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## Dialogues between journalists on the news: the intraprofessional 'interview' as a communicative genre

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Daily, in news and current affairs broadcasts, we see journalists who talk together about the political events of the day. Some researchers regard these interactions as something that is mainly there to lighten up the more monological news presentation and reporting. They can be thought of as providing 'an element of "mild spice" in the form of "what if ...", "maybe", some vague rumour, unattributed gossip, displaced or imagined sentiments' (Montgomery, 2007: 125).

However, journalists in the role of interviewees in news and current affairs broadcasts are even more frequent than politicians (more on this in the fourth section: 'Journalists as interviewees in news and current events programming'). In fact, journalists talking to each other has become an important cornerstone in the construction of news. These interactions are used in a variety of ways in contemporary news journalism, from shorter or longer comments or reports via link to recorded sequences of talk or lively discussions in the studio. Indeed, it seems appropriate to speak of them as constituting a specific *communicative genre* (Linell, 1998b: 238), alongside other kinds of established broadcast interactions such as interviews with politicians, spokespeople, experts or ordinary citizens.

The main purpose of this study is to identify the various ways that 'intraprofessional broadcast talk' is used and performed on the news with a specific focus on examples from television. Intraprofessional broadcast talk refers to discourse (and interaction in general) *within* specific professions (Linell, 1998a: 143), in this case within broadcast news journalism. The interactions occur in between professionals and are performed on air in an

institutional setting for the sake of an overhearing audience. Presumably, like other kinds of institutional encounters, they are in some sense organized into 'a standard "shape" or order of phases' (Drew and Sorjonen, 1997: 109–10) that come(s) to influence the interactional structure and style of talk.

I will regard these interactions between journalists on air as inclusive in what conversation analysts generally label 'institutional interaction' (Drew and Heritage, 1992: 59). When launching a framework for studying institutional discourse, Agar (1985: 164) limited himself to studying communicative exchanges between representatives and clients but also noted the inadequacy of his approach: 'Another branch of the same framework must deal with how the co-members of the same institution make it work.' However, the intraprofessional angle has not yet been of much interest to researchers studying broadcast interaction. This despite the fact that journalists' talk among themselves on the news must surely also be regarded, both literally and figuratively, as *talk at work* (cf. Drew and Heritage, 1992). Although the present study is not a Conversation Analysis one, I believe that it is important to frame these instances of journalistic talk within the area of institutional interaction. Not least, it signals that they deserve to be taken as seriously as other kinds of institutional broadcast talk.

In one of the few studies on this kind of intraprofessional interaction, Montgomery uses the terminology of 'affiliated interview' (as opposed to other types of news interviews; see next section). An affiliated interview is 'when the presenter is in communication on air with an accredited journalist of the same institution ... concerning an item in the news' (Montgomery, 2007: 118). Without explicitly stating so, Montgomery focuses on a specific type of intraprofessional talk, the so-called 'live two-way', where a presenter in the studio is communicating with a journalist at the scene via link. However, there are more types of interview-like intraprofessional exchanges in between journalists than the live two-way which are used as communicative resources in the news. Empirically, then, there is more work to be done to understand the complexity and interactional variety of intraprofessional broadcast news talk. Besides identifying the different uses of intraprofessional talk, an extended example of a studio talk between a presenter and a political correspondent serves to problematize the distinction between the discourse of news presentation and report on the one hand, and the discourse in these kinds of intraprofessional talks on the other hand, made by Montgomery.

### **Theoretical platform and methodological approach**

When mapping out the various ways that journalists speak in between themselves in news broadcasts, I will choose to primarily refer to these exchanges as intraprofessional *dialogues*. Whether they are also to be seen as

'interviews' alongside other types of news interviews is something that will be discussed in the latter part of this article.

According to Linell (1998b), dialogues are built on complementary rather than symmetrical roles of participation and the actors are oriented towards mutual but sometimes competitive communicative goals. Various contextual resources can be meaningful in relation to the discourse. Examples of these resources may be prior discourse, the surrounding concrete situation, knowledge about the topic at hand as well as the persons involved and the abstract situation definition. It is also about knowledge of the organizational context, language and communicative routines, as well as background knowledge including general worldview and collective memory of the culture (Linell, 1998b).

An interaction in between journalists on air can be understood as a (dialogical) communicative project in the sense that it is other-oriented, both towards the audience and the other journalist, and involves achieving (and presenting to the audience) some kind of shared understanding. At the same time, although collectively accomplished, the project embodies a division of roles and responsibilities and thus also invokes a certain asymmetry of participation. It is worth noting that, although the dialogue concept is used to characterize and explore these exchanges, from time to time I will refer to the presenter as 'interviewer' and the journalist positioned in the role of deliverer of a comment or response as 'interviewee'. This is done to signal the division of labour that is set up for, and enacted by, the participants.

The methodological approach is both quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative data is supported by codings of news and current affairs programming from Great Britain and Sweden totalling approximately 150 hours, including both radio and television, commercial and public service channels. The data was gathered between 3 April and 4 June 2006. A sample of news and current affairs programmes were downloaded/recorded during three time-slots per day (morning, midday, evening) for one week per channel.<sup>1</sup> Random samples of tapes/downloads have been studied qualitatively by applying Linell's (1998b) dialogue theory as an overarching theoretical framework.

In the next section, I will present an overview of research on the news interview focusing on some existing interview typologies. Montgomery's work on the affiliated interview will also be presented in more detail. The fourth section ('Journalists as interviewees in news and current affairs programming') provides some quantitative findings on the prominence of intraprofessional dialogues in news and current affairs broadcasts in Sweden and Great Britain. In the fifth section ('Ways of exploiting intraprofessional dialogues in the news'), various ways of using intraprofessional dialogues in the news are presented, with a focus on the live studio dialogue. This focus is motivated by it being one of the most common types of intraprofessional interaction on air alongside the 'live two-way' (via link) analysed by Montgomery. In the concluding section, the results are discussed in relation to the question of whether these exchanges are to be regarded as 'interviews' or not.

### **The news interview and ‘the affiliated interview’**

There is little debate over the importance of the news interview for journalism. The interview is, and has been, fundamental to the journalistic practice (Ekström, 2001; Schudson, 1994), its basic function being: ‘the communication of information or opinion from public figures, experts or other persons in the news for the benefit of the news audience’ (Greatbatch, 1998: 166). The news interview has been thoroughly researched in Conversation Analysis and in analyses of media broadcast talk (e.g. Clayman and Heritage, 2002; Greatbatch, 1986; Heritage, 1985; Hutchby, 2005; Lauerbach, 2006). However, as Tolson (2006) and others have argued, the political interview that has been so extensively researched by conversation analysts is becoming increasingly rare in news broadcasts.

Media scholars have made distinctions between different types of broadcast interviews, suggesting typologies or taxonomies based on content, interviewer role/behaviour or type of interviewee. Corner (1999: 42–4) distinguishes between three types of interview content; information, viewpoint and experiential interviews. The information interview draws upon some kind of expertise or direct knowledge of specific events, often delivered as decontextualized soundbites in a news feature, documentary or factual series. Viewpoint interviews display live or recorded exchanges with officials and other elite sources. Their focus is on political accountability, the political interview being one obvious example. In experiential interviews, the interviewee is there to talk about personal memories of past experiences and the interviewer may act more as a counsellor rather than a critical interrogator.

Femø Nielsen (2006: 95) proposes an action-based taxonomy of interviews based on the behaviour of the interviewer and what that person invites the interviewee to do. She suggests that interviewer roles can ‘be done’ in various ways. By analysing interviewers’ speech, posture, gesture and facial expression she comes up with an action-based taxonomy that differs between argumentation, declaration and storytelling interviews (2006: 117–18). In the argumentation interview, the interviewer adopts a neutral oppositional footing in order for the interviewee to account for, explain or defend a position. In the declaration interview, the interviewer invites the interviewee to declare, admit or claim something without challenging it or holding the person accountable. The storytelling interview is also a non-oppositional one, as the interviewer works at getting the interviewee to tell a story by aligning with the interviewee and possibly also collaborating in telling the story.

Montgomery (2007, 2008) suggests a similar typology to Corner but distinguishes between the accountability interview, the experiential interview, the expert interview and the affiliated interview. In contrast to Corner and Femø Nielsen, Montgomery thus singles out the affiliated interview as a specific interview type in broadcast news. Montgomery studies the ‘live two-way affiliated interview’, where a presenter in the studio interviews a fellow

correspondent or editor who is at the scene elsewhere, connected to the studio via link. According to Montgomery, the discourse of live two-ways is essentially unscripted, informal and interpretative in character. It blends assertiveness with tentativeness (rather than being straightforwardly 'factual'), and expresses a personal rather than an institutional voice. He sees the discourse of the live two-way as something quite different from news presentation as such, the former being there to extemporize and improvise on facts already delivered in a report:

The discourse of the live two-way is about 'doing being interesting' (sounding lively and engaging) in relation to a facticity already established. (2007: 128)

Montgomery sees the live two-way as a particular form of social exchange in the news that projects other tendencies in public discourse already discerned and discussed by other researchers, i.e. an increasing orientation toward personalization, conversationalization and dialogue (Fairclough, 1994; see also Cameron, 2000; Scannell, 1996).

In his article on the internal fragmentation of the news in relation to dialogical news formats, Ben-Porath (2007) briefly touches upon the talk that occurs between presenter/anchor and other. For Ben-Porath, these categories of talk contribute to a diminished authority both for reporters and in the long run also for the news organization as such. Carefully pre-recorded and edited monological news accounts or soundbites, where words of other news subjects could be recontextualized into a coherent news story, provide less risk for the journalist-as-interviewee. To talk seemingly on equal terms, perhaps facing each other in a discussion in the studio, diminishes the possibility of upholding an authoritative expert role, according to Ben-Porath (2007).

Empirical studies that focus on the affiliated interview in the meaning of on-air interviews in between journalists in news and current affairs programming seem to be a rarity, with Montgomery's study standing out as a groundbreaking exception. His work on the the live two-way provides good ground on which to continue to investigate intraprofessional broadcast news interactions. Before exploring the various ways of using these interactions on air, some quantitative findings on their prominence in news and current affairs will be presented.

### **Journalists as interviewees in news and current affairs programming**

Out of approximately 150 hours of coded broadcast data,<sup>2</sup> just over 50 hours consist of *responses by interviewees* of various categories (ordinary citizens, spokespeople, politicians, experts, etc.). Journalists' responses from interviews or interview-like situations in these programmes are presented in Table 1. They make up about one-fifth of the time devoted to the total number of

interview replies/responses both in Swedish and British news programming. As a comparison, interview replies by politicians make up 18 percent of the total number of interviewees' responses in Britain and only 15 percent in Sweden. Hence, journalists are more likely to get to respond to current (often political) events in broadcast news than are such 'accountable' public figures as politicians.

Notably, these figures include the time for journalists' responses and not the talk by the journalist acting in the role of interviewer. Thus, the entire intraprofessional dialogue covers more air-time than these figures are able to show. Still, the numbers provide enough support to claim that indeed journalists-as-interviewees, engaged in dialogues with colleagues, make up a significant portion of news and current affairs broadcasts, especially in comparison with politicians-as-interviewees. The numbers in Table 1 can also be broken down to show whether the person being interviewed comes from the broadcast's own organization or from another media. The figures are broken down by country (Britain = GB, Sweden = SE) in Table 2.

In Swedish broadcasts, it is slightly more common to choose a journalist of another newsdesk as interviewee while in Britain, one is more likely to choose a journalist from one's own organization. This variation may stem from differences in resources when it comes to available in-house staff expertise. Irrespective of country it is clear that intraprofessional dialogues consist of both intra-affiliated dialogues (journalists within the same organization) as well as inter-affiliated ones (journalists from another organization/media). I

**TABLE 1**  
**Prominence of journalists' responses in news and current affairs on Swedish and British radio and television in relation to total amount of interviewee response time**

|  |       |
|--|-------|
| Swedish journalists' 'interviewee-responses' | 19.7% |
| British journalists' 'interviewee-responses' | 22.5% |

**TABLE 2**  
**Journalists-as-interviewees and their affiliation with the news organization where they appear on air in British and Swedish news and current affairs broadcasts (incl. radio and television)**

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| GB journalist-as-interviewee affiliated to newsdesk | 17.5% |
| GB journalist-as-interviewee external affiliation   | 5.0%  |
| SW journalist-as-interviewee affiliated to newsdesk | 8.5%  |
| SW journalist-as-interviewee external affiliation   | 11.2% |

will now move on to present the various ways that intraprofessional dialogues are used in broadcast news.

### Ways of exploiting intraprofessional dialogues in the news

I have found it fruitful to analyse the range of possibilities that the intraprofessional dialogue offers, and in which various ways (as a genre) it is exploited as a communicative resource in the news rather than launching a typology. The parameters used to discern different ways of using these interactions consist of number of turns and/or episodes; passive vs. active interviewer during the interviewee's response; link vs. studio talk; live vs. recorded talk; orientation towards interviewee or absent audience; autonomous vs. non-autonomous news item. Using these parameters as a general guidance, six sub-types of intraprofessional dialogues have been identified which will be presented below.

#### *The recorded single-turn*

The recorded single-turn usually consists of a pre-recorded single utterance via link by a correspondent. These shorter sequences are used as commentaries on a news presentation or news item just given. The presenter introduces a journalist by mentioning that they talked prior to the live airing; the question from the presenter is repeated in order to provide a co-text for the journalist's single answer which is cut in via link. A typical hand-over from an ITV news piece can look as follows:

#### *Extract 1*

- 1 *Presenter*: Earlier this morning I spoke to our political editor Tom Bradby and asked for his
- 2 assessment of the political damage done to Tony Blair and his government.  
*[Bradby's recorded reply follows and his image fills the screen for the duration of the turn]*

This is not a collaborative exchange between the participants. Thus, the presenter does not turn to the screen while the reply is given, nor is the sequence rounded off by a 'Thank you'. The coordination between presenter and correspondent is a technically constructed one (the pre-recorded reply is shown to the viewer), but there is no direct relation between that which is live and that which was said earlier other than the fact that the presenter's discourse links a recorded reply/report to the live broadcast's here and now. Both the presenter's gaze and the gaze of the interviewee are directed towards the camera. These types of recorded replies are used sparingly.

*The live single-turn*

As with recorded single-turns, the live equivalent is generally used as a follow-up to a shorter or longer news presentation and is conducted via link. However, the hand-over is often done by the presenter using the interviewee's name in a rising pitch ('Gloria?') while turning to the screen where the correspondent is seen (see Montgomery, 2007: 56). The presenter remains passive during the interviewee's single-turn in the sense that no follow-up questions are posed. The turn is closed by the presenter thanking the interviewee ('Gloria, thanks.'). This category of replies/reports functions much like a monologically delivered news report but is presented in a pseudo-dialogical way, with the presenter addressing the correspondent by name and physically orienting him/herself towards the interviewee. The live single-turn may also be introduced and concluded more elaboratively. In Extract 2, the presenter is joined by a correspondent on link who reports from the scene about a successful rescue of trapped miners.

*Extract 2*

- 1 *Presenter*: Well we've – we can now speak to ABC correspondent Paul  
Lockyer he's there  
2 and that's where the dramatic rescue occurred last night in  
Beaconsfield  
3 Good morning to you Paul  
4 thank you very much for being with us this morning.  
5 Talk us through what happened.  
6 *Lockyer*: What an amazing story isn't it [...]  
[turn lasts for 1 min. 46 sec.]  
7 *Presenter*: Wow they're feisty men aren't they thank you very much Paul for  
joining us for  
8 that update from Tasmania this morning.

Again, the correspondent is the one doing the talking for quite an extensive turn but receives a fuller introduction and welcome. He is also thanked by the presenter but not before the latter has commented on the correspondent's report (line 7). However, there is no invitation to elaborate further on the subject which is then subsequently closed. Although the interviewee is allowed plenty of air-time to expand on the dramatic rescue and thus delivers a rather monologic turn, the presenter works at framing the turn in a more active manner than in the previous example, enhancing the sense of connection between interviewer and interviewee despite their spatial distance. The division of labour is clear. The correspondent delivers a seemingly spontaneous, but most likely prepared, response when so prompted and is in no need of further guidance after having been given the air. The correspondent knows and accepts that his work in their joint communicative project is done when the single-turn has been delivered.

*Live two-way via link*

The live two-way via link is the variant of the ‘affiliated interview’ investigated by Montgomery. The presenter poses questions to a journalist who is present via link in a multi-question and answer exchange, bringing the site of news and studio together (see Montgomery, 2007: 117). Most commonly, there is one interviewer (presenter) and one interviewee (correspondent or equivalent). This is a recurring feature in news and current affairs programming and usually follows upon a news presentation or report. Depending on its topic and expansion, it can also function as an independent news item in itself. Both parties are active and tend to physically orient themselves towards each other, something which is underlined by the presenter turning and facing the screen, as well as the usage of first names during openings and closings.

*Extract 3*

- [presenter in view with co-presenter and correspondent visible on screen link]*
- 1 *Presenter:* Let’s join now our political correspondent  
*[presenter turns to screen]*
- 2 Chris Ship who’s at Downing Street
- 3 Chris deal first with this morning’s cabinet
- 4 it must’ve been one of the more  
*[correspondent comes into full view while presenter’s voice is heard]*
- 5 hh how shall we put it
- 6 interesting meetings
- 7 *Ship:* Yeah I think you’re probably right Nick hh [...] *[image of presenter who is turned towards screen]*
- 8 *Presenter:* Now Patricia Hewitt wasn’t there
- 9 should we read anything into that?  
*[correspondent comes into full view]*
- 10 *Ship:* Well guess what Patricia Hewitt’s doing this morning
- 11 she’s giving another speech
- 12 you might think she’d cancelled a few speeches
- 13 after yesterday’s performance in hh Bournemouth [...]

Montgomery’s points about these talks being more loosely scripted, conversationalized and personal in style are reflected in this particular extract (for example the ‘guess what’ in line 10 would hardly be possible in a more monological news presentation). During a live two-way via link, the presenter’s gaze leaves the audience to be fixed upon the journalist-as-interviewee, an interactional move that is emphasized by the way the camera follows the exchange. As members of the audience we are meant to understand it as a genuine and quite spontaneous dialogue between the two parties although, of course, its content is probably agreed upon in advance. Again, there is a clear role definition with the presenter being the one who starts the exchange, shifts topics within the main theme and

closes the interaction and the interviewee follows along easily and delivers his comments. The somewhat informal framing with personal address, viewpoints and slight sarcasm between the two lends an aura of a rather symmetrical relationship, despite the presenter's obvious opening and closing power.

I would like to argue that the presenter's turning away from the audience towards the correspondent on the screen is something that strengthens the authority of the person talking, and consequently also something that is done to underline the truthfulness and legitimacy of what is being said. In addition, the size of the projected image (the correspondent on the screen) tends to emphasize the weight and importance of the journalist-as-interviewee as the presenter needs to meet the gaze of the former by almost tilting back the head, looking upwards as if at an all-knowing superhuman. Furthermore, it signals to the viewer to pay the same kind of attention to the interviewee's words as the presenter does. I believe that turning your back to the viewer is a bold and powerful strategical move with ideological implications as it boosts the authority of the interviewee (and hence the news organization as such). This line of argument clashes with Ben-Porath's (2007) somewhat categorical claim that journalists who engage in interviews within their own professional group diminish their individual and collective authority and expertise.

#### *Live two-way on split screen*

The live two-way on split screen is similar to the live two-way via link but instead of visually underlining the spatial difference between being at the scene in contrast to being in the studio, the presenter is also visually pictured in a frame *as if* on link beside the journalist-as-interviewee.

#### *Extract 4*

- [presenter shown on full screen]
- 1 *Presenter:* Thirty-five thousand chickens have been slaughtered  
 2 at a farm in Norfolk
- [presenter and correspondent are both shown on a split screen]
- 3 Jonathan Swaine is close to the farm at Dereham.  
 4 Jonathan hh bird flu but not the deadly H5N1 strain.
- [correspondent is shown on full screen]
- 5 *Swaine:* That's right Penny yes bird flu is with us yet again in Britain  
 6 but before we all panic this isn't as you say  
 7 the deadly strain H5N1 that is so fierce  
 8 and killed up to a hundred people in Asia last year. [...]

This visual framing of a split screen seemingly shrinks the space between the presenter and correspondent during their exchange, making them appear as if speaking on equal terms. It is not a very prominently used technique but can, for example, be seen in the ITV morning shows. Normally, though, the alleged

'joint platform' from which they speak is broken as soon as the interviewee gets the turn and comes into full view as in Extract 4.

### *Sequential (multi-task) dialogue*

Sequential or multi-task dialogue refers to exchanges where the interviewee switches between the roles of interviewee, reporter/interviewer and back to interviewee as shown in Extract 5.

#### **Extract 5**

- 1 *Presenter*: Where are you and what colour are you Ben?  
 2 *Shephard*: hh I'm so slightly browning but a bit of grey around the gills as well  
 3 we're in Tokyo hh on the edge of Tokyo  
 4 there you can see it in the background in Japan  
 5 it's a fascinating country  
 6 and this is the Wood family who have lived out here for twelve years  
 7 this is mum Lucy mother-in-law Joan and the two girls Katie  
 and Lauren  
 8 Listen hh what brought you out here in the first place  
 9 *Lauren*: It's my husband's job  
 10 *Shephard*: OK and he works in ... [...]  
*[the interview continues with family and yet another interviewee]*  
 11 *Presenter*: Hey listen how are you doing surviving on airline food  
 12 'cause that's where you're eating most of your food really  
 13 *Shephard*: hh Yes I think we worked out that we've had  
 14 about seven or eight airline meals [...]

A presenter asks a question to a journalist (who is often but not always live via link) who then replies. Thereafter the interviewee switches to a more monological reporting or, as in this example, starts interviewing people who are live at the scene (and/or a recorded interview sequence or news report with voice-over is shown). The person then switches back to the role of interviewee, once again replying live to questions from the studio presenter. There is a fluid character to the correspondent's role who switches between tasks. This type of exchange is not uncommon in the morning shows where lightweight items are given more air-time than is the case during regular news programmes.

### *Live studio dialogue*

In this last sub-category, the presenter poses questions to a journalist who is present in the studio in a multi-question and answer exchange. Again, the most common participants are one interviewer and one interviewee (on occasion there may be two interviewers and one interviewee and more rarely two interviewers and two interviewees). This category features prominently in the news. The live

studio dialogue makes it possible to expand on a subject in the news using a dialogical mode of talking and interacting. I will analyse an extended example of a live interaction in the studio, partly in order to problematize the distinctions made between various broadcast interview genres presented earlier, but also to question the differentiation between news presentation and report on the one hand and live two-ways on the other made by Montgomery (2007: 125). This calls for a closer examination of the content than in previous examples, where the emphasis has been on format-related features.

The example is an exchange from a BBC news programme dealing with a current political ‘crisis’ for the government as several ministers have made the news for allegedly scandalous reasons. Political correspondent Reeta Chakrabarti is interviewed by presenter Dermot Murnaghan on the matter. The exchange is broken down into smaller units which are dealt with separately.

*Extract 6:1*

- (shot of interviewee)*
- 1 Murnaghan: [...] we were talking yesterday morning about last night’s meeting  
 2 of the Parliamentary Labour Party  
*(shot of both interviewer and interviewee)*  
 3 and how it might go for Mr Blair now you more or less told us that  
 4 it would go quite well and that’s what happened

As the exchange starts, the camera excludes the co-presenter sitting close-by and zooms in on the pair talking. References to yesterday’s discourse are made explicit as a background to the present conversation, serving as a platform or co-text along with the news report about the troubles for ministers which was presented prior to their talk.

In the frame caught in Figure 1, it appears that Chakrabarti positions herself as a humble and passive listener (head to the side, slightly bowed with her gaze on Murnaghan) while the male presenter is doing the talking. However, at the same time, the presenter initially acknowledges the correspondent’s expertise by saying she was right in her predictions from the day before, implicitly underscoring that previous speculations have now become facts in reality. A consensus-oriented approach is thus quickly established. Chakrabarti is brought into the live news context and her status is affirmed as someone whose authority ought not be questioned. The fact that she is in the studio during a live broadcast lends further weight to her and that which is said; she is not merely an eye-witness at the scene. The camera shots underline the two participants’ collegial linkage as they sit fairly closely together in the studio and their respective gazes are oriented towards each other during the entire exchange. There is no overt dominant or subordinate position apart from images of Chakrabarti’s quiet listening before being given her turn.

**FIGURE 1**  
**Reeta Chakrabarti in the news studio with presenter Dermot Murnaghan**



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**Extract 6:2**

- (shot of interviewee)
- 5 *Chakrabarti*: It is what tends to happen often the critics don't speak up at these  
 6 meetings they're packed with loyalists and that is what happened  
 7 last night.  
 8 It was absolutely packed out and intriguingly one or two of the  
 9 people who were rather disgruntled with Mr Blair couldn't get in  
 10 I'm sure it was just a coincidence  
 11 Eh I think the mood of the meeting was eh appeared to be that  
 12 on the whole people were more reassured than not  
 13 because they had got concessions from Tony Blair  
 14 during the day hadn't they

Chakrabarti starts off in a conversational and perhaps speculative mode that seemingly mixes 'facts' with 'personal thoughts'. According to Montgomery (2007), the talk displays what he calls 'push and pull', which is best illustrated with the phrase 'the meeting *was eh appeared to be*' (line 11). First, there is an assertiveness about what happened which is then promptly weakened. In this sequence, she seems to seek acknowledgement in her narrative from the presenter ('hadn't they'). The 'I'm sure it was just a coincidence' seems to be breaking the professional interviewee-mode of a BBC reporter in that it displays something of her personal sarcasm or irony. It is pronounced at a much quicker pace than the rest of her utterances so clearly she adopts another

**FIGURE 2**  
**Chakrabarti talking while keeping her gaze on Murnaghan**



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voice at this particular point in their talk. However, it is not as if the entire discourse is ‘non-institutional’ (see Montgomery, 2007: 125). In Dahlgren’s (1988: 57) words, Chakrabarti by and large adopts a reporter-voice:

The discourse has the appearance of being matter-of-fact and self-assured, with little or no sign of insecurities, emotionality or doubt with regards to what is being presented. It delivers seriousness and, when needed, concern and even a touch of irony.

Chakrabarti then continues her extended turn.

**Extract 6:3**

- 15 *Chakrabarti*: the fact that he wouldn’t go on right to the end of his turn  
 16 that he did back Gordon Brown as his successor  
 17 eh there were still questions of course  
 18 Like he said that he would leave ample time for his successor  
 19 what does ample time mean  
 20 well he wouldn’t say because  
 21 that’s pinning him down too much  
 22 *Murnaghan*: [mmm]

In this turn-sequence, Chakrabarti switches her perspective by first reporting statements by Tony Blair before going into watchdog mode. Her role as a critical investigator of those in power is made explicit while simultaneously reporting the inquiries of others (‘there were questions of course’) and perhaps herself (‘what does ample time mean’). At the same time she seemingly defends the Prime Minister’s actions by providing a personal explanation for his actions (‘because

that's pinning him down too much'). Murnaghan, in line with a more conversationalized discourse, acknowledges what she is saying by an 'mm'.

At this point in time, the pair in the studio are 'joined' by an image of Tony Blair hovering in the background (Figure 3) – although, as soon as the image has been projected, the presenter introduces a subtopic involving not Blair but the Deputy Prime Minister, and where 'facts' about his affair are taken from one of the papers.

**Extract 6:4**

- 23 *Chakrabarti*: I think that he has got through this particular crisis but of course  
24 everyone's saying  
*(shot of both interviewer and interviewee with Tony Blair showing  
on a large still-picture in the background)*
- 25 the issue hasn't gone away and it's it'll no doubt rear itself again  
26 the next time there is a government crisis
- 27 *Murnaghan*: mm a lot of interesting reading in the newspapers this morning a  
28 poll in *The Times* but we'll deal with that in a moment but first eh  
*(shot of interviewee)*
- 29 in the *Independent* newspaper we've we're reporting there  
*(shot of interviewer)*
- 30 he seems to be saying his role is to knock heads together and  
31 calm the situation  
*(shot of both interviewer and interviewee with Tony Blair on  
a still on the screen behind)*
- 32 if you can do two – both of those things at the same time  
*(shot of interviewee)*

**FIGURE 3**  
**Chakrabarti and Murnaghan joined by Tony Blair**



Chakrabarti has no problem following along the presenter's introduction of a new sub-topic but steals a glance at her notebook now and then to remind herself of what she has read in the paper so that she, in turn, can repeat the arguments (Figure 4).

In all, Chakrabarti looks down at her notebook ten times during the dialogue, proving that this is not a totally unscripted and spontaneous talk. Statements from a newspaper interview are brought into the broadcast dialogue and are transformed into facticities as the political correspondent reports on what John Prescott has revealed in the paper.

*Extract 6:5*

32 *Chakrabarti*: Absolutely that's right and he says that justifies his position  
 33 And this is a very interesting interview 'cause it's the first time  
 34 we've heard from John Prescott since the scandal broke of his  
 35 affair with Tracy Temple  
 36 he pulled out of an interview at the weekend  
 37 a broadcast interview  
 38 Eh he's making three points really he's he's saying he's  
 39 apologizing for his behaviour he says he recognizes he has  
 40 behaved stupidly and he needs to rebuild things with his wife  
 41 Pauline  
 42 Eh he defends the perks that he's got because eh of course  
 43 there was a big controversy an ongoing controversy over the fact  
 44 that he retains a salary eh and his two grace-and-favour  
 45 government buildings eh you know as Deputy Prime Minister

**FIGURE 4**  
**Reeta Chakrabarti looking down at her notes during the studio dialogue**



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Mainly, Chakrabarti reports what the politician has said, quoting him, using the paper's statements as 'truths'. Apart from the more personal comment 'a very interesting interview' she keeps to the telling of Prescott's defences. One 'you know' (line 45) is directed, possibly as an acknowledgement-seeker, to the presenter. And her turn goes on.

**Extract 6:6**

46 *Chakrabarti*: and he says look he works hard he's chairing numerous cabinet  
47 committees he's got this big brief to eh sort of negotiate  
48 between different government departments and get them to eh  
49 to come to an agreement  
50 and he accuses people of snobbery basically of saying you know  
51 implicitly that someone like him shouldn't really be having eh you  
52 know eh build – access to buildings like that.

Chakrabarti displays her role as BBC reporter as she shows she cannot quote Prescott directly and adopt his position and voice too uncritically, hence 'and he says look *he* works hard ...', keeping the third-person distance. The two 'you knows' might be signs of stalling as she has talked live for several extended turns, memorizing the words of others as they have been represented in other contexts. Now, the presenter takes the turn in order to round off this segment.

**Extract 6:7**

53 Murnaghan: Eh and we're out of time Reeta but just to reflect on that poll  
(*shot of both interviewer and interviewee with Tony Blair on  
background screen*)  
54 in *The Times* it says support for Labour at the lowest level since  
55 1992 Blair on 30 percent David Cameron on 38 per  
56 cent so some pretty tough reading there for the Prime Minister  
57 OK Reeta thank you very much.

Blair is yet again made the focal point visually although the interview started off by acknowledging that the Prime Minister had not received the criticism in Parliament that a lot of people had expected. The presenter displays his power of rounding off the item with his own framing without giving the floor back to the interviewee to respond and, of course, this is not challenged by the interviewee.

This example shows that the intraprofessional broadcast dialogue is not easy to pin down as something that is interpretative, personal, unscripted and informal. Both interviewer and interviewee move between personal comments and views about events, ('factual') reports of what has been said (or written), possible attempts at accountability, alleged defences of politicians' actions and so on. Notes are used to keep track of arguments and it seems pretty clear from the way that the interaction is structured that they are both well aware

of what the other one is going to say. In some sense then, these interactions are most surely pre-planned and not off the cuff. The studio interview demonstrates the correspondent's (and the presenter's) fluid roles. Chakrabarti moves between being an eye-witness, an expert, a reporter and personal opinion-holder. She switches between a more strict institutional voice to inserting utterances within a turn that expresses a more personal voice. Likewise, Murnaghan does not simply initiate areas to talk about but works at reinforcing her role as a reliable and truthful correspondent who tells it like it is, and he also offers interpretations of his own with the help of poll news from the papers. In sum, then, when intraprofessional dialogues other than the live two-way via link are examined, it becomes clear that the distinctions between the discourse of 'news report and presentation' on the one hand and 'affiliated talk' on the other are difficult to apply.

I will now turn to the question of whether intraprofessional dialogues in news broadcasts could, or should, be understood as interviews or not.

### **Intraprofessional dialogue or intraprofessional interview?**

In the introduction it was stated that intraprofessional broadcast talk on the news can be seen to constitute a communicative genre of its own, and I have attempted to identify the various interactional forms that are housed within this genre (although there are probably even more variants). I have persisted in speaking of intraprofessional dialogues that are enacted and used in various ways within the news and current affairs format rather than defining them as a sub-category of broadcast interviews. At the same time, they do raise questions about what a broadcast interview really is, or at least how it should be defined in scholarly work on news journalism.

According to the widely cited Clayman and Heritage (2002: 7): 'the prototypical news interview involves a distinctive constellation of participants, subject matter, and interactional form'. Moreover, the interviewer is a professional journalist and the interviewees have connections to recent events as primary agents or informed commentators. The discussion focuses on recent events, is highly formal in character and is managed through questions and answers (2002: 7). Although Clayman and Heritage have been criticized for adopting too narrow a definition (O'Connell and Kowal, 2006), as theirs is based on interviews with politicians in high-profile broadcast formats, their set of criteria for a broadcast interview is most probably recognized by many. If one sees the journalist-as-interviewee as the equivalent of an informed commentator, intraprofessional broadcast dialogues mostly seem to fit Clayman and Heritage's definition. However, the extracts in this article point to one important feature that seems to be missing in the intraprofessional dialogue, namely the question and answer management.

Taking the dialogue between Chakrabarti and Murnaghan as an example, it is clear that the latter in his role of presenter does not really pose any questions. Throughout the exchange, he makes three turn contributions, none of which is formulated as a question. One functions as an introduction, the second as a topic shifter as a sub-theme is introduced and, third, he closes the exchange by referring to a poll result before thanking Chakrabarti and moving on to the next news item. As one can see from Extract 7, the opening is not formulated as a question.

#### *Extract 7*

- 1 *Murnaghan*: [...] we were talking yesterday morning about last night's meeting
- 2 of the Parliamentary Labour Party
- 3 and how it might go for Mr Blair now you more or less told us that
- 4 it would go quite well and that's what happened

Similar non-question openings are to be found in other exchanges.

#### *Extract 8*

- 1 *Presenter*: Gloria de Piero is outside Number 10
- 2 and Tony Blair has got a lot on his plate this morning Gloria
- 3 *de Piero*: Hasn't he just Penny

In comparison to other kinds of broadcast interviews, intraprofessional broadcast dialogues seem to favour statements or statement-like openings by the presenter followed by an acknowledgement and expansion on the topic from the interviewee.

The reason for this structural deviation is of course that in contrast to accountability interviews, intraprofessional dialogues are all about collaborating towards the same communicative goal.<sup>3</sup> In these interactions, the participants speak from the same platform and they basically subscribe to the same professional values and ideals. They are well aware and accept the norms that rule their practice and their task within it. Thus there is a large degree of cooperation, coordination and an absence of competing goals (at least that are visible frontstage).

The presenter and interviewee have complementary roles within the exchange which they both accept and strengthen by acknowledging each others' contributions throughout the talk. The asymmetry that may stem from different backgrounds and different access to knowledge about the topic is minimal in comparison to other communicative projects where the competing roles and goals might be more prominent (as in other types of broadcast interviews). Again, in contrast to Ben-Porath's (2007) argument of the diminishing authority of journalists, the intraprofessional dialogue most probably empowers journalism because it enables journalists to frame the presentation

and report interactionally, among themselves, without having it challenged by another interview participant with a different agenda.

At the same time, the live studio dialogue is set up to look like any other interview with regards to physical setting, placing of participants and the dialogical character of the talk. Journalists continually work at signalling to the audience that these interactional events should not be regarded as any less authoritative with regards to content, legitimacy and professionalism than any other type of broadcast interview.

Ultimately, I do not believe it is of fundamental importance to decide whether these interactions should be conceptualized as dialogues or interviews. More importantly, we need to recognize them as crucial institutional components in the construction of news. The prominence of the intraprofessional news dialogue has the potential of having ideological and democratic implications far beyond 'doing being interesting'. What happens to political accountability when politics in the news is primarily discussed between journalists themselves? Is the critical interrogative interviewing of politicians soon to become a thing of the past only to be replaced by projected portraits on a screen while journalists define the problem with politics? To me, these are relevant questions to probe in future studies of the intraprofessional broadcast news dialogue.

## Notes

1. This study is a spin-off from a project mapping the extent of the interview in news and current affairs coverage carried out at Örebro University, led by Professor Mats Ekström. I am indebted to my colleague and co-author Göran Eriksson for providing me with the tables included in this article.

2. The 150 hours measured equal the programmes' 'interviewable time', which refers to such time where interviews would be possible/expected, i.e. excluding jingles, weather reports, commercials and other similar occurrences.

3. Jucker (1986) argues along the same lines when he, based on quantitative findings on favourable or disfavoured interviews, concludes that, in contrast to politicians, correspondents are not presented with any face-threatening questions because they are not seen as having any responsibility for the event under discussion.

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