Cultural and Literary Studies

SAME POLITICIANS, DIFFERENT JOURNALISTS.
POLITICAL INTERVIEWING STYLES ON DUTCH-SPEAKING
AND FRENCH-SPEAKING PUBLIC TELEVISION
IN FEDERAL BELGIUM

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Abstract

This article analyzes political television interviews in the two languages (French and Dutch) of federal Belgium. Clayman and Heritage (2002) have listed the communicative characteristics of news interviews and have set forth a framework for analysing them. We have applied their findings to the corpus we have collected from the two public broadcasting stations in Belgium. The focus of this paper is on the specific characteristics of interviews with politicians interviewed both in their native and their non-native tongue. We have especially focused on the interviewer's role in communication. It turns out that the interviewing styles on both channels analyzed are equally adversarial, but that the ways in which this adversarialness is achieved, differ.
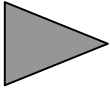
Introducere

In Belgium, most politicians who play a role at federal level are known by the Dutch-speaking as well as by the French-speaking part of the population. However, the fact that they individually belong to one of the two communities seems to influence the way they are being approached in television interviews. The interviewer's membership of one of the two communities is also an important factor. We have analysed a limited sample of interviews with federal politicans on the two public broadcasting channels, i.e. the Dutch-speaking VRT (Vlaamse Radio- en Televisieomroep) and the French-speaking RTBF (Radio-Télévision Belge de la Communauté Française) in both their native and their non-native tongue (Dutch/French). We have been inspired by methods of conversation analysis (CA), as described in ten Have (1999).

CA is interested in the way language is used in interaction. In CA-studies concerning the journalistic interview, parameters like the use of pronouns and turn length are analysed in order to investigate the 'agonistic stance' of the interviewer (e.g. Alber et al. 2002) or the 'intersubjectivity' of the interview (e.g. O'Connell et al. 2004). The structural organisation of talk in news interviews has been analysed in work by Fairclough (1995), Emmertsen (2007), Clayman (e.g. 1992) and Clayman & Heritage (2002b). Clayman & Heritage (2002) have listed a number of communicative characteristics of news interviews and have set forth a framework for analysing them. We have applied their findings to our corpus using the CA-approach, we have described the differences in interviewing styles on the two public broadcasters.
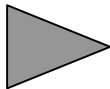
1. Media and politics in Belgium

Since the first official state reform in 1970 the Belgian state has been subject to a process of devolution that eventually led to Belgium becoming a federal state in 1993. Contemporary Belgium is composed of three regions and three (language) communities. In spite of this, the Belgian federal system has to a great extent been constructed as a bipolar system composed of two large language communities: the Dutch-speaking (approx. 6 million) and the French-speaking (approx. 4 million) (Deschouwer, 2002). The small German-speaking community (approx. 72.000 inhabitants) hardly plays a role on state level.

A good illustration of the Belgian bipolarity is the way in which political parties and elections are organised: no national political parties of importance are left and most voters can only vote for candidates of their own language community (De Winter et al, 2006; Sinardet, 2008). The audiovisual media are also split up on a linguistic basis. Actually, the de facto split up of the unitary public broadcasting corporation in 1960 meant the first official reference to the existence of two large language communities in Belgium. It also means that the public broadcasters (VRT and RTBF) are expected to cater specifically for their own language community, which leads them to pay the bulk of their attention to it and to interpret national information from that perspective (Sinardet, 2007). While the Belgian public broadcasters on both sides of the language frontier are influenced by larger evolutions in the European and international media landscape, within these limiting conditions they have nevertheless evolved in a quite different way since the 1990s. Earlier research showed that this had effects on the news content, election programming, the program schedules and the style and content of typical public broadcaster program formats (see a.o. Sinardet, De Swert & Dandoy, 2004; Van den Bulck & Sinardet, 2007). More precisely, this showed evidence of a more traditional public broadcasting culture on the French-speaking side than on the Dutch-speaking side, which seems to have evolved towards a more economic-competitive logic. This is characterised amongst other things by a transgressing of borders between the public and the private, between different program genres and also by a quicker and flashier style. One of the questions is whether we can also find traces of these differences in the interviewing styles of political interviewers on both channels.
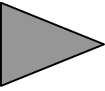
2. Data

For our purpose, we have assembled 12 interviews with 6 different politicians. The corpus shows a 'linguistic balance' in that it contains interviews with three Dutch-speaking politicians (using their native language on VRT and French on RTBF), i.e. Rudy Demotte, Didier Reynders and Elio di Rupo and three French-speaking politicians (using their native language on RTBF and Dutch on VRT), i.e. Dirk Sterckx, Johan Vande Lanotte and Patrick Dewael. The most recent interview in our corpus is from February 2005, the oldest dates from March 2003.

Each of these interviews has been transcribed according to the transcription conventions mentioned in appendix 1. The abbreviations used to indicate the speakers are the initials of their names. The analysis of the interviews is a qualitative one, inspired by concepts from linguistic pragmatics and conversation analysis. We have analysed and compared the interviews on the basis of the attitude the interviewers take towards the different interviewees.
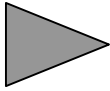
3. Interviewer attitude

The first comparison we will make, concerns the interviewer attitude. Clayman & Heritage (2002b) have shown that the ways interviewees are approached by the interviewer may differ a lot. They have compared the kinds of questions that American presidents were asked at press conferences. Their diachronic analysis shows that interviewing styles in the United States have evolved in the course of the years from a rather deferential approach (leaving the interviewee a lot of elbow-room) to a rather adversarial approach (where the interviewer is very assertive and leaves very little room for initiative to the interviewee). This is shown by the speaking time for interviewer and interviewee, the kinds of questions asked and by the way the questions interrelate. Using these criteria we have investigated in our corpus whether Dutch-speaking and French-speaking journalists take a markedly different attitude towards the politicians they are interviewing. We have also examined the possible occurrence of differences in interviewing styles depending on whether the interviewee belongs to the same linguistic community as the interviewer or not.
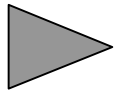
3.1. Speaking time

A first indicator of the prominence of both the interviewer's and interviewee's role in the interview is the amount of time they take the floor. For each interview, we have counted the number of question-answer sequences. We have also timed interviewers' (IR) and interviewees' (IE) turns. By question-answer sequence (Q-A sequence) we mean every adjacency pair which is initiated by the interviewer and which is complemented by the interviewee. Table 1 gives a summary of the findings.

Table 1. Average speaking time (in minutes and seconds) of interviewers
and interviewees

	interview nr / duration	number of Q-A sequences	speaking time IR	average speaking time IR (in sec.)	speaking time IE	average speaking time IE (in sec.)
DSP on VRT	1 / 7'44"	20	1'57"	5,85	5'22"	16,1
	2 / 8'37"	33	2'36"	4,73	4'41"	8,52
	3 / 8'53"	27	1'24"	3,11	6'36"	14,67
DSP on RTBF	4 / 11'22"	25	2'19"	5,56	8'18"	19,92
	5 / 11'00"	21	2'30"	7,14	7'49"	22,33
	6 / 10'47"	22	2'50"	7,73	8'25"	22,95
FSP on VRT	7 / 8'21"	23	1'51"	4,83	5'58"	15,56
	8 / 7'23''	28	2'17''	4,9	5'06''	10,9
	9 / 11'15''	21	1'39''	4,71	9'17''	26,52
FSP on RTBF	10 / 11'17''	31	2'35"	5	8'00"	15,48
	11 / 12'07''	20	2'17''	6,8	9'50''	29,5
	12 / 12'58''	23	2'36"	6,78	9'50"	25,65

DSP = Dutch-speaking; FSP = French-speaking; IR = Interviewer; IE = Interviewee; sec. = seconds

Table 1 shows that the RTBF interviews on the whole take longer than the VRT-interviews (11 minutes vs. 8 minutes on average). Moreover, the average speaking times of both interviewer and interviewee are longer on RTBF than on VRT. This means that the pace of the RTBF interviews is slower than that of the VRT interviews. The difference is especially notable for the Dutch-speaking politicians: they get a lot more time on RTBF than what they are used to on VRT. For the French-speaking politicians, there is not so much difference in average speaking time on both channels. Only Didier Reynders is treated differently by having to adapt to the faster pace of VRT: his average speaking time on VRT is 10,9 seconds, while on RTBF it is 29,5 seconds. For Elio di Rupo, the VRT interviewer seems to make an exception: he gets the longest average speaking time on VRT by far. A possible reason for this might be that his proficiency in Dutch is not very good. In fact, upon being asked whether he was nervous when coming to the VRT-studio, he answered:

(1)[1][#9 VRT-Di Rupo]
```
<EDR>      mijn nederlands is heel slecht en ik euh ik doe
           mijn best maar
           my Dutch is very bad and I  I do my best but I
           ik ken dat het is niet genoeg.
           [know wrong verb] that it is not enough.
```

Interruptions are also an indication of the interviewee's freedom being limited. In one of the VRT-interviews, the journalist interrupts his interviewee 14 times (every

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[1] We have tried to translate the examples into English as literally as possible but details may be lost in translation.

32 seconds on average). The most striking example of the VRT-journalist's interviewing behaviour is the following:

(2) [#8 VRT-Reynders]

        <DR>   zal misschien een echte conflict zijn maar t is niet de eerste in

will maybe be a real conflict but it is not the first in

belgië. |we moeten [XXX] |--

Belgium. we have to

        <IDV> |ja. de p s heeft| al aangekondigd dan stappen wij op=

yes. the PS [socialist party of the French-speaking community] has already announced then we will quit

```
<DR>  =hah t is dezelfde redenering voor alle
franstalige==maar |u weet |--
     it's the same reasoning for all French-speaking==but
you know
<IDV>                                          |u
stapt| ook op?
                                                    you
quit as well?
<DR>  jamaar er zijn twee standpunten—
     but there are two points of view
<IDV> wacht==dan ga ik even dan ga ik even de derde foto
|euh| tonen.
     wait==then I am going to I am going to show the third
photograph
```

The interviewer here even uses the imperative 'wait' to stop the interviewee. The interviewee does not get the chance to explain himself.

Concluding, we can say that the French-speaking journalist offers his interviewees a larger forum and that, on the whole, interruptions occur more often in the VRT-interviews. This is also immediately clear from the transcripts of the interview. Whereas the interviews on VRT have the appearance of a game of ping-pong, interviewee turns in the RTBF-interviews take up long stretches of text, sometimes one third of a page. As we will see in the next paragraph, this does not necessarily mean that the French-speaking journalist takes a less critical attitude than his Flemish colleagues.
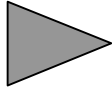
3.2 Dimensions of adversarialness in the questions

In their search for a typology of interviewing styles Clayman & Heritage (2002b) have defined an interviewing style continuum from deferential to adversarial and they have distinguished four dimensions of adversarialness, i.e. initiative, directness, assertiveness and hostility. These categories are based on the results of the analysis of the questions that were asked by journalists at press conferences with American presidents at the White House. We will apply these dimensions to the questions asked in our corpus, and will investigate whether the same categories hold for news interviews. We will first describe the different types of questions in paragraphs 3.2.1 to 3.2.5 before discussing them in paragraph 3.2.6.
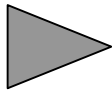
3.2.1 Initiative

The dimension of initiative is concerned with who determines which topics will be discussed in the interview, and who determines the direction the interview takes. The more initiative the interviewer leaves to the interviewee, the more relaxed the tone of the interview is. The type of question (open, complex, paraphrasing) tends to determine the degree of initiative that is left to the interviewee. Clayman & Heritage (2002b) use the term *simple questions* to indicate questions that do not restrain the answering possibilities of the interviewee. They imply that these questions always have a grammatically simple form. As can be seen from example (3), this is not always the case in our corpus.

(3) [#3 VRT-Dewael]
```
<AP> [...] u moet eens uitleggen wat er vandaag in het
          nieuwsblad staat.
      you should explain what is in Het Nieuwsblad [name of a
          news paper]
      een nieuwe politiehervorming, weer.
      today. a new police reform, again.
```

We label every interviewer turn which is meant to provoke an answer of the interviewee as a question. In example (3), the interviewer leaves a lot of initiative to the interviewee, but her utterance does not take the form of a simple question (grammatically speaking, it is a statement with an imperative meaning). We propose the term *open question* for every interviewer turn which leaves a lot of initiative to the interviewee.

If the interviewer asks open questions (e.g. 'do you have any comments to make'), the interviewee can take the floor. The RTBF-interviewer opens two of his six interviews with the very open question about what news facts have struck the interviewee most in the last week. It should be noted that those two interviews are with Dutch-speaking politicians. The Dutch-speaking interviewers in general avoid such openings. They very seldom ask open questions and they at least limit the subject the interviewee can talk about, as in example (3) above.

A second category of questions is what Clayman & Heritage (2002b) call *complex questions*. They state that complex questions limit the initiative the interviewee can take. A question is called complex when it it has a preface which narrows down the domain of the answer, when it consists of several subquestions (example (4) combines the two), or when after the interviewee's answer a new question (a so-called follow-up question) follows about the same topic (cf. example 5). This question is again meant to reduce the answering space for the interviewee.

```
(4) [#10 RTBF-Demotte]
<OM> alors le bulletin de santé de la sécurité sociale eh est
          inquiétant:
     so the health report of the social security is alarming
     en 2005 si <si il n'y a <rien ne change le déficit
          atteindra 1,2
     in 2005 if nothing changes the deficit will reach 1.2
          billion
     milliards eh d'euros eh. on dépense trop|ou bien on
          n'engrange pas
     euros. we spend too much or we don't rake in enough
          receipts?
     assez de recettes ? quel est le problème ?
     what is the problem ?
```

```
(5) [#10 RTBF-Demotte]
<OM>      |donc c'est| quoi? le retour de la fameuse cotisa
          <cotisation
          so what ? the return of the famous generalized
          social
          sociale généralisée la < la CSG comme en France ?
          c'est ça
          contribution the CSG as in France ? is that what
          you want?
          |que vous voulez ?|
          [...]
<OM>      mais vous n'avez pas répondu. vous êtes pour| ou
          contre eh une
          but you have not answered. are you in favour or
          against a
          cotisation sociale généralisée ? ce serait ça la
          bonne solution
```

```
                     generalized social contribution? would that be
                     the right
                     |selon vous| ?
                     solution in your opinion ?
```

Another kind of question which reduces the answering possibilities is what we have labelled the *paraphrasing question* (not to be found in Clayman & Heritage's typology). The interviewer interprets the previous answer of the interviewee, and asks whether this interpretation is correct, thereby reducing the question to a yes/no question, as in the following example:

(6) [#5 RTBF-Vande Lanotte]
```
<OM>       donc les patrons tiennent un <un double langage
           c'est ça que vous dites ?
           so the employers use doublespeak, is that what
           you are saying?
```
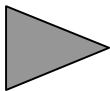
3.2.2 Directness

According to Clayman & Heritage (2002b) linguistic indicators of mitigated directness in questioning, are question structures with self-reference (questions beginning with 'I wonder...', 'I would like to ask...', 'May I ask, ...' etc.) or reference to the other (questions beginning with 'Can you explain...', 'Would you comment on ...' etc.). These structures would make the question less direct, and are supposed to make it easier for the interviewee to ignore the question. However, when we started looking for self-reference and reference to the other in the questions in our corpus, we came across questions that, despite of containing self-reference or reference to the other, could hardly be called mitigated, as in the following examples:

(7) [#2 VRT-Vande Lanotte]
```
<SB>       goedemorgen. ik heb mij ik heb mij zitten
           afvragen mijnheer
           good morning. I have been wondering mister vande
           lanotte
           vande lanotte hoe dat gaat bij de socialisten. z
           zitten jullie
           how does it go about with the socialists. do you
           sit together
           met zo drie vier mensen samen en en denken jullie
           dan wat
           with some three four people and are you
           brainstorming what else
```

```
                    kunnen we nog gratis maken? en dan goh de trein!
                    ja! zo? is dat
                    can we give for free? and then yes the train!
                    yes! like that?
                    zo gegaan?
                    did it go like that?
```

(8) [#2 VRT-Vande Lanotte]
```
<SB>         |denkt u | denkt u denkt u dat u met dat
              do you think that with the free commuting
              gratis sporen naar het werk en van het werk / dat
              u daarmee de
              by train / that you will solve the traffic-jams
              with it?
              files oplost?
<JVL>        oplossen maar toch verminderen<|en| ik denk dat
              niet,
              solve but still reduce and I do not think so
<SB>                                           |ja|?
                                                yes?
<JVL>        ik heb dat vastgesteld.
              I have found it to be true.
```

(9) [#9 VRT-Di Rupo]
```
<IDV>        snapt u nu dat in vlaanderen iedereen zegt u bent
monsieur non?
              do you get now that in flanders everybody says
you are monsieur
              non?
```

In example (8) the interviewer refers to himself but this reference does not have a mitigating effect. The question that follows is very assertive, even hostile, and the effect of the self-reference is rather that the interviewer puts himself to the foreground in this adversarial role. In examples (8) and (9) the interviewer refers to the interviewee explicitly, but again this does not have a mitigating effect. Again the tone of the questions is rather harsh. By using the informal verb *snappen* (ex. 9, *snappen* is a colloquial form of the Dutch equivalent of *to understand*) the interviewer rather shows disrespect for the interviewee. In example 8 we can see from the interviewee's answer (*I do not think so, I have found it to be true)* that he feels somewhat attacked by the question.

The use of self-reference or reference to the interviewee here makes the questions more aggressive, sometimes also ironic. Clayman & Heritage did not come across these kinds of questions in their corpus but this might be due to the fact that they studied questions that were asked at press conferences. The setting in which our interviews have been taken, with an 'overhearing audience', be it at home or in the

studio, might incite interviewers to try and score with the audience (cf. Goffman 1981, O'Connell 2004).

Self-reference or reference to the interviewee certainly does not leave more freedom to the interviewee here. This phenomenon only occurs in the VRT-interviews. In the RTBF-interviews, self-reference or reference to the other do have a mitigating effect, as in example (10):

(10) [#11 RTBF-Reynders]
```
<OM>   alors comment être un homme orchestre sans faire de eh
fausses
       so how to be a one-man band without getting the notes
wrong
       notes  <je sais que la question vous agace un peu
                I know the question annoys you a bit
```
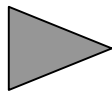
3.2.3 Assertiveness

In the view of Clayman & Heritage (2002b) assertive questions are questions that clearly steer towards a particular answer. This might be brought about by formulating the question negatively with the purpose of evoking a positive answer (such as in example 11), or by adding a preface to the question in which the answer is explicitly stated or in which there is a bias towards one possible answer (such as in examples 12 and 13):

(11) [#11 RTBF-Reynders]
```
<OM>      est-ce que une fois encore ce ne sont pas les
          <les francophones
          isn't it once again the case that it will be the
          French-
          qui feront les efforts pour sauver l'unité du
          pays ?
          speaking [part of the population] who will make
       the efforts to
          safeguard the unity of the country?
```

(12) [#4 RTBF-Sterckx]
```
<OM>  alors le treize juin le vlaams blok pourrait encore
progresser,
       so on June 13 the vlaams blok could still make
       progression,
       tous les derniers sondages le montreuhnt, on leuh on le
place
```

> *all polls show that, it is put*
> en deuxième position derrière leuh, derrière le cd&v.
> la montée
> *in second position, after CD&V. the rise*
> de l'extrême-droite c'est c'est inéluctable en flandre?
> *of the extreme right is inevitable in Flanders ?*

(13) [#2 VRT-Vande Lanotte]
<SB>   [...] d h l kan niet ontwikkelen in vlaanderen.
akkoord?
            DHL cannot expand in Flanders. do you agree?

Clayman & Heritage only mention the possibility of a biased preface. Our corpus shows, however, that sometimes a question also can be followed by a statement which betrays a preference for a particular answer. We have coined the label 'biased afterthought' for this phenomenon, which appears in example (14):

(14) [#1 VRT-Sterckx]
<IDV>   gaat deze regering <de regering verhofstadt dan
           bedoel ik dan,
           will this government <the verhofstadt government
           I mean
           ga< kan die nog verder |regeren| met dit soort
           peilingen?
           can it still go on with this kind of polls?
<DS> |ik vin |--
   I thi
<IDV>   met een een een premier die zijn neus wel
           geschonden heeft in
           with a prime minister who did fall on his face in
           this conflict
           dit conflict.

There is a third way of showing assertiveness in interviewing behaviour which Clayman & Heritage do not mention. They only discuss interviewer *questions*. In our corpus, however, especially in the VRT-interviews, it often happens that the interviewer does not ask a question at all, but simply launches a statement. As example (15) shows, this is of course a very assertive way of setting the agenda for the interview. This kind of statement differs from the one cited in example (3) (which we have categorized as an open question) in that it does not invite the interviewee to react. Still, as the exemple shows, the interviewee feels compelled to react, and that is why we have even categorized these statements as a kind of questions.

```
(15)[#1 VRT-Sterckx]
<IDV> en achter dat blauwe banier.. marcheert u desnoods
allemaal
     and behind that blue banner.. you will all together
          march into
     samen de zee in |euh en en tenondergaand want daar
daar| komt
     the sea if need be and and going down because that that
is
<DS>                      |jaah nee neeneeneeneenee
| neenee
               yeah no nonononono                    nono
<IDV  <het dan op neer.
     what it comes down to.
<DS>  da is nie waar.
     that's not true.
```

It is remarkable that the last two examples come from the same interview, with a politician who used to be a journalist himself and who used to be a colleague of the interviewer. Earlier research (Temmerman, 2006) has shown that the interviewing style VRT-journalists use when interviewing their former colleague are not at all milder.

However, not all statements are adversarial, or express the interviewer's opinion. We have labelled statements about non-adversarial topics or statements which only repeat what the interviewee has said, as non-hostile statements. These do not invite or provoke an answer from the interviewee.
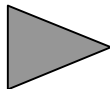
3.2.4 Hostility

The fourth dimension of adversarialness is hostility. According to Clayman & Heritage, this dimension captures the degree in which a question is overtly critical of the interviewee. However, it is difficult to define this category in terms of grammatical or syntactic characteristics (like negation in the question, segmented questions, the use of statements) and the coding categories are rather merely interpretive here. In this category, we have grouped all questions that do not fit into any of the above categories and that are clearly leading questions, or that are overt or covert attacks.

Sometimes only an ironical tone shows the question is a hostile question, as in the following untranslatable example:

(16) [#10 RTBF-Demotte]
```
<OM>   tout va bien madame la marquise c'est ça ?
```
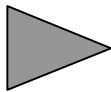
In example (17) the interviewer makes the hostile nature of his question explicit:

(17) [#11 RTBF-Reynders]
```
<OM>   alors comment être un homme orchestre sans faire de eh
fausses
       so how to be a one-man band without getting the notes
wrong
       notes   <je sais que la question vous agace un peu
               I know the question annoys you a bit
```

3.2.5 Question type continuum

In figure 1, we have drawn up a continuum in the kinds of questions that we have discussed up till now from open to hostile questions. The more the question is to the left of the continuum, the more it is face saving towards the interviewee (in terms of Brown and Levinson's (1987) politeness theory). The more a question is positioned to the right of the continuum, the more it is face threatening.

open paraphrasing complex cascade negative biased preface/afterthought statement   hostile
     <--->

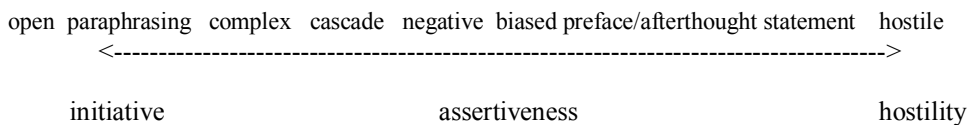   initiative   assertiveness   hostility

Figure 1

We have attributed every question in our corpus to one of the above categories. If a question could be attributed to more than one category, we have classified it in the most adversarial category. Table 2 gives an overview of the kinds of questions per interview type in percentages.

Table 2. Percentages of kinds of questions per interview type

type of question towards:	Dutch-speaking politicians on VRT	French-speaking politicians on VRT	average on VRT	Dutch-speaking politicians on RTBF	French-speaking politicians on RTBF	average on RTBF
[non-hostile statement][2]	6	7	6	1	6	4
open q. (ex. 3)	1	18	19	26	14	20
paraphrasing q. (ex. 6)	4	13	8	12	8	10
complex q. (ex. 4)	6	14	10	14	17	15
cascade q. (ex. 5)	6	7	6	0	9	5
negative q. (ex. 11)	4	0	2	9	9	9
biased preface /afterthought (ex. 12)	10	1	6	9	14	11
statement (ex. 15)	39	35	37	23	18	21
hostile q. (ex. 16)	6	5	6	6	5	5
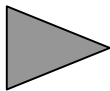
4. Discussion and conclusions

When we compare VRT-interviews with RTBF-interviews in general, the most remarkable difference is the number of statements that are made by the interviewers. VRT-interviewers replace questions by statements almost twice as many times as the RTBF-interviewer does.

As far as the open questions are concerned, these are asked more frequently to interviewees of the other community than to interviewees belonging to the same community as the journalist. (The 19% for Dutch-speaking politicians on VRT is strongly distorted by one interview.) As could be expected, paraphrasing also occurs more often if the interviewee belongs to the other community: interviewers want to make sure they have interpreted the interviewee's answer correctly.

Interviewers seem to be harder on interviewees of their own community and softer on interviewees of the other community. This is corroborated when we move to the more adversarial side of the continuum, by the fact that the French-speaking interviewer does not subject his Dutch-speaking interviewees to question cascades,

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[2] For the sake of completeness, we have added non-hostile statements to the list, though they cannot be considered to be questions. With non-hostile statements and questions together, however, we have captured all interviewer speaking turns.

and that the Dutch-speaking journalists do not ask negative questions vis-à-vis their French-speaking interviewees. Also bias in the preface or the afterthought of the question occurs a lot more often if the interviewee belongs to the same linguistic community as the interviewer.

As for the interviewer attitudes on RTBF and VRT in general, we can conclude that these are equally adversarial. The overview shows that in the last four categories (negative – hostile questions), which are the most adversarial, there is hardly any difference as far as the number of hostile questions is concerned. As already stated, the VRT-interviewers make a lot more statements than the RTBF-interviewer does, but this is made up by the fact that the RTBF-interviewer uses more negative questions and more bias in preface or afterthought of the question.

Based on the findings concerning average speaking time and types of questions, we can conclude that interviewing styles on VRT and RTBF are equally adversarial, but that the pace of the RTBF-interviews is slower. So interviewees get more time for their answers on RTBF, but this does not mean that they get an open forum or that they can determine the course of the interview.

The more frequent turn-taking changes and the occurrence of more statements in the VRT-interviews give the latter more the appearance of a discussion than of an interview. Far more than their French-speaking colleague, VRT-journalists seem to consider themselves to be partners in the discussion instead of neutral guides.

The differences we have found in interviewing styles between the Dutch-speaking public broadcasting channel and its French-speaking counterpart, tend to confirm earlier research as well as our current hypothesis on more general differences between the two broadcasters. Indeed, the interviews suggest that the French-speaking broadcaster RTBF remains more strongly adherent to traditional public broadcasting culture than the Dutch-speaking VRT. The informal and rather personal way of communication of Dutch-speaking journalists with Dutch-speaking politicians seems to be typical of the 'infotainment approach'. It would be interesting to compare the interviewing styles we have encountered here with interviewing styles in other countries, to see if similar differences between traditional interviewing formats en infotainment formats can be found, and if these differences are also related to the length of speaking turns, the use of self-reference and reference to the interviewee, and the use of personal questions.

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Appendix 1: Transcription conventions[3] (loosely based on Gumperz 1992)

intonation

.	final fall
,	slight fall (comma-intonation 1 : 'more is to come')
?	final rise (question)
/	slight rise (comma-intonation 2, as in enumeration)
!	tone remains on the same level
--	sentence not finished

pause

ordinary, normally expected pauses are not indicated

..	longer pause
[*n*]	pause of *n* seconds
==	shorter pause (= 'latching')
<	speaker tries to 'overwrite' previous start
| |	overlap (speakers speak simultaneously)

prominence

ordinary stress is not indicated

*	(before syllable) unexpected or very strong stress
CAPS	extra prominence (louder or higher)
-	(between syllables) each syllable is stressed or pronounced separately
:	lengthened sound

other

[*rem*]	our own remarks and explanations
{[*rem*]}	idem, with indication of stretch of text involved
[?]	probably
[...]	irrelevant part left out
[XXX]	incomprehensible, each X represents one syllable
[/*phon*/]	phonetic transcription
<*NN*>	speaker

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[3] Variable symbols are in italics.

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