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Cover Sheet

Title of paper:

The importance of being (in)formal: discourse strategies in police interviews with children

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Bio-note

Georgina Heydon has made significant contributions to research into the discourse of police interviews with suspects and is the author of *The Language of Police Interviewing: A critical analysis* published by Palgrave Macmillan. Her research combines analytic tools drawn from interactional sociolinguistics and conversation analysis with macro-level critical sociolinguistics. She has taught Linguistics at Århus Universitet , Denmark and Deakin and Monash Universities in Australia and is currently a research fellow at Monash University, where she is continuing her research into language strategies in police interviewing in the Criminal Justice program.
Georgina is also a consultant for the Monash Forensic Linguistics Consultancy and a member of the International Association of Forensic Linguists.

Title: The importance of being (in)formal: discourse strategies in police interviews with children

Georgina Heydon

Abstract 148 words

Since tape-recorders were introduced into police interrogation rooms in various countries, researchers have had an unprecedented level of access to a data source previously unavailable to all but the participants. However, the significant contribution of psychology to police interviewing research has resulted in the detailed analysis of police institutional discourse being somewhat overshadowed by concerns with cognitive skills and memory enhancement techniques. This paper attempts to redress the balance by presenting a discourse analysis of video-taped police interview data from Victoria, Australia. The analysis draws on the theoretical framework of interactional sociolinguistics and examines the frames and footings used by participants as they negotiate the highly specific requirements of police-child training interviews. The study finds that at the micro-level of the interactions, the police participants are able to respond to the apparently conflicting requirements of their specialist training and the police institution by utilising a 'duality of discourses'.

Keywords: police interviewing; institutional discourse; frames; footing; child language; power.

Introduction[1]

Like many of its counterparts around the world, the Victoria Police Service in Australia trains police officers to obtain statements from young witnesses and victims of violent crimes. The resulting video-taped interviews form the child's evidence for the prosecution in court and, as such, are often critical to the success of a police case against an alleged offender. Given the disparity in institutionally-granted power between a police officer and a young child, these interviews present the police institution with a major challenge – how to adequately respond to the needs of a vulnerable child whilst satisfying the complex legislative requirements, and still facilitate an accurate witness statement. In light of the extensive research findings regarding the language of police interviewing (Agnew, 2006; Ainsworth, 1993; Atkinson, 1992; Auburn, Drake, & Willig, 1995; Cooke, 1996; Eades, 1994; Fisher & Todd, 1986; Guadagno, 2006; Haworth, 2006; Heydon, 1997, 2005; Lakoff, 1990; Powell, 2000; Redlich, Silverman, Chen, & Steiner, 2004; Shuy, 1998; Thomas, 1989), we might expect that the discourse produced in these interactions would represent an almost prototypical example of the asymmetrical institutional interview. Indeed, the data examined in this study reveal the presence of interactional phenomena which clearly indicate such asymmetry, including discoursal indicators (Thomas, 1989) and asymmetrical naming rituals (Lakoff, 1990), both of which can be used by dominant participants to control the contributions of subordinate participants. However, the presence of features associated with less formal interactions indicates that institutionality is not a fixed property defined by the setting or the backgrounds of the participants, but may be manipulated and reconstructed in the turn-by-turn production of the discourse. This paper describes in interactional terms the methods used, consciously or unconsciously, by police interviewers when they must negotiate the challenging discursive realm that is the pre-recorded child witness statement.

Institutional context of the discourse: the VATE project

As a part of the Video and Audio Taping of Evidence (VATE) project, which has been in operation in Victoria, Australia since 1993, officers are trained in the procedures for interviewing children according to the guidelines laid down by legislation which allows these video taped interviews to be used in place of a court appearance by a child. The main emphasis of the training course is the rehearsal of an interview technique which will elicit information in such a way that it can be used as

reliable evidence in court. There are, therefore, certain constraints on both the type of responses that are to be elicited and the way in which requests for information can be made. It is of primary importance that the information elicited is given freely by the child and without leading questions or verbal threats and bribes. In the literature supplied with the training materials, leading questions are defined as those which 'imply the presence of information not previously mentioned by the child' (Powell & Thomson, 1994, p. 209). For instance, the interviewer may not ask if *the man went home* when the child has not yet mentioned the gender of the person under discussion.

The training materials used in the VATE project at the time of this study were developed with a strong emphasis on rapport building and understanding the difference between children and adults in the comprehension of questions and knowledge of the interview procedure. Explaining the interview procedure to the child carefully is very important and interviewees are instructed to tell their child subjects to say *I don't know* if s/he doesn't know the answer to a question. This latter strategy is designed to reduce the possibility of the child making up answers under pressure . However it is noted that 'studies with protocols that allow the child to say *I don't know* have not eliminated the fabrication of false reports' (Powell & Thomson, 1994, pp. 207-208).

The first part of the analysis, described in the following section, aims to align the discursive features of the VATE interview with the interview structure outlined in the VATE training course guidelines by identifying utterances which mark boundaries, or frame shifts. Having delineated the segments of the tri-partite interview, the Opening and the Closure of the interview will be analysed in terms of frames and participation frameworks (Goffman, 1974) as indicators of institutionality. A further examination of the data in terms of discoursal indicators (Thomas, 1989) and receipt markers (Atkinson, 1992) aims to reveal patterns of formality in the interview discourse. Through this detailed analysis, it will be possible to further our understanding of the unique character of the VATE interview as an interactional construct and consider the implications of the findings for police practice and training.

The Tri-Partite Interview Technique

The interview guidelines described in the VATE training course literature as the Tri-Partite Interview Technique involve approaching the interaction as three successive and largely discreet segments:

Opening, Information Gathering and Closure. Each section includes a number of objectives or instructions for interviewers and the whole structure is presented in Appendix II.

The first part, the 'Opening' consists of Rapport Development and Developmental Assessment, where the interviewer aims to put the child at ease with some simple questions such as the child's full name and birthday and an explanation about the purpose and procedures of the interview. The following is an extract from INT3[2] which demonstrates how the Opening may proceed:

Extract 1 (INT3)

1. PO4   You ready to go?...OK..this is a video taped statement at the Victoria Police Centre on Sunday the twenty-fifth of May 1997 and my name is Senior Constable (FN. SN) and with me is (FN) who I'm gonna be speaking to. (FN) can you tell me your whole name?

2. CH5   (FN. MN. SMN. SN)?

3. PO4   And how old are you (FN)?

4. CH5   Eight and I'm turning nine in (month. date)

5. PO4   (month. date). OK ..right. now before I turned the camera on. did I show you the camera and the TV outside?

6. CH5   Mmm. yes

7. PO4   Yes?. and what's on the TV

8. CH5   Um well there's chairs with us sitting on them?

9. PO4   OK. and who' s looking at the TV?

10. CH5   Julie and Jenny?

11. PO4   ..OK. um while I'm speaking to you (FN) I'm going to be writing down what you tell me and the reason why I'm doing that is so that at the end when we've finished speaking I can go over what you've told me?. OK so that I remember everything

12. CH5   Yep

13. PO4   Yep?. and if at any time you want to stop talking to me and you. you feel like you want to take a break? OK you might want to go to the toilet or you might need a drink or something like that?. I want you to tell me that you want to take a break and we'll stop the video and we'll go outside OK?. and it's also really important that I tell you that if if I ask you a question and you don't know the answer or you don't understand the answer I want you to say oh (FN) I don't know the answer or I don't understand what your saying OK? and that's OK to say that. all right? OK. now do you know why you're here today?

14. CH5   Um. yep. be- because Julie's studying language about children talking to policemen?

15. PO4   Mm hm? All right so when I speak to you about that. I want you to remember

every thing that you can about what we're going to speak about. even if you think it's not really important I want you to remember everything that you possibly can

16. CH5   Yes

17. PO4   OK all right. now can you tell me why we're here today?

18. CH5   Um. because...so Julie can um. learn about her university thing?

In Extract 1 above we can see that PO4 begins in turn 1 with an acknowledgment of CH5's presence - *You ready to go?...OK..* - and then proceeds to make a statement which describes the situation - *this is a video taped statement* etc. PO4 then gives her rank and name before introducing CH5 using her first name - *and with me is (FN) who I'm gonna be speaking to* - and finishes the statement by requesting CH5's full name, which CH5 gives in her first turn, turn 2. In turns 3 and 4, CH5's age is established and acknowledged by PO4 in turn 5, where PO4 repeats the date just given by CH5 in turn 4. The remainder of turn 5 and turns 6-10 contain a question/answer exchange through which PO4 establishes CH5's understanding that the interview is being video-taped. In turns 11 and 13, PO4 describes to CH5 the interview procedure and CH5's rights, such as her right to *take a break*. These are quite long turns and between them, CH5 only offers an agreement marker - *yep* - in turn 12. At the end of turn 13, PO4 asks CH5 if she knows *why you're here today* and CH5 responds with a mention of the researcher in turn 14. However, PO4's following turn does not relate to CH5's response in turn 14, but rather discusses CH5's responsibility to provide full and detailed descriptions of *what we're going to speak about* which CH5 acknowledges in turn 16. PO4 then repeats the request for CH5 to explain why she is participating in the interview. When responding a second time, CH5 is more general in her description, changing it from *because Julie's studying language about children talking to policemen* to *because...so Julie can um. learn about her university thing*. In the second version, CH5 pauses for a long time after *because* and then alters this word to *so* and before stalling again soon after in *Julie can um*.

In addition to exemplifying the Opening sequence, this extract provides an important illustration of the vulnerability of the child's responses to the pressures of institutional questioning techniques. Turns 13-18 clearly demonstrate that the repetition of a question can cause a child to modify her/his response in

the belief that the first response must have been 'incorrect' (Powell & Thomson, 1994). This observation is particularly pertinent here as PO4 has just explained to CH5 the need for detailed information in turn 15 before she repeats the question about the reason for CH5's participation in the interview in turn 17. Even though CH5 has acknowledged the direction from PO4 in turn 15 to provide maximum detail, she actually provides less detail when responding to the repeated question made in turn 17, than when she responded to the original request made in turn 13, before PO4 had mentioned anything about providing details in descriptions.

The second and longest part of the interview is labelled Information Gathering and it is here that the interviewer elicits the bulk of the information being sought. An 'anchor' is established to focus the child on the day and approximate time that the event occurred using questions like Tell me about school on Tuesday morning - where Tuesday is the date given for the event. This is followed by the elicitation of an 'Open Ended Narrative', using phrases like think back to and remember to encourage the child to recall the day in question, and any resulting narrative is then probed using first 'open' questions like what happened next? And then 'closed' questions, where interviewers are instructed to use the child's own version of the event to elicit further details. The interviewer selects a part of the narrative which s/he feels is pertinent and asks the child for further information about that part using yes/no questions, or asking the child to select one of a set of possible alternatives. These questions should also start with cues for the child to remember, for instance: *Think back to when you said a man came in, did he come through the front door, or the back door, or the side door?*; or as a yes/no question: *When the man came in, do you remember if he told you his name?* The child is encouraged to add information at any time, especially at the end of this section and in this way the narrative is elaborated and details refined.

The third part of the Tri-Partite Interview technique is called the Closure and it is here that the interviewer makes sure that s/he has properly understood the child's version of the event and finishes the interview.

In subsection VIII of the Closure – the Review – the narrative is read back to the child from notes which the interviewer has been making throughout the interview. The child is encouraged to interrupt if s/he feels that any detail is incorrect and to add any other information should s/he think of it. In

subsection IX at the end of the Closure, the child is thanked and the interview concluded. In terminating the interview the child should be left feeling that they have 'done the right thing' and that should they desire to, they may contact the interviewer at any time for further discussion. [3]

Frame identification in the tri-partite interview

In order to discuss the linguistic implications of the tri-partite interview technique, we first need to be able to identify the three parts of the interview as they appear in the data. This means that we must be able to find a particular utterance or type of utterance which marks the transition from one part to the next. Coupland, Robinson and Coupland's (1994) study of frame negotiation provides an example of how a particular utterance can be identified which marks the transition from phatically designed talk to the medical 'business at hand' in doctor-elderly patient consultations. In their study, an utterance of the type *How are you?* (HAY?) was said to initiate a shift in footing (in Goffman's (1981) sense) from the relational to the professional (in this case, medical).

If we are considering the interviews which comprise the data for this study in terms of their division into three parts (ie. the tri-partite structure described above), then we might expect to find transitional markers at the boundaries of these parts which function in a similar way to the HAY? utterance in the Coupland et al study. In other words, we might be able to identify the particular type of utterance which marks the point at which a shift in footing takes place between the Opening and the Information Gathering part of the interview, and between the Information Gathering and the Closure.

Recalling the different features found in the Opening and the Information Gathering parts of the interview which were described above, the beginning of the Information Gathering is marked by the establishment of the 'Anchor'. Up to this point in the interview, the child has not been asked any questions regarding the Event. The establishment of the Anchor is the preliminary step before any requests for information regarding the Event may be made by the police officers. We would therefore expect to find that an utterance which contains those pieces of information that comprise the Anchor – the time and place of the Event – would mark the transition from the Opening to the Information Gathering. Extracts 2 and 3 give examples of this type of utterance.

Extract 2 (INT2)

21.PO3	All right now I believe that on Thursday night. just gone. which was the twenty second of May. you were at the ballet school? is that right?
22.CH2	Yep
23.PO3	and something happened there at about six o'clock in the night
24.CH2	Mmm

Extract 3 (INT5)

43.PO5	Not really?..do you remember anything that happened at ballet at all. last week?
44.CH6	Ah.. well we danced... um. ah we learnt a um a new bit of our dance?

The extracts above show two different ways in which the Anchor can be established, but in both cases there is a mention of *ballet* and an indication of the time being referred to. The example given in Extract 3 is fairly non-specific but it still makes a time reference which the child is able to correctly interpret, *last week*. In the other five interviews, the Anchor is similarly established with varying degrees of detail being given in one or more turns and from the data in each interview transcription we can illustrate the features of each Anchor in a table such as Table 1 below.

Table 1 *Features of the frame transitional utterance between the Opening and the Information Gathering*

	Discourse marker	*Mention of intention*	*Mention of time/date*	*Mention of place*
INT1	YES	YES	YES[4]	YES
INT2	YES	NO	YES	YES
INT3	NO	YES	YES	YES
INT4	YES	YES	YES	YES
INT5	NO	NO	YES	YES
INT6	YES	NO	YES	YES
INT7	NO	NO	YES	YES

We can see from Table 1 above that while all of the utterances which marked the transition from the Opening to the Information Gathering contained a time and mention of the Event place, only four of

the seven utterances contained a discourse marker (for example in INT2, turn 21: *All right now*), and three contained some mention of the police officer's intention, for example INT3, PO4; 19: *and I'm going to be speaking to you about something*. However, it should be noted that all of the police officer's mentioned to the children at some time in the Opening that they would be asking questions during the interview. The use of discourse markers generally is mentioned by Coupland et al (1994) as a common feature of frame transitional utterances, and we should note also that in the case of INT5, where there is a false start to the Information Gathering, *now* occurs in the second attempt.

The transition from the Information Gathering to the Closure is similarly overt in the interviews. Because the officers wish to keep the child informed of the progress of the interview, each officer explains to the child subject that the Information Gathering section is over, and that the information elicited will next be presented to the child for her confirmation or adjustment.

Extract 4 demonstrates the form that this transitional statement can take:

Extract 4 (INT2)

81.PO3	OK. now. what we might do. I'll just go back through and we'll just. I'll quickly go through my [notes]
82.CH2	[yeah]
83.PO3	and we'll just. review what you've. told me. and um. just to see that I've got my notes down right
84.CH2	yeah
85.PO3	and we've got the story right. if I make a mistake just say. let me know
86.CH2	yeah

We can see that, like the shift between the Opening and the Information Gathering, the shift from the Information Gathering to the Closure is initiated by the police officer (see turn 81). The child adds agreement markers in turns 82, 84 and 86 and no challenge to the shift in frame is raised. The generalised structure of the frame transitional utterance is:

discourse marker + mention of intention

and these two features are found in the frame shift from Information Gathering to Closure in every interview.

By identifying the frame transitional utterances, we can see very clearly the effect of the Tri-Partite Interview Technique on structuring the discourse produced by the police participants. The following section will further investigate institutional structures underlying the discourse by focusing the analysis specifically on the Opening and the Closure of the interview.

Frames and participation frameworks in the Opening

In the Opening, the police officers combine several activities. There is an identification process in which they first identify themselves and their location and then introduce the child, and then there is an explanation to the child about the interview procedure.

In their opening statements, the police officers seem to invoke a 'police on-record interview' frame where a description of the situation is addressed to an absent third party who is viewing the video-taped recording at some future time. Features which mark this frame are utterances which are formulaic and seemingly redundant, such as *This is a video-taped statement.* This frame having been invoked, the interviewing officer then seems to make an effort to switch frames perhaps in recognition of the fact that a police on-record frame is unlikely to be within the experience of their child subject. They achieve this switch using the utterance *and with me is [FN]* which has echoes of a television or radio host introducing a guest to their programme, and as such likely to be a familiar frame to most children. However, almost immediately the police on-record frame is reinvoked in order to deal with the identification process described above.

Another way of describing participants' alignments is by reference to Goffman's description of a participation role framework whereby stretches of the interaction can be categorised according to 'speaker roles' (Goffman, 1974, p. 517). Goffman's speaker roles refer to the way in which participants align themselves to utterances produced in an interaction, and is closely related to his perhaps better-known concept of 'footing' (Goffman, 1981, p. 128) Three roles are identified by Heydon (2005, p. 48) that are considered crucial to the analysis of confessional or informative talk in police interviews: the roles of *author* (the utterance was 'written' by the participant); *principal* (the

participant takes responsibility for the impact or effect of the utterance); and *animator* (the participant actually physically produces the utterance). A fourth role, *figure*, is also relevant to the present study and it indicates a person being referred to by the utterance.

In the police on-record interview frame, these roles are attributed to participants in an unusual way. In their opening statements, the police officers switch from speaking for themselves in the first utterance, e.g.

> INT3: 1: PO4 *You ready to go?...OK..this is a video taped statement at the Victoria Police Centre on Sunday the twenty-fifth of May 1997 and my name is Senior Constable (FN, SN)*

to speaking for another when they introduce the child e.g.

> INT3: 1: PO4 *and with me is (FN) who I'm gonna be speaking to.*

Thus, in the opening statement, the police officer is the *animator* of the identification process and by introducing the child at the end of the opening statement in the third person, the police officer assigns the role of *figure* to the child. The roles of *principal* and *author*, however, can be shown to belong to neither participant. In the case of the opening statements, it is possible to argue that in making their statements to camera, the police officers themselves are only *animator*s of a scripted statement which has been written by a third party representing the police force as an institution. If we consider Extract 5 below, we can see that in the first line of turn 1, PO1 states that she is *going to be reading from something*.

Extract 5 (INT6)

1. PO1   Here we go..(sits) OK..now I'm going to be reading from something. all right? so um. just bear with me. all right this is a video taped statement at the ah Melbourne Community Policing Squad today's um Sunday the twenty-fifth of May?. 1997?. can you tell the time (FN)?. have you got a wa- oh very good can you tell me what the time is by your watch?

2. CH3   Um. one past eleven?

3. PO1   So is mine. that's good. all right the time is one past eleven. my name is Senior Constable (FN. SN) and I'm with (FN). (FN) could you tell me what your full name is?

This mention of *reading from something* clearly indicates that the statement made by PO1 is not speech created by her, but rather a scripted statement created by someone representing the police force

as an institution. Thus PO1 is not the *author* of the statement and, as the statements made by the other police officers at the commencement of their interviews are almost identical to this one, it is reasonable to postulate that none of the police officers occupy the role of *author* of this statement. As to the role of *principal* of the statement, we must consider whether or not the police officer, as an individual, can be 'held responsible for having wilfully taken up the position to which the meaning of the utterance attests' (Goffman, 1974, p. 517).   If we consider how a person could be held responsible for taking up the 'position to which the meaning of an utterance attests' when that utterance is a quote (ie. the *author* of the utterance is someone other than its *animator*), we find that, since the form of the utterance is prescribed by its *author*, the only aspects of the utterance available to the speaker for adjustment are the decision to use the quote and the decision as to where the quote is used in relation to the rest of the discourse in which the speaker is involved. Having already established that the opening statement made by the police officers has been written by another, and that the statement is a standard feature of each interview transcription, it seems reasonable to assume that making the statement at the beginning of the interview is a requirement of carrying out the interview. Therefore, the police officer is not responsible for deciding whether or not to make the statement nor when it should be made and therefore cannot be considered responsible for any of the decisions that would place her/him in the role of *principal* of the statement.

This analysis indicates that the participation framework of the police on-record interview frame is one in which the speaker, the police officer, is assigned the role of *animator* of the utterances while the roles of *principal* and *author* seem to be assigned to a third party which might be identified as the police institution, though it could incorporate the justice system more broadly. We find further evidence of this participation framework in the second part of the Opening where the police officer explains to the child her rights and obligations in the interview procedure.

Extract 6 (INT3)

13.PO4   Yep?. and if at any time you want to stop talking to me and you. you feel like you want to take a break? OK you might want to go to the toilet or you might need a drink or something like that?. I want you to tell me that you want to take a break and we'll stop the video and we'll go outside OK?. **and it's also really important that I tell you that** if if I ask you a question and you don't know the answer or you don't understand the answer I want you to

say oh (FN) I don't know the answer or I don't understand what your saying OK? and that's OK to say that. all right? OK. now do you know why you're here today?

In this rather lengthy turn, PO4 makes reference to a guiding protocol in the highlighted utterance implying that responsibility for the decision to make the statements about the interview procedure is not attributable to PO4 herself as she is only following the necessary procedure. In other words, the highlighted utterance indicates that the role of *principal* is occupied by someone other than PO4. Each of the interviews include a similar statement and thus the role of *author* is also clearly assigned to this third party.

Further, in the Opening, the requests being made are largely requests for information which is already known to the police officer. In the identification process, for instance, it would be reasonable to assume that the police officers would know in advance the full name and age of the child they are interviewing and the request to the child to state these details 'on-record' is a requisite police formality. [5]

INT1 shows an interesting departure from the police on-record interview frame, with CH1 finishing PO2's turn for her and thus taking over as *animator* of the utterance at that point:

Extract 7 (INT1)

27.PO2   I might take some notes? All right? so don't be put off by that. ah. if you wanna stop. you can just [say]

28.CH1   [Just] say at any time.

29.PO2   Yep. we can break. we can come back in start again do whatever. all right

30.CH1   OK

The reversal of roles begun by CH1 in turn 28 is completed by PO2 in turn 29 with her agreement marker *Yep* supplying confirmation to her own statement appropriated by CH1. PO2 then goes on to regain the role of *animator* of the statement discussing the child's rights. Detailed examination of the interviews with CH1 indicates that this is typical of her behaviour, and yet, these disruptions to the police protocol are momentary and never threaten the underlying institutional structure of the interview (cf. Frankel, 1990; Heydon, 2005, p. 174).

As police interviewers are expected to develop rapport during the Opening of the interview, we would expect to find here some indication of a relational frame being invoked involving some use of 'phatically designed talk' (Coupland et al., 1994). In fact, an examination of the Opening of each interview reveals that an attempt to invoke a relational frame is made by only two interviewers, PO1 and PO6, presented here in the following two extracts:

Extract 8 (INT6)

29.PO1	OK. and how long have you been going to ballet
30.CH3	Um..six years
31.PO1	Since you were how old?
32.CH3	Three
33.PO1	You must be very good at ballet are you?. OK all right now when do you go to ballet. classes

Extract 9 (INT7)

43.PO6	How often do you go to ballet
44.CH7	Um. three times a week. and one of them is for private lessons
45.PO6	What days do you go to ballet
46.CH7	um. Thursday Friday and Saturday

In these two interviews the police officers are using the child's interest in ballet to engage in some phatically-designed talk and to attempt to establish rapport. We can therefore confirm that a relational frame is invoked in order to achieve these goals.

To summarise, the analysis of frames in the Opening part of the interview reveals a complex discursive structure, though one dominated by the police on-record interview frame. This features a statement made 'to camera' by the police officer as well as various other statements, such as those regarding the child's rights in the interview, all of which are considered a part of the police interview protocol. The discourse frames are reflected in the participation frameworks used in the Opening: the rather unusual assignment of roles appears to be a feature of the police on-record interview frame where the dominant speaker (ie. the police officer) is making utterances under instruction and cannot therefore be considered the *principal* of those utterances. Furthermore, as many of the utterances were

found to be formulaic and similarly phrased across all the interviews, the interviewing officer could not truly be said to occupy the position of *author* either.

The next section will consider the discourse structures that are involved in the review of the child's narrative by the police officers in the Closure of the interviews.

Frames and participation frameworks in the Closure

We noted earlier that the transition from the Information Gathering to the Closure is marked by an utterance which mentions the police officer's intention of presenting to the child for her confirmation the narrative elicited in the Information Gathering part. One example of the frame transitional utterance was given in Extract 4 above and two further examples are given in Extracts 14 and 15 below.

Extract 10 (INT7)

149.PO6	Right. OK. certainly sounds very interesting. we'll stop the ah the tape there. but um just so I make sure I've got this right. so last Thursday you went to ballet?
150.CH7	Yeah

Extract 11 (INT4)

67.PO7	OK. I'm just going to go through what you've told me about this man OK and um I'd like you to just to make sure that I've got it right and if there's anything you want to add to what I've said you can just. interrupt me and add
68.CH4	Yep
69.PO7	Or um if there's something that's wrong that I've said you can just tell me if I've got anything wrong..OK you said that at ballet school on Thursday at about six o'clock?
70.CH4	Yeah

The two extracts above include the transition into the Closure of INT7 and INT4 respectively. From this we can see that the Closure, as noted previously, commences with a mention of the police officer's intention. In Extract 14, PO6 in turn 149 makes an utterance pertaining to his intention - *but um just so I make sure I've got this right* - but does not elucidate any further, leaving it up to CH7 to interpret the frame as one where she may challenge or confirm the police officer's assertions as

appropriate. However in INT4, PO7 makes her intentions and the child's role in the Closure much more explicit (see Extract 15). In turn 67, she begins the transitional utterance by telling CH4 that she is *going to go through what you've told me about this man* and in this and her following turn (69) she instructs CH4 to *make sure I've got it right*, and to *just tell me if I've got anything wrong*. Further differences between these two approaches become apparent when we examine the remainder of the Closure. In the transitional utterance of INT7, PO6 seemed to indicate that he had appropriated responsibility for CH7's narrative by saying *um just so I make sure I've got this right*. This position is supported by the fact that in his review of CH7's narrative, PO6 states the parts of the story without any qualification as to the source of his information. For instance, in turn 149, after mentioning his intention, he says *so last Thursday you went to ballet* which does not attribute any *authorship* of the narrative to CH7. The remainder of the Closure of INT7 is undertaken using the same approach by the interviewer. This approach (also used in INT2) can be contrasted with that of PO7 in INT4, who overtly recognises the child as the *principal* and *author* of the narrative being discussed both in the frame transitional utterance (eg. *I'm just going to go through what you've told me...*) and in her review of the narrative which follows (eg. *you said that...*). Detailed analysis found that in INT4, where PO7 made explicit the child's role in providing any necessary adjustments to the narrative, CH4 was more likely to make such contributions to the review process. In contrast, CH7 only responded with affirmations to PO6's version of the Event and did not offer any corrections, even when there were inaccuracies in the police officer's account. Thus, the analysis reveals that the use of this framework better enables the child to offer feedback and corrections to the police officer as they review the narrative together. This approach is used in all the remaining interviews and appears to be favoured by the VATE technique.

Stephen Clayman (1992) discusses shifts in footing used by media interviewers to maintain neutrality and shows how assertions are attributed to a source other than the interviewer as a means of distancing the speaker from such assertions. Thus we could argue that PO7 in INT4 has maintained a neutral stance regarding the content of CH4's narrative by not taking personal responsibility for the utterances and only referring to them as things said by CH4. PO6, on the other hand, appears to align himself

more strongly with the content of CH7's narrative by not attributing his assertions about the Event to CH7.

If we consider this arrangement of participant roles in relation to the framework identified in the Opening, it is possible to see conflicting structures emerging. Whereas in the Opening there was a clear effort by all police participants to avoid *principal-* and *authorship* roles in the police on-record interview frame, the Closure produces disparate practices. When the narrative elicited by the police officer in the previous part of the interview was presented to the child, some police officers maintained a neutral stance in relation to the narrative by assuming the role of *animator* of the child's utterances (eg. INT1, INT3, INT4, INT5 and INT6), while others aligned themselves more strongly with the child's narrative by appropriating the child's utterances as their own (eg. INT2 and INT7). We will return to this issue of neutrality and alignment later, however, in order to address the issues raised earlier concerning the conflicting police requirements of the VATE interviews, it is first necessary to consider the use of discoursal indicators (Thomas, 1989) and receipt markers (Atkinson, 1992) by the police officers as they negotiate the frame transition and the interview as a whole. In this way we will develop the analysis of a range of discourse features found in the data which give these interactions their distinctive character of mixed (in)formality.

Frame negotiation and discourse control acts

Given the interest of this study in the apparently conflicting aims of the VATE interview, namely the establishing both of authority and rapport, it is useful to consider the devices used by these officers to guide the children's narratives. Thomas (1989) identified discourse control acts as tools commonly used by the police officers for the purpose of guiding or controlling the contributions of an interviewee. She distinguishes three types of speech events which she describes collectively as discourse control acts: discoursal indicators, metadiscoursal comments and interactional controllers. These devices are said to 'offer insights into the way in which a dominant speaker may deliberately limit the discoursal options of a subordinate interlocutor' (p. 135). Here we shall consider the use of discoursal indicators, which 'define the purpose and boundaries of the discourse and are surface level markers of the speaker's discoursal intent' (p. 136). An example of a discoursal indicator can be found in Extract 16 below.

19.PO4	That's right. and **I'm going to be speaking to you about something that happened at ballet school last Thursday?** Can you remember ballet school last Thursday?
20.CH5	Yes

The highlighted utterance shows PO4 defining the nature of the discourse to follow by stating that she will be speaking to CH5, and that the discussion will be focussed on a particular Event, at a particular time. Thus PO4 establishes herself as the dominant speaker in the encounter by using the discoursal indicators to 'define the purpose and boundaries of the discourse'. This will affect the speaker roles in the talk that follows because by defining the boundaries of the discourse, PO4 has already established herself as the judge of what is to be deemed relevant in the discussion and CH5's contributions are limited to those found relevant by PO4. Discoursal indicators similar to that exemplified in Extract 16 ??? are found in all of the interviews, particularly in the Opening and the transitional utterances between the Opening and the Information Gathering.

We also noted earlier that in the transitional utterances between the Information Gathering and the Closure, the police officers all state their intention of reviewing the child's narrative. These mentions of intention by the police officers can now be redefined as discoursal indicators and an example is provided in Extract 19, below.

Extract 13 (INT1)

149.PO2	**So what I'm gonna do is. I'm just gonna go through and tell you. um. go back over the things that you've already said?** All right?
150.CH1	Hmm

In the above extract we can see that PO2 is defining the boundaries of the discussion to follow by saying that she is *gonna go through and tell you, um, go back over the things you've already said*. In this way, the transitional utterance exemplified here is also being used as a discoursal indicator.

Receipt markers in police responses

In his article examining the discourse of informal court proceedings, Atkinson (1992) notes that arbitrators in the London Small Claims Court regularly employ receipt markers as a way of acknowledging contributions made by the parties involved in the dispute. Receipt markers, which

typically include such utterances as *certainly, right* or *OK* are made by the first speaker following the

second speaker's response to a question asked by the first speaker. Many examples of this device can

be found in the data for this study, such as those highlighted in Extract 20 below.

Extract 14 (INT5)

189.PO5	..Mm..now I'll just go back to the camera. you said it was a. a snap shot camera. but that's not right. it was a movie camera. right?
190.CH6	Yeah. it one of those one's you hold up and you tape yourself
191.PO5	**Right**. like this one's doing now?
192.CH6	Yeah
193.PO5	**OK**. so what happened after Julie. ah took the movie?
194.CH6	um. he packed up and left
195.PO5	**OK**. did he say anything when he left?
196.CH6	No

The highlighted utterances occurring in turns 191, 193 and 195 are examples of receipt markers. They

are being used by PO5 to show acknowledgment of CH6's utterances, such as in turn 190, where CH6

confirms the description of the camera used in the Event (a point of confusion earlier in the interview),

and this is acknowledged by PO5 by the receipt marker *Right* in turn 191. To illustrate the high

number of receipt markers found in the data, the following table is provided, which shows the number

of receipt markers per total number of police officer turns in each interview and the proportion of

these turns which contained receipt markers as a percentage.

Table 2 *Number of receipt markers used by police officers per total number of police officer turns (percentages in parentheses)[6]*

	INT1	*INT2*	*INT3*	*INT4*	*INT5*	*INT6*	*INT7*	*TOTAL*
Receipt Markers	46/88 (52.3)	19/69 (27.5)	48/66 (72.7)	14/55 (25.5)	57/128 (44.5)	62/90 (68.9)	23/80 (28.8)	269/576 (46.7)

From Table 2 above we can see that across all the interviews, there is a 46.7% occurrence of receipt

markers in the police officer turns although rates for individual speakers do vary considerably – INT3

and INT6 have very high rate of receipt markers per police officer turn at 72.7% and 68.9%

respectively, while INT2, INT4 and INT7 all have rates of receipt marker occurrence well below the

mean, at 27.5%, 25.5% and 28.8% respectively. Nonetheless, the fact that at least one in four turns by the police officers in each interview is prefaced by a receipt marker indicates that it is a prominent feature in the data.

In the concluding discussion below, the range of discourse features identified in the data will be considered in relation to the institutional goals of the police participants and the intentions of the VATE training scheme.

Duality in the discourse of police VATE interviews

We have seen that the institutionalisation of these interviews is expressed in the form of frame transitional utterances and participation frameworks that seem to have the principal role of mitigating the responsibility of the individual interlocutor. That is, the Opening can be said primarily to involve a frame labelled a police on-record interview frame, where the police officers seem to take on the role of *animator* of utterances whose *principal* and *author* were attributed to a third party represented by the police force as an institution. In the interview Closure it is possible to identify two different approaches, exemplified by PO7 in INT4 and PO6 in INT7. It was noted that PO7 in INT4 maintained a neutral stance in respect of CH7's narrative by using a footing device which attributed responsibility for the account to CH7. PO6 on the other hand did not overtly attribute the narrative to CH4, but rather made his account in the role of *principal* and *author* as well as *animator*. The examination of the Closure of INT4 and INT7 seemed to indicate that when the police officer assumes the role of *animator* of the child's utterances, as in INT4, the child feels more able to offer contributions to the summary. By contrast, in not making the participation framework explicit, PO6 in INT7 appears to have appropriated the child's narrative and thus reduce the possibility of CH7 offering any corrections or contributions.

In considering the participation frameworks of both the Opening and the Closure in terms of police institutional discourse we need to take into account the relationship between the police officers as an individual producing utterances which may classed as police institutional discourse, and the institution represented by such discourse. It seems reasonable to assume that in their daily work, police officers are considered to be carrying out a duty and representing the police force as an institution, rather than

representing themselves as individuals, and that this would be somehow incorporated as a feature of police institutional discourse.

We could therefore conclude that the distribution of roles in the participation framework of the Opening (ie. the police officer as *animator* of utterances attributable to the police institution) and the neutralistic stance taken up by PO7 through the shift of footing which places her in the role of *animator* of CH4's utterances, both conform to a notion of the police officer as a functionary of the police institution. In this sense, the participation frameworks support the institutionality and formality of the discourse, as proposed above.

Discoursal indicators (Thomas 1990) were said to support the police officer's position as the dominant participant by defining the boundaries of the discourse and restricting the allowable contributions made by the subordinate participant, the child. The use of discoursal indicators by the police interviewers in VATE interviews further emphasises the formality of the interaction, nonetheless such guidance of the interview structure is a necessary feature of this type of interview (Powell & Thompson 1994). The children must have a clear idea of what it is they are being asked to do and the whole encounter is heavily circumscribed by legislative requirements.

However, the co-occurrence of frequent receipt markers with discoursal indicators mark the VATE interview as an unusual variant of police institutional discourse. While the findings of the frame analysis, the distribution of participant roles and the discoursal indicators all indicate that the institutionality of the Tri-Partite Interview Technique is entrenched in the discourse, the frequency of receipt markers indicates that some contradictory force is at work in the production of these interactions. In addition to the receipt markers, relational or phatically-designed talk appears to be used by at least two officers to offset the underlying institutionality of the interviews and the overall use of the officers' first names is quite striking in its informality. The relational talk and first name use are both linguistic expressions of 'Rapport Development', identified in the training guidelines as one step in the Opening section of the Tri-Partite Interview. Through the use of such devices the police officers are able to maintain an atmosphere where the children feel able to contribute meaningfully to the interaction. That such devices are reasonably successful is supported by the fact that all of the children in the study showed their willingness to provide a narrative of the dance class and/or the

Event in some form. It was also notable that they were willing to inform the police officer if they did not know the answer to a question.

In presenting an interpretation of these findings, it is important that we attempt in some way to address the concerns of VATE interview practitioners and the justice system more broadly. In this way, it is possible to demonstrate to a wider audience that discourse analysis has the power to usefully contribute to police training and courtroom practices. There are certain risks associated with the use of VATE interviews in court cases and for the prosecution to continue to rely on the program, these risks must be outweighed by the advantages of reducing the stress on a child who is quite likely to be already traumatised. For instance, some commentators believe that the VATE process may in fact be advantageous to the defence as the role of the trial prosecutor in leading the evidence is diminished and the case for the prosecution must be constructed from evidence gathered by a police officer who is not a trained lawyer (Meadows, 1995). The risk that the VATE interview provides greater scope for the defence to deconstruct the child's evidence is supported by Magistrate Coate of Victoria who observes that '[under the old system] the defence just has the child's statement and it's a more difficult task in cross-examination to get behind it' (cited in Meadows, 1995, p. 970). Nonetheless, the VATE procedure is seen by some to be worth these risks as it does appear to work in reducing the stress on the witness: '[b]eing tested [in cross-examination], even though it's traumatic, may be easier than having to get the story out in the first place' (S.C. Cotterill cited in Meadows 1995: 970). Thus the VATE interviews may function as a valuable opportunity for the child to tell his/her story – often for the first time – in an environment less formal than a court hearing and then later rely on this narrative for support when being cross-examined.

The value of this opportunity and the way in which it is observed by practitioners interviewing child witnesses is borne out by the results of the discourse analysis. Were the interview to conform exactly to normal police procedure, the result would no doubt be just as confrontational and confusing to the child witness as the proceedings of the court. Instead, the VATE interview is designed to consolidate the child's trust in the police officer: the importance of the police officer's displays of personal interest in the child's story is a very real consideration though one not normally associated with police institutional behaviour. In fact, it is more usual for police officers as individuals to display a minimal

amount of personal interest in an interview subject, as their personal interests are considered secondary to the interests of the institution they represent.

It is clear then that there is considerable pressure on police officers in this situation to balance the requirements of the courts with the needs of the child, and the result is a unique and at times innovative blend of formality and informality. Police power and institutionality are expressed through discoursal indicators and participation frameworks of neutrality, while respect for the child's vulnerability produces the reassurances of receipt markers, first names and phatic communication. This duality of discourses is so fundamental to the process that it has become deeply embedded in the language of the VATE interview, demonstrating at the level of the interaction that the success of the program relies on the acceptance of some level of discursive contradiction.

Appendix I

Transcription Conventions

Adapted from DuBois ((1991)

Units

Turn	{*carriage return*}
Word	{*space*}
Truncated word	-

Speakers

Speaker identity/turn start	:
Speech overlap	[ ]

Pause

Long	...
Medium	..
Short	.

Pitch

Rising terminal pitch	?

Transcriber's perspective

Researcher's comment	( )

Codes used for confidentiality of participants

Police Officers code	PO#
Child code	CH#
First name	(FN)
Middle name	(MN)
Second middle name	(SMN)
Surname	(SN)
Name of month (in DOB)	(month)
Day of month (in DOB)	(date)

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Appendix II

The VATE Tri-Partite Interview Structure

OPENING

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I.   Rapport Development;

II.   Witness Focussing; and

III.   Demographic Details for Anxious Older Witnesses.

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INFORMATION GATHERING

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IV. Establishing Anchor

V. Open-Ended Narrative

VI. Open Questions

VII.Closed Questions

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CLOSURE

</div>

VIII.Review

IX.   Terminating the interview

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Appendix III

VATE training interview set-up

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The VATE training course consists of theory and practical components and the interviewing skills of trainees are tested in a mock interview. In order to create the most realistic environment for these mock interviews, the VATE coordinators organise for groups of school children, aged about ten years, to attend interview sessions with the trainees. A few days prior to these interviews, the VATE coordinators arrange for the children's school day to be disrupted in some fashion. A typical example might be two police officers in plain clothes attending a classroom and pretending to conduct a survey of the children's afterschool activities. The disruption organised by the VATE coordinators is usually referred to as 'the Event' and any information about the Event becomes the target for elicitation in the police-child interviews a few days later. VATE trainees are told only the time and date on which the Event occurred and perhaps the type of class that it disrupted (eg. normal class, assembly, special assembly etc.). Each trainee engages in a fifteen minute interview with at least two different children during the training day. The object of the exercise is to use the skills taught in the training course to elicit as many details as possible from the interviewee about the Event, including descriptions of the people involved.

Seven such training interviews were conducted at the Melbourne Police Centre in May 1997, and the video-taped recordings of those interviews formed the basis for the data used in this study. The child participants were pupils at a rural ballet school and the Event occurred during one of their classes.

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[1] My thanks to Tim Moore of the University of Melbourne for his insightful comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

[2] See Appendix I for a list of transcription conventions used in the extracts.

[3] Giving the child a contact number for the interviewing officer is not considered relevant in the mock interviews and is frequently deleted.

[4] While PO2 does not mention an actual date in the frame transitional utterance, the day of the Event is a feature which she wishes to draw attention to by asking CH1 *when did you last go to ballet*.

5 Whether or not the child is aware of this would probably depend on his/her age and experience. In some of the transcripts in this study, there seems to be reasonable evidence to suggest that the children are aware of such a protocol.

[6] Percentage figures have been rounded to the nearest 0.1% and have an error margin of 0.1%.