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Abstract

Through an analysis of news journalism in Sweden, the development of a more adversarial, critical or interpretive news journalism is discussed in this article. A frequent form of politicians' appearances in the news is in short-form interviews in news stories. Such interviews are often reduced to single turns or answers. The aim of this study is to identify the more communicative techniques used, when politicians' answers are cut and incorporated into news stories, and how these techniques are related to the roles set up for politicians and reporters. What potential relationships are set up between politicians, reporters and the viewers? Swedish television data from 1978, 1993 and 2003 have been analysed. The analysis shows that in the early period, news journalism appears as a *mediator* or *interrogator*. In the latter periods, news journalism appears in an adversarial role. It becomes more of an *interpreter* or a *critical interrogator* of politician's actions.

Keywords

adversarialness, interpersonal functions, news journalism, short-form interviews, television, theories on interaction, visual methodology

Introduction

When politicians appear on television news, it is primarily in conjunction with their participation in interviews. The interview is, as McNair (2000: 84) describes it, 'the adversarial moment in the public sphere', and as such it 'is a key moment in the political news cycle, and the main context in which the journalistic tasks associated with critical publicity and representation of the public can be directly applied to politicians in the media'.

This key moment has been analysed in a detailed and thorough manner by researchers working in the tradition of Conversation Analysis (henceforth CA) (e.g. Clayman, 1988, 2002; Clayman and Heritage, 2002a; Greatbatch, 1988; Heritage, 1985). Among other

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things, analyses have focused on the adversarial role played by news journalism through the practice of asking questions. One crucial conclusion from this research is that 'the journalistic initiative has expanded considerably over the last forty years' and this is linked to a growth in adversarialness (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a: 236). This is confirmed by Clayman et al. (2006; see also Clayman et al., 2007), who show in studies of presidential news conferences that journalists are becoming more adversarial in their treatment of presidents (see also Clayman and Heritage, 2002b). Furthermore, these findings are in line with different analyses of news content. Researchers within various traditions have shown that, over the years, news journalism has generally become more interpretive and critical in relation to politicians (e.g. Entman, 2004; Patterson, 1993; Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2001; Robinson, 1976; Schudson, 1982).²

CA research on interviews has mainly dealt with more extensive interviews or news conferences and has overlooked the visual dimensions, but one frequent form of politicians' appearances in the news is that of short-form interviews in news stories (McNair 2000). In news stories, interviews with politicians are often heavily edited (Ekström, 2001; Hallin, 1992). The original interviews are cut and answers are mixed with other voices such as a reporter's, expert's or layperson's. Moreover, visual clips from interviews are combined with other images and integrated into the stories. These short-form interviews and how they are incorporated into news stories are an essential aspect of the adversarial role of news journalism.

The aim of this article is to discuss the development over time of a more adversarial, critical or interpretive news journalism, using an analysis of news journalism in Sweden. The study focuses on edited news stories and identifies the more specific methods used, or what I prefer to term communicative techniques, when politicians' answers are cut and incorporated into news stories. The analysis is restricted to focusing on the communicative techniques and how the interpersonal functions of the news story are established (see Fairclough, 1992, 1995): What roles are set up for politicians and reporters? What potential relationships are set up between politicians and viewers as well as between reporters and viewers?

The approach is influenced by the extensive research on broadcast interviews within the CA tradition (Clayman and Heritage, 2002a; Hutchby, 2006) or inspired by CA (Ekström et al., 2006; Scannell, 1991; Tolson, 2006). The visual methodology influenced by film studies (see Bordwell and Thompson, 1993; Monaco, 2000) described by Rose (2001) is another important starting point. These theories, and connecting methods, enable a more micro-oriented kind of analysis that allows for a more elaborated understanding of the practice of editing news stories.

Swedish television data from 1978, 1993 and 2003 have been analysed (summary in Table 1). According to historical research on Swedish broadcast journalism (Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2001), the period studied coincides with a phase when Swedish journalism (in general) developed what is often described as a more professional attitude. Among other things, this means that journalists are expected to be more active and to focus on revealing abuses of power and on putting things right in society.

The data are presented briefly in the following section. Then, the methodology and the empirical questions are further elaborated. The results of the study are introduced thematically. The article ends with a summary of the most crucial findings.

Table 1. Summary of data from Swedish television

Program	Date	No. of programs	No. of stories analysed
Period 1: 1978			
<i>Aktuellt</i>	6–19 November	14	9
<i>Rapport</i>	6–19 November	14	12
Period 2: 1993			
<i>Aktuellt</i>	1–14 November	14	6
<i>Rapport</i>	1–14 November	14	8
<i>Nyheterna</i>	1–14 November	13*	6
Period 3: 2003			
<i>Aktuellt</i>	3–16 November	14	6
<i>Rapport</i>	3–16 November	14	17
<i>Nyheterna</i>	3–16 November	14	10
Total no of programs/stories		111	74

*One of the programs was not available

Data

The data consist of news stories from Swedish television from 1978, 1993 and 2003, and are summarized in Table 1.³ The news programs included in the 1978 data are *Aktuellt* (SVT 1 at 9:00 pm) and *Rapport* (SVT 2 at 7:30 pm). The years 1993 and 2003 also include the news program *Nyheterna* (TV4 at 7:00 pm), which started airing in 1991. SVT is the public service television company in Sweden and TV4 is privately owned and commercially financed.

The selection of data is partly due to practical circumstances. News programs dated before 1978 are not available. What is available from the earlier periods (1965–1977) is the edited news story, but without introductory texts or commentaries. If it had been possible, a time period from the 1960s would have been chosen. A principle guiding the sample selection was to avoid election periods so that the data would consist of the more routine ‘everyday’ reporting. I also chose to avoid programs aired in the summer, when activity in the political institutions (such as Parliament) is low.

The data comprise a total of 111 news programs, and from these programs a further selection was made. Only the edited news stories involving interviews with politicians in more leading positions (that is, leading members of a political party or members of Parliament or government) have been analysed; in total 74 items.

Methodology

For news journalists, there are conventional ways to produce news stories (Johnson-Cartee, 2005: 159). News journalism is a routinized practice and the process of production could be characterized as a more or less rule-governed activity (e.g. Golding and Elliot, 1979; Tuchman, 1978). In the approach developed in this study, the process of editing is analysed as a set of communicative techniques (Eriksson, 2002: ch. 3). Here,

techniques refer to relatively regular procedures in the process of production. As part of the journalists' repertoire, they represent more routinized ways of producing news stories. This does not mean that the techniques are static or in any way 'forced' upon journalists; rules can be broken and a change can result from such actions.

In the analysis, three different dimensions or techniques are distinguished: narrative structure, framing discourse techniques and visual techniques. Next, I elaborate on these aspects of the editing process and the empirical questions connected to each of them.

Narrative structure

Within media and communication studies, the news story as narrative has been discussed in different ways and with diverse analytical purposes (e.g. Bird and Dardenne, 1988; Fiske, 1987: ch. 12; Grunwald, 2005; Hartley, 1982: ch. 7; Lewis, 1994). In this study, narrative structure refers to how different sequences or elements of talk are organized in news stories.

A news story consists of different voices that are mixed together in a specific structure. The basic principle is that it starts with a presentation from the announcer, and then journalistic commentaries (often presented by a reporter in a voice-over) are combined with cut answers from interviews with politicians, experts, etc. in different combinations. Hallin (1992: 9) asserts that the structure of the news story is changing and that the news 'is much more mediated' than it used to be. One important question here, then, is to reveal how the sequences of talk are organized and how this is changing over time.

In the analysis, four categories of talk are distinguished: Reporter's voice, Interview with politician, Interview with other actor, and Political speech. Reporter's voice includes the announcer's presentation and subsequent talk, and the talk presented by a reporter in a voice-over. The 'Interview with politician' and 'Interview with other actor' categories may consist of a single answer, or could be a longer sequence containing questions and answers. 'Other actors' are all people who are not presented as representatives of a political party, Parliament or the government. They are often people who participate in the news as experts or spokespersons for organizations or authorities.

The analysis of narrative structure includes a measurement (in seconds) of the different categories of talk. A preliminary hypothesis for this analysis was that news stories are becoming increasingly dominated by the reporter's voice. This hypothesis is based on results from analyses of Hallin's (1992) study of American election campaigns, which shows that the number of sound-bites is increasing, but that their total time is decreasing. He claims that news stories are becoming much more journalist-centred over time. Instead of being dominated by candidates and other officials, they are now dominated by the words of journalism.

Framing discourse techniques

In news stories, the reporter's original question is often removed and replaced with a journalistic commentary presented by the announcer's or reporter's voice.⁴ The reporter's voice frames the answer and it becomes what Tannen (1989: ch. 4) describes as 'an element

of the reporting context'.⁵ The answer is recontextualized, and the new context affects the meaning of the answer. The reporter's voice gives viewers 'background information' for the answer, explaining what is going on when the politician is answering. In news journalism, the framing voice is a way to transform an (often small) part of an interview into a coherent news story.

This kind of framing is done with established and recurring discourse techniques. Ekström (2001) has identified two main discourse techniques:

- (a) *The reporter's voice reformulates the question that elicited the answer.* This refers to when the reporter's voice seems to replace a question. An example of this is when the politician's answer starts with 'Well yes' or 'Yes'. The answer could then seem to be a response to the reporter's narrative. The answers also appear to be more spontaneous comments, sometimes as though they were made at the initiative of the politician.
- (b) *The reporter's voice describes what the politician is feeling/thinking/doing while giving the answer.* This is a method by which the reporter integrates answers into a coherent news story: 'It is often a way of transforming the answer into a specific action that fits into the narrative' (Ekström, 2001: 574).

So, the analysis focuses on the voice-overs that precede politicians' answers with the aim of revealing the discourse techniques news journalism uses in this practice. How are the answers framed and incorporated into the news story? A specific part of the analysis focuses on the texts presented by the announcer. These introductions are elements that briefly summarize what the story is about, and can also describe what politicians are saying. The question in this part of the analysis is how politicians' answers are described and fitted into the story. Often, introductions are characterized by generalizations and simplifications that can sometimes be misleading (Ekström, 2001).

Visual techniques

Visual techniques refer to how the camera operates and how the stories, especially the answers, are visually cut. With the point of departure in the visual methodology described by Rose (2001), three aspects of visual techniques are dealt with primarily. This concerns three diverse but linked choices made in the process of production: *choice of shot distance*, which refers to how much of a particular figure (a politician) is shown (medium, head and shoulders or close-up shot); *choice of angle* (high-angle, eye-level or low-angle) and *focus* (deep or shallow), which refers to how the camera is positioned in relation to the object; and *choice of cut*, which concerns the relationship between talk (what the interviewee says) and what is visualized. These choices involve reporter, cameraman and picture editor, and form a part of the daily routine in the process of production.

The visual techniques of news journalism have developed over time in relationship to photo journalism, film (both documentary and fiction) and other television genres, and function as norms that viewers are familiar with and take for granted. For example, politicians' answers are almost exclusively visualized with head and shoulders shown or in close-up shots, and their eyes never look straight into the camera.

Table 2. Elements of talk in news stories (%)

	Reporter's voice	Interview with politician	Political speech	Interview with other actor	Sum %	Total time (seconds)
1978	48	38	4	10	100	6122
1993	59	29	0	12	100	3722
2003	51	33	1	16	100	5217

News journalism and the edited news story

The analyses have identified how the communicative techniques of news journalism have changed over time. Focusing on tendencies of change, they are presented thematically through brief examples. As a consequence, details and nuances will sometimes be mistreated. The analyses concentrate on the link between the changing communicative techniques and the changing relationship between politicians and journalists in the news story.

Journalistic texts and politicians' answers intertwine

The narrative structure of news stories becomes more complex over time. The change could be described as a splintering of the sequences of talk. This also implies that the voice-overs and interviews with politicians are intertwined and, in a sense, cooperate to form a meaningful story.

The preliminary hypothesis that the reporter's voice category is expanding in the news story is not confirmed in this study. Since the data are limited (extreme cases could have affected the results), it is reasonable to be careful with far-reaching conclusions. Table 2 shows that news stories are dominated by journalistic talk, but there is no significant difference between 1978 and 2003 (3%).

However, how time is distributed between these categories gives a rather narrow picture of the development. The splintering means that more and shorter sequences of talk occur in the stories. This tendency is illustrated in Examples 1 and 2 in Figure 1.

In Example 1, the news story consists of four sequences of talk for a period of 2 minutes and 45 seconds. It begins with an introduction by the Announcer (AV). This is followed by a Reporter's Voice (RV). Together, these elements last 60 seconds. They are

Example 1:	A – RV – <u>AP</u> – <u>QR</u> – <u>AP</u> – <u>QR</u> – <u>AP</u> – A (<i>Aktuellt</i> , 16 November 1978. Time: 2 min. 45 sec.)
Example 2:	A – RV – AP – RV – AP – RV – AP (<i>Rapport</i> , 4 March 2003. Time: 2.0 min.)

Figure 1. Narrative structure of news stories

Note: A = Announcer, RV = Reporter's Voice, AP = Answer from Politician, QR = Question from Reporter, AO = Answer from Other Actor. Underlining marks that this is a sequence which is not cut.

<p>Example 3: A – RV – <u>AP – QR – AP – QR – AP – QR – AO – QR – AO – QR – AO</u> – A (<i>Aktuellt</i>, 7 November 1978. Time: 3 min. 25 sec.)</p> <p>Example 4: A – AP1 – AP2 – RV – AP2 – RV – <u>AP1 – QR – AP1</u> – AP2 – AP1 (<i>Rapport</i>, 3 March 2003. Time: 2 min. 17 sec.)</p>
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Figure 2. Narrative structure of news stories

Note: A = Announcer, RV = Reporter's Voice, AP = Answer from Politician, QR = Question from Reporter, AO = Answer from Other Actor. Underlining denotes that this is a sequence that has not been cut.

followed by a 90-second sequence from an interview with a politician. The story ends with a short (15 seconds) comment from the announcer. In Example 2, the news story contains seven sequences of talk for a period of 2 minutes. Here, the answers from the politician are interspersed with the reporter's voice.

The narrative structures in the examples above (involving only one interviewee) are rather uncomplicated. The change towards more complex structures implies that answers from different interviewees appear in more complex patterns and are to a greater extent intertwined with each other and with journalistic texts. This change is demonstrated in Examples 3 and 4 in Figure 2.

The structure in Example 3 is straightforward and follows the 'one activity at a time' principle. The story starts with the announcer's presentation and continues with the reporter's voice, then follows a sequence from the interview starting with an answer from a politician. This is in turn followed by another interview sequence (with another actor), and the announcer ends the story. In Example 4, answers from two politicians are combined to form a 'pseudo-dialogue' (see Ekström, 2001: 570). Fragments from the original interviews (three from each interview) are interspersed with the reporter's voice. The 'one activity at a time' principle is abandoned, and as a consequence the news story tends to be more dialogic, something that also implies other possibilities for news journalism to frame politicians' answers.

From setting the scene to interpreting ongoing political processes

In the earlier period (1978), the discourse techniques framing politicians' answers are characterized by openness and a tendency to set the scene for the politicians. The frames used could be described as deferential, and often set up a politician in a position from which he or she can describe or explain political ideas, proposals and decisions.

When the reporter's voice frames an answer from a politician, it says something about the action the politician is involved in when he or she is talking. A discourse technique that only occurs in the early period is the reporter's voice framing the answer as if the politician is explaining, motivating or describing political proposals, decisions or ideas. Example 5 is a clear-cut example of this technique, with the reporter's voice ending with an 'invitation' or 'encouragement' to the minister to justify a governmental proposal.

Example 5: Rapport, 8 November 1978

IE (interviewee): Ingemar Mundebo, Minister of Budget and Economic Affairs (Liberal Party).

- 1 RV /.../ The government also wants to give extra money to employment training:
 2 courses, one billion, and to measures for generating employment, two billion.
 3 Industry investments will be encouraged by prolonging the release of
 4 investment funds, plus investment deductions and subsidies. A new investment
 5 deduction for buildings will be introduced, and the government motivates its
 6 standpoint as follows.
 7 IE Yes we think these contributions will further improve the prospects of a
 8 favourable developments in 1979 /.../

The reporter's voice ends in a summary of the different proposals involved in a governmental package (lines 1–5), and this summary is completed with a description of what the politician will do when he is given the floor. It is said that the government, here represented by Minister of Budget and Economic Affairs Ingemar Mundebo, will 'motivate(s) its standpoint' in the ensuing answer (lines 5–6). What follows is a rather short explanation of what the government believes will be the consequences of its proposals. However, it is important to note here that it is the politician who is describing the consequences.

A common technique is for the politician's answer to be preceded by a direct or indirect question. For instance, the question can be phrased as a yes/no question. Such questions are often indirect and constructed around the conjunction *if*. In a sense, such questions call for clear information from the politician, who is set up to answer. If the politician does not deliver the requested information it can easily seem like he or she is avoiding answering the question. This technique is used most frequently in 1978. What is interesting about its use in 1978 is that it was done to set up answers that explain or describe ongoing political processes.

Example 6: Rapport, 9 November 1978

IE: Ola Ullsten, Prime Minister (Liberal Party)

- 1 RV At a press conference today, Prime Minister Ullsten was asked if the
 2 government is now prepared to give the green light to an eleventh nuclear
 3 reactor, that is, Forsmark 3.
 4 IE This is an issue we're working on. It calls for negotiations with both the
 5 Forsmark company and the Oskarshamn group. For there is also a twelfth unit
 6 to be considered, which has been granted a concession, but it's a private
 7 company that is in charge.

Example 6 is from a report from the Liberal Party Congress, and the original interview was conducted during a press conference. In reporting what was said at the press conference, the reporter's voice formulates an indirect yes/no question (lines 1–3). Since the answer that is set up does not involve a yes or a no it could easily appear as evasive, but this voice-over is used to frame an answer that comprises an explanation

of how the government is working with the issue. Another interesting aspect of these frames is that the reporter distances himself from the questions by attributing them to a third, unidentified party, making it seem as though it was not he who produced the story by asking the questions. The reporter's voice is simply 'animating' (or mediating) what was said at the press conference. At the same time, mentioning the press conference makes it obvious that these questions were asked by journalists. This reference also creates a transparency around these questions. It is possible for viewers to understand what the answers are responses to.

A more narrow discursive technique is when the frame includes a *wh-question*. A *wh-question* is an interrogatively formed question that includes *what*, *why* or *who*. In an analysis of news interviews, Clayman and Heritage (2002a) note that such questions are – not surprisingly – a frequent technique. *Wh-questions* also occur in voice-overs that precede politicians' answers in edited news stories, but this only occurs in the data from 1978 (with one exception). What characterizes this technique is that the question seems to be open ended and that the answer that follows is an explanation of ideas behind political decisions or proposals or of the difference between political ideas, or points out important political questions in the future. The questions asked in these frames are not attributed to a third party. Instead, the journalist operates as an *interrogator* who asks open-ended questions. The use of *wh-questions* is a way for news journalism to bring political arguments out in public; it is a way to search for reasons behind political proposals or decisions; it is a means to perform what is often seen as a core democratic function.

During the time period being analysed, the framing discourse techniques change radically. In the latter periods, news journalism no longer sets the scene for the politicians. During the 1990s and 2000s, news journalism appears in a more autonomous and adversarial role, having become increasingly more of an *interpreter* of political processes. Instead of setting up the politician to explain or motivate his/her policies, decisions or proposals, the reporter's voice tends to explain or describe the ongoing processes, and how the actions carried out by the politician should be understood. It is more or less a rule that it is the journalistic text that describes the consequences political actions will have. Often, the answer used in the story functions as a confirmation of what the reporter's voice is claiming.

Example 7 is from a news story on the Conservative Party (Sw. *Moderaterna*) and their leader Bo Lundgren. The answer is framed by a voice-over that announces what the politicians think about a particular matter. This frame also reflects the way news journalism has become more autonomous in relation to politicians and their answers. News journalism takes the initiative to conduct investigations, and uses politicians' answers to present and dramatize these investigations.

Example 7: *Aktuellt*, 6 March 2003

IE: Katarina Brännström, Kronoberg County (*Moderaterna*)

- 1 RV /.../ *Aktuellt* has interviewed all twenty-seven chairpersons of the
- 2 Conservative Party's county assemblies. A clear majority is of the opinion that
- 3 Bo Lundgren cannot remain Party Leader if he isn't able to turn public
- 4 opinion around before the party convention in October. And only a clear

- 5 minority believes he will succeed in doing so.
 6 IE think it's a hopeless task right now. It – they have in some way I think in –
 7 other people in some way decided it isn't going to happen, and then it's
 8 difficult to make it succeed.

The news program's own journalists have interviewed 27 chairpersons of the party's county assemblies, and the result of this investigation is presented in a voice-over (lines 1–5). According to this investigation, 'a clear majority' says that Bo Lundgren cannot keep his post if 'he isn't able to turn public opinion around'. The person set up to answer is one of the chairpersons. Her answer is used in a way that makes it seem to express the majority's opinion. Also, by attributing the statements about Bo Lundgren to the 'majority' and 'minority' of the chairpersons and by setting up an example of what the majority believes, the reporter is able to distance himself from the rather controversial statement that Bo Lundgren 'cannot remain Party Leader'.

Example 8, from a news story on a governmental decision to order two Iraqi diplomats to leave Sweden, is also an example of news journalism's more autonomous attitude toward the answers politicians deliver.

Example 8: *Aktuellt*, 13 March 2003

IE: Göran Persson, Prime Minister (Social Democratic Party)

- 1 AV Yes two Iraqi diplomats have been ordered to leave the country. This
 2 information was provided by the government today, but this is not a response
 3 to demands from the US a week ago, the Prime Minister says.
 4 RV Two Iraqi diplomats employed here at the Iraqi Embassy in Stockholm have
 5 been ordered to leave the country immediately. The decision was made by
 6 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the reason is said to be refugee espionage.
 7 IE You see, there is espionage on Iraqis who are staying in Sweden and who are
 8 critical of the Iraqi regime, and there are quite a few of them. Sweden is a
 9 country with one of the largest numbers of Iraqi refugees in relation to our
 10 population. There are seventy thousand people in Sweden with this
 11 background, and they have the right to live in security without having to be
 12 exposed to the kind of investigation that refugee espionage implies.
 13 RV Does it have anything to do with the current Iraqi conflict?
 14 IE No it doesn't, for this is an investigation that has been going on for quite a
 15 long time.

The story focuses on the reasons for the Prime Minister's denial (probably in response to a reporter's question) and not on the reasons which he is giving in the answers. In spite of what he says in the answers, this storyline is fulfilled. The answer from the Prime Minister (starting on line 7) is framed by both the announcer's voice (AV) and the reporter's voice (RV). The introduction ends with an indirect quote from the Prime Minister (lines 2–3): '.../this is not a response to demands from the US a week ago, the Prime

Minister says'. The reporter ends the voice-over by saying that 'the reason is said to be refugee espionage', emphasizing the phrase 'is said to be' (line 6). In the answer that is set up, the Prime Minister explains the reason for the order. The reporter (in the original context) then asks, 'Does it have anything to do with the current Iraqi conflict?', but this is denied. According to the Prime Minister, the order is the result of an investigation that has been underway 'for quite a long time'.

In Example 8, news journalism appears in an adversary role. By involving the 'demands from the US' and questioning the reason for the order to the Iraqi diplomats, news journalism appears to be an actor seeking a hidden agenda. News journalism operates as a critical interrogator seeking the real reason (the truth) behind the order. But, there is no other information in the story that indicates a hidden agenda. In fact, the government's decision is supported by three leaders of opposing parties. Furthermore, by framing the Prime Minister's answer with 'the reason is said to be refugee espionage' (with emphasis on 'said'), the reporter's voice creates suspicions about the true motive for the government's action. From the viewers' point of view, it is easy to doubt what the Prime Minister is saying. He could easily be understood as hiding the real reasons for the order.

From transparency to decontextualizations

The discourse techniques used in the introductions by the announcer also change over time. In the early period, these texts are characterized by a transparent relationship with the original context of the politicians' utterances. In the latter period, the answers are decontextualized and are often interpreted and described by the Announcer as part of a spectacular story.

The introductions in 1978 are actually trying to give an account of the situation in which the politician said what he or she said.

Example 9: Rapport, 14 November 1978

- 1 AV Leader of the Centre Party Torbjörn Fälldin has warned the new government
- 2 to table the proposal to separate the established church from the state. This
- 3 proposal was presented by the Minister of Religious Affairs at the Liberal
- 4 Party Congress last Sunday. The parishioners are against such a divorce,
- 5 Fälldin claims, and says that now it is up to the government whether the
- 6 Centre Party will have to take up the gauntlet. Fälldin said this in an interview
- 7 with Rapport when he met members of the Centre Party in Sävsjö in Småland.
- 8 Besides, this was the first time since the government crisis that he met with his
- 9 supporters.

Example 9 is from a story about Torbjörn Fälldin, leader of the Centre Party, who has made a statement regarding a recent proposal by the Minister of Religious Affairs (lines 2–6). This statement is portrayed by the announcer, who also gives detailed information about the original context of this statement (lines 6–7).

These rather transparent contextualizations of politicians' answers or statements disappear in the latter period. In example 10, there is no reference to the context of the politician's statement.

Example 10: Rapport, 3 March 2003

- 1 AV Now the Christian Democrats are mobilizing to attract new voters and
- 2 together with the other non-socialist parties win governmental power 2006.
- 3 Alf Svensson is dissatisfied with the passivity of the non-socialists and now
- 4 wants to take over the leadership

The announcer asserts that the Christian Democrats 'are mobilizing to attract new voters'. This introduction construes what Party Leader Alf Svensson thinks of the political situation in Sweden ('Alf Svensson is dissatisfied with the passivity of the non-socialists') and describes what he wants to do about it ('wants to take over the leadership'). Nothing is said about the situation in which Svensson made this statement; whether he said this in an interview, at a press conference or in a speech is not presented to the viewer. There is no clear distinction between what he actually says and the journalistic interpretation of what he says. In a sense, the political event and the news story (as a communicative event) become intertwined. Political events and utterances that occur in such contexts become more or less a natural part of news stories. The journalistic interpretations of answers turn out to be a normalized practice during the investigated period.

This also means that the importance of the original context is reduced and the journalistic interpretation of politicians' answers becomes more independent of this context. In the later periods (especially 2003), the journalistic text interprets answers within a frame that is not explicitly given by the specific event or motivated by the answer incorporated into the story. This is illustrated in Example 11.

Example 11: Aktuellt, 5 March 2003

- 1 AV Do you remember how they talked before the general election last autumn?
- 2 Many of the country's leading economists warned about hard times coming,
- 3 but the government stuck to its much brighter view of the future and made
- 4 generous election promises. Today, Minister of Finance Bosse Ringholm
- 5 admits that he was wrong.

The angle of this news story is that the new economic forecast affects the possibilities for the government to fulfil an election promise – to raise compensation caps in the health and parental insurances. The optimism of the government, which resulted in 'generous election promises', is contrasted with the view of 'the country's leading economists' and a claim that the Minister of Finance 'admits that he was wrong'. In the ensuing story, there is no answer from Ringholm in which he declares that the government has been too optimistic in their prognosis. Instead, he describes what the government believes is a plausible development, and what differs in the new forecast from the one it presented during the

election campaign. The election promises are not brought up at all in the interview sequences, but at the end of the introductory text the Announcer describes the Minister's actions as if he has acknowledged that the election promises were too optimistic (lines 4–5), which could easily be interpreted as the politicians not fulfilling their promises. The introductory text recontextualizes the politician's answers, 'moving' them from a context of a new economic forecast to one of broken election promises. This context is not motivated by anything else than what is claimed by the announcer. Through this procedure, news journalism appears as an *ombudsman* for viewers (see also Djerf-Pierre and Weibull, 2001: 352–3; Hjarvard, 1999), working on behalf of them, revealing what could be an uncomfortable truth for the government (failing to fulfil an election promise).

From synchronicity to visual overlaps

The visual techniques gradually change over time. In the latter period, news journalism works more actively with the visualizations of the stories, which is naturally due to an extent to technological development. In brief, and in general, this means that the time between the clips decreases and the camerawork is more active (with, for example, zooms and pans). The shot distance in the interviews is also altered over time. In 1978, the politicians' answers are almost exclusively visualized with head-and-shoulder shots. In the latter period, especially 2003, answers are more often visualized with close-up shots showing almost only the face of the interviewee. This closeness establishes a more personal relationship between the politician and the viewer, and for the viewer it is possible to take a close, and inquiring, look at the politician's facial expressions (Ekström, 2006). Viewers are in a position from which it is possible to read every little expression on interviewees' faces and judge the authenticity of the answer. It is a position from which it is easy to critically judge what is being said. This is based on an implicit premise that there is good reason to carefully observe a person's facial expressions.

The change towards a more autonomous news journalism means that its allegiance to politicians' answers declines. This change is also manifested in the altering visualizing techniques and concerns the relationship between the audio (what the politician says) and the visual (what the viewer can see of the politician when he or she is giving the answer). In 1978 it is a rule that the answer is synchronized with pictures of the interviewee, which means that the viewers can see the answer from start to finish (or a continuous part of an answer). This changes radically during the investigated time period. Today, a common visual technique is to cover clips in interview answers with pictures. The change could also be understood as part of a change towards a growing disloyalty from news journalism regarding politicians' answers.

A visual technique in use today is what could be conceptualized as *visual overlaps of answers*, i.e. a shift from, for example, a voice-over to an answer that is not synchronized with the pictures of the interviewee, as was done in 1978. In turn, this means that viewers can hear the interviewee talking immediately before they see their image on the screen, or that the pictures of the interviewee shift to something else before he or she has stopped talking. Visual overlaps of answers of this kind occur in every news story in the latter data. As a consequence, when answers from politicians are not visually indicated they are integrated into an audiovisual narrative. Pictures from the interview melt together with other pictures, and the shift from one sequence of talk to another is less obvious to the viewer.



IE: Well, they will investigate how the life insurance companies have behaved, to what extent they've handled the important task to deliver comprehensible information



// eh to the insurance holders.



// So there are several aspects



// And I think that they should investigate this more thoroughly and systematically and reach an evaluation of this so that it can come to an end. And we can go on with restored confidence

// in this important line of business

Figure 3. Example 12: Visual overlaps of clips in answers (Rapport, 12 March 2003)

Visual overlaps of answers are preconditions for another technique, here conceptualized as *visual overlaps of clips in answers*. This technique is used when two originally separate parts of one answer (or sometimes two different answers) are combined to form what seems to be a continuous answer, without showing this to the viewers. Example 12 in Figure 3 is a typical example of this technique.



Figure 4. Example 13: Visual overlaps of clips in answers (*Aktuellt*, 13 March 2003)

In this story, which deals with an upcoming interrogation regarding the internal affairs of insurance companies, answers from Deputy Minister of Finance Gunnar Lund are shown. The answer in the example ends the story. When the answer begins, the politician is visible to viewers, but after the words ‘comprehensible information’ the pictures from the interview are replaced with pictures of an advertising poster for an insurance company. From the words ‘And I think that they should investigate this /.../’ the interviewee is visible again. The camera is a bit closer now, and it is also possible to hear in the Minister’s breathing that two different parts of the interview have been spliced together. The pictures of the advertising poster cover the splice.

Visual overlaps of clips in answers can also be accomplished in other ways. An example of this can be seen in an interview with Prime Minister Göran Persson (Example 13). In this sequence (Figure 4), a series of white pictures are integrated into the answer along with the clicking sound of a camera. It is impossible to judge whether or not the clicking sound is authentic, but the white light is not only that of a flash (though part of it could be). Taken together, this creates the illusion of a photographer taking photos of the Prime Minister, which hides the fact that a splice has been performed in this answer.

Today’s technology allows news journalists to make very precise cuts in an answer and choose which part to reproduce. The technique of using visual overlaps of clips in answers makes it possible for news journalists to act in an autonomous manner in relationship to politicians’ answers. These clips are almost impossible for viewers to detect, which means that the fact that the answer is not authentic is concealed from them. This also means that the power news journalism has over answers, and the possibility to make exact cuts in them, is hidden.

Summary

The main conclusion from this study is that the ‘journalistic initiative’ has expanded in Sweden during recent decades. It is obvious that in news stories, news journalism has developed a more autonomous attitude towards politicians’ answers during recent decades – their allegiance to these answers has declined – and news journalism appears in an adversarial role to a greater extent today than it did in the 1970s. These findings correspond with research on news journalism from various traditions. The aim of this particular study is to identify the specific communicative techniques used when politicians’ answers are cut and incorporated into news stories. The changes of these techniques can be summarized in four linked themes:

- 1 *The narrative structure* of news stories becomes more complex, which means that the sequences of talk are splintered. Journalistic texts and politicians' answers intertwine and the stories are realized in a more dialogic mode. This also means that news stories consist of more and shorter sequences of talk, which creates other opportunities for news journalism to frame politicians' answers.
- 2 *The framing discourse techniques* change from being characterized by openness and a tendency to set the scene for the politicians to talk to having a more interpretive character. It is almost a rule in the latter period that it is the reporter's voice that explains or describes the ongoing processes, and how the utterances and actions of the politician should be understood.
- 3 In the early period (1978), *the framing discourse techniques used in the introductory texts* include transparent descriptions of the interview settings. In the latter period (1993/2003) answers are decontextualized, with the original contexts of the interview not being referred to. Instead, the introductory texts interpret politicians' answers within a frame that is often not explicitly given by the specific event or motivated by the answers incorporated into the story.
- 4 In the latter period, news journalism works more actively with visualizations of the stories. Answers are often visualized with close-up shots showing almost only the face of the interviewee and are generally cut more freely. Answers are no longer synchronized with pictures of the interviewee but are instead overlapped, and when they are cut this is covered with other pictures or using other techniques (like the photo flash).

Altogether, the analysis points to news journalism appearing as a *mediator* or *interrogator* in the early period (1978), mainly with the aim of bringing political arguments out in public. In the latter period, news journalism emerges more as an *interpreter* explaining what is going on in politics, and as a *critical interrogator* seeking real motives for (or the truth behind) politicians' decisions, proposals, etc. As a consequence, the roles set up for the politicians are altered. When news journalism becomes more interpretive and critical of the politicians' answers, the role of the politicians is no longer to deliver arguments, policies, or proposals. Instead, when they appear in news stories their role is primarily to confirm that news journalism's analyses or explanations are reliable.

The changing journalistic attitude towards politicians' answers is changing the (potential) relationships between news journalism and viewers, as well as between politicians and viewers. In the early period, politicians are set up to talk more directly to the viewer. It is the politicians themselves who explain, motivate or describe their proposals, decisions, or ideas. News journalism leaves it to the viewers to judge what the politicians are saying, and in this sense the viewers are addressed as reasonable subjects. In the latter period, when news journalism appears as an interpreter or a critical interrogator, the viewers are given ready-made packages of ideas of what is going on in politics and how this should be understood. News journalism acts as an *ombudsman* for viewers. It operates as an actor pointing out hidden agendas and finding other (true) motives behind politicians' actions, which tends to create and reproduce scepticism (distrust or discontent) regarding politicians and their actions. It often seems as if the politicians have something

they want to keep out of sight from the viewers, for instance that they are not fulfilling their election promises. The ‘preferred reading’ is to doubt what politicians say. From a democratic point of view, this sceptical position can be both constructive (if it helps people to critically judge politicians’ actions and make rational decisions) and destructive (if it establishes a more cynical view of politics among viewers).

Notes

- 1 This article is a summary of a project named ‘News Journalism and the Edited Conversation’, carried out within the research program ‘The Language of Politics in the Media Public Sphere’ at Örebro University, Sweden. Results from this particular project have been published earlier (Eriksson, 2006a, 2006b).
- 2 Schudson (1982) identifies a trend towards more analytical reporting in television in the USA. He also claims that this reporting style was established by the 1920s by print journalism. However, this picture is not uncomplicated. Some media and communication scholars have claimed that, although the reporters are formally autonomous and not just reproducing the words of the politicians, the practicalities of news work make them dependent on government officials as sources of information and opinion (e.g. Epstein, 1973; Gans, 1979; Tuchman, 1978).
- 3 The data have been kindly supplied by the Swedish National Archive of Recorded Sound and Moving Images.
- 4 A study conducted by Ekström (2001) shows that more than 80 per cent of interviews with politicians start with answers. In these cases, the original question that initiates the answer is replaced by the announcer’s or reporter’s voice.
- 5 The concept of frame has been widely used in media and communication studies. It has been used with many different meanings, and in analyses of partly different aspects of the process of media communication (Carragee and Roefs, 2004). Entman (1993) describes frame as ‘a scattered conceptualisation’ and Scheufele (1999) claims that it lacks theoretical precision. Here, I use the concept as a means to understand what is going on when journalists transform interview answers and use them in news stories. A frame is something that makes an action or an utterance meaningful (see Goffman, 1986[1974]; Tannen, 1993).

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