and whether remedial measures were taken at the scene. Only when the outcome provokes audience reflection can a news story truly demonstrate its practical value.

1.3 Documentary and Real-Time Nature

The most crucial aspect of television news lies in manifesting its documentary and real-time characteristics. When reporting a news story, television journalists should strive to capture fleeting on-site scenes or candid shots of representative figures, thereby restoring the most authentic scene and providing audiences with the most timely coverage. Naturally, considering that some subjects cannot be tracked due to elapsed time or inherent abstraction, television journalists must leverage their professional expertise, adapt to circumstances, dissolve interviewees’ defensive psychology, and pose questions skillfully. An outstanding journalist must not only ask interconnected questions during interviews but also demonstrate rigorous logical thinking, eliminating respondents’ psychological concerns while delving deeply into their emotional states [3].

Problems in Current TV News Interviews

2.1 Lack of Communication

As society continues to develop, the emergence of the internet has intensified competition among various media platforms. Although contemporary news reporting generally exhibits clickbait tendencies, the content itself remains the key factor in sustaining audience attention, regardless of headlines. Facing a modern society with unprecedented variety and volume of information, some television station journalists painstakingly devise series of questions to extract explosive news and boost ratings, directly confronting interviewees with inquiries that touch upon privacy or prove difficult to answer. Reporters’ attempts to manipulate interviewees into making specific statements result in ineffective communication during interviews: many questions posed by journalists are ones interviewees prefer not to answer, while information interviewees wish to convey goes unasked.

2.3 Lack of Focus

The failure to highlight key points and the lack of distinctive content represent one of the most prominent issues in today’s television news industry. In modern

society, which is filled with “high-end talents” everywhere, television journalists can only avoid producing monotonous and unoriginal news by strengthening their own understanding of news stories. However, most current news interviews merely parrot others’ words. As television journalists, they neither fully leverage their own characteristics nor grasp the focal points of interviews. Compounded by frequent interview interruptions due to various practical reasons, news production essentially relies on hearsay or journalists’ own speculation, causing the characteristic authenticity of news to be lost.

Effective Questioning Strategies

3.1 Creating a Harmonious Interview Atmosphere

Impartiality, fairness, and objectivity constitute the fundamental requirements for news reporting, and appropriately integrating humanistic sentiment can yield unexpected results. The ultimate purpose of news is to serve society, promote positive spirits, and gradually eliminate social malpractices by guiding correct social values. To this end, news reporting should consistently uphold a “people-oriented” attitude, examining issues from a common person’s perspective to ensure impartial and objective evaluation. To incorporate humanistic concepts into news interviews, journalists must strictly adhere to the following principles: First, correctly comprehend the meaning of humanistic sentiment—this should serve as a standard for justice and conscience, enabling audiences to feel societal care and thereby gaining wider acceptance. Second, continuously enhance professional competence and personal cultivation. Only through constant self-improvement can journalists empathize with others and disseminate kindness and universal love to audiences.

3.2 Controlling Interview Emotions and Maintaining Questioning Focus

Distinguishing the main line of questioning and controlling interview emotions represent basic competencies every journalist should possess and constitute important strategies for ensuring television news effectiveness. Mastering the questioning focus is key to obtaining valuable news content. However, many journalists currently make frequent errors during interview questioning because they cannot manage on-site emotions. Some arrogant journalists completely disregard interviewees’ feelings during interviews, often causing interviews to break down. Consequently, journalists should understand how to control interviewees’ emotions while maintaining their own composure, enabling effective communication with respondents and acquisition of valuable news information.

3.3 Designing Questioning Approaches and Remembering Questioning Taboos

For every news interview, journalists should have a clear questioning approach and remember questioning taboos. Since every interviewee possesses private

matters they do not wish to disclose to the public, journalists should, during interviews, strive to understand respondents' personalities through their discourse, proceed gradually, and absolutely avoid crossing these boundaries. This prevents the unwarranted loss of interview opportunities while simultaneously ensuring the effectiveness of news interviews.

3.4 Preparing Before Interviews and Clarifying Interview Objectives

Since television news primarily involves live broadcasting, thorough pre-interview preparation becomes particularly crucial. Journalists should clarify the main objectives of each interview beforehand and inform interviewees of the interview's focus to obtain the most effective results and improve interviewing efficiency. Additionally, some journalists attempt to create atmosphere before interviews with opening remarks such as: "Mr. Yang, we know you enjoy high prestige in both education and literature and possess remarkable musical accomplishments, so please tell us about..." Such openings mislead respondents, leaving them uncertain about which achievements the journalist wishes to explore and causing them to miss the question's focus in their answers. Direct, specific questioning proves more effective than such preamble.

Conclusion

In conclusion, television news, due to its on-site and visual characteristics, demands mastery of certain questioning techniques to avoid content that lacks distinctiveness or authenticity. Simultaneously, during the questioning process, interviewers must clearly define their questioning focus and remember questioning taboos. Only through these measures can the effectiveness of news interview questioning be ensured, resulting in the production of valuable television news.

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Note: Figure translations are in progress. See original paper for figures.

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