

# **Political News Interviews: From a Conversation Analytic and Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective**

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This paper employs Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis to examine institutionalized interaction. The majority of the data is taken from American and British political news interviews. The focus is on the found similarities between the two approaches in regard to institutional discourse, viz. the formalistic features which both conversation analysts and critical discourse analysts investigate. It should be noticed, however, that there are still remaining differences between the two approaches, since critical discourse analysts, compared to conversation analysts, also focus on broader discursive issues of talk.

## **1. Introduction**

The purpose of this paper is to examine two different approaches to discourse, which are Conversational Analysis (CA) and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), in regard to the nature and structure of televisual political news interviews. My decision to choose the frameworks of CA and CDA for my analysis of political news interviews is motivated by the fact that both are sociological approaches, analyzing social structure and activity, and both have examined news interviews in a more or less thorough fashion.

CA's approach to research demonstrates that the analysis is grounded in the observable orientations that the interactants display when engaging in conversational interaction (Clayman & Maynard 1995). In contrast, CDA is mainly concerned with the way social power and dominance are practiced and challenged through written and spoken discourse within a social and political context (van Dijk 2001).<sup>1</sup> Since CDA is an eclectic approach, my analysis of political news interviews is by and large not based on prototypical studies, given that the focus is on interaction.

There are, however, several conversation analysts who have combined studies of interaction and power relations in their work, e. g. Hutchby (1992, 1996a, 1996b, 1999) and Clark & Pinch (1988). Feminist researchers, e.g. Kitzinger (2000), have drawn on CA as well to analyze the relationship between language, gender and sexuality. Thus a CA analysis can show how inequalities are reproduced in discourse. It is important to point out that the treatment of power relations in CA is different from those in CDA. In CA such relations are

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<sup>1</sup> I will not reproduce the debate between CA and CDA here, since this would be beyond the scope of this paper.

constrained, observed and understood from participants' communicative conduct in interaction. Whereas in CDA, the focus is on finding evidence of the operation of power relations in discourse (Wooffitt 2005).

For the purpose of this paper, political news interviews can be defined as question-and-answer exchanges between two or more participants, which often are confrontational and challenging in nature, since adversarial and competitive questions occur frequently (Mullany 2002). The interaction is formal and institutionalized, produced for an overhearing audience that does not actively participate (Heritage 1985; Clayman & Heritage 2002).

Discursive conflict is here defined as "... the interaction of interdependent people [can include two or more participants] who perceive opposition of goals, aims, and values, and who see the other party as potentially interfering with the realization of these goals" (Putnam & Poole 1987:552).<sup>2</sup> Generally, from a conversation analytic perspective, verbal conflict is interactionally managed and designed (Hutchby 1996a; Clayman 2002). In CDA, by contrast, discursive conflict can be defined based on semantic criteria. As van Dijk (2001) claims, conflict is "... discursively sustained and reproduced by derogating, demonizing, and excluding the [o]thers from the community of [u]s, the [c]ivilized" (p. 362).

Political news interviews represent an institutional genre; such interaction is different from ordinary talk. Ordinary talk is a form of interaction that is not restricted to a particular setting. It is comprised of conventions and practices applicable to numerous social goals; however institutional interaction involves restricted interactional rules (Heritage 2004). It needs to be mentioned here that there can be cultural as well as social variations between political news interviews, such as differences between public service and commercial television channels (Clayman & Heritage 2002; Lauerbach 2004).

Although it is commonly understood that critical discourse analysts, as well as conversation analysts, are interested in the analysis of interactional features regarding political news interviews, critical discourse analysts also focus on the discursive content of interaction to understand the construction of power (e.g., Wodak 2007). For the sake of comparison, however, in my synthesis of the two approaches I discuss the similarities of their treatment of political news interviews, looking at their analyses of the formal and interactional features of this genre, since to date the extent to which both approaches overlap in critical areas has received little attention.

In part 2 of this paper, I introduce the two different approaches of CA and CDA along with the general importance of their major contributions. In part 3 I discuss political news interviews from a CA and CDA perspective. I discuss strengths and weaknesses of each framework, but also their points of agreement in their respective analytical approaches to political news interviews. The concluding part presents my own synthesis of the above approaches. Although it

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<sup>2</sup> There are cultural differences in how verbal conflict is conducted. For example, according to Schiffrin (1984) conflict talk can be used to demonstrate sociability.

appears at first glance that the two frameworks are very different, it has become obvious that despite such methodological differences, CA and CDA show striking similarities in the analysis of political news interviews.

## **2. Two Approaches to Discourse: Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis**

### **2.1 What is Conversation Analysis?**

Harvey Sacks is considered to be the founder of CA, a qualitative sociological approach to the study of the organization of social interaction (Levinson 1983; Heritage 1984).<sup>3</sup> The basis for a conversation analytic approach is the ethnomethodological claim that the focus for analysis is on participants' understanding of the ongoing interaction. Analysts' assumptions should therefore be discarded. In CA, participants' own interpretations of talk shape their following contributions to the discourse (Wooffitt 2005). Consequently, context is the product of participants' actions and therefore locally produced in the given interaction.<sup>4</sup>

Conversation analysts consider communication as a joint activity; they are interested in analyzing how such jointly organized interaction is produced (Sacks 1984). Thereby the focus is on natural occurring talk, such as formal vs. informal and institutional vs. personal interaction. Sequences and speaking turns within sequences are the primary units of analysis (Sidnell 2010). In other words, CA is mainly concerned with explaining how coherence and sequential organization in discourse is constructed and understood in order to identify systematic properties in talk (Levinson 1983).

### **2.2 What is Critical Discourse Analysis?**

Critical discourse analysts study how "... social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context" (van Dijk 2001:352). In their analyses they uncover how discourse discriminates against minority and powerless groups drawing from wider structural contexts (Wooffitt 2005).

The notion of power is here "... conceptualized both in terms of asymmetries between participants in discourse events, and in terms of unequal capacity to control how texts are produced, distributed and consumed ... in particular sociocultural contexts" (Fairclough 1995a:1). According to Fairclough

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<sup>3</sup> Heritage & Roth (1995) argue that without quantitative evidence it is impossible to get reliable results from individual case studies about how participants orient to questions during interview conduct.

<sup>4</sup> According to Stubbe et al. (2003) there are more flexible versions of CA that include contextual and socio-cultural cues.

(1989), there are two aspects of the relationship between language and power. First, relations of power can structure and represent the social order of institutions or societies, thus powerful groups are able to establish and determine language use. Second, there is the actual exercise of power, which means to constrain other people by using language.

CDA is considered to be a shared perspective rather than a school or a methodology (Bell 1995; van Dijk 2001). It adopts a political perspective that aims to have an effect on social practice and social relations by revealing taken-for-granted power relationships (Titscher et al. 2000). By making such political interventions, analysts have preconceptions about their data (Wooffitt 2005). The concept of ideology is, not surprisingly, an important factor within CDA. Ideologies can be defined as sets of beliefs that activate practices and attitudes maintaining inequality. Since discourse includes ideological assumptions, such assumptions operate to preserve the interests of powerful groups (Wodak et al. 2007).

In CDA the basic units of analysis are texts and the corresponding context is crucial. Here, texts are not only written documents; they can also refer to oral discourse or visuals or even to a combination of these forms. Different researchers working in the field of CDA draw on eclectic and cross-disciplinary analytical techniques for their analysis. In the next section I will discuss the characteristics of political news interviews from a conversation analytic and critical discourse analytic perspective.

### **3. Conversation Analysis and Critical Discourse Analysis applied to an Institutionalized Genre**

#### **3.1 Political News Interviews from a Conversation Analytic Perspective**

In this section, I will discuss the following characteristics of political news interviews from a conversation analytic perspective: neutrality in political news interviews, the possibility of interviewees challenging the interview format and the conflictual potential of such interviews. Heritage (1985) suggested early on that the analysis of political news interviews could be a central contribution to the general field of institutional talk. Such institutionalized interaction, which influences the talk of both interviewer and interviewee, can be regarded in many ways as different from ordinary conversation (Atkinson 1982; Clayman 1991). Everyday conversation is comprised of conventions and practices appropriate for various social goals, while institutional interaction involves restricted interactional rules (Heritage 2004).

Generally, political news interviews can be regarded as question-and-answer sequences. In other words, they involve a normative turn-taking system that restricts participants to either asking questions or answering them (Heritage 1985; Greatbatch 1986, 1988; Clayman 1988, 2010; Schegloff 1988/89; Heritage

& Greatbatch 1991; Heritage & Roth 1995). The interviewer's conduct is influenced by the cooperativeness of the interviewees. Usually, they collaborate with the interviewer by withholding a response until a question is completed, thereby confirming the neutrality of the turn (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991; Heritage & Roth 1995). Interviewers have the right to keep the floor until a question is produced. They can perform a range of actions, such as challenging or affiliating, but they have to be carried out in question format (Clayman 2010). Important to mention is that the interpretation of such political news interviews as either cooperative or confrontational is culturally variable and prone to social change (Lauerbach 2004).

### 3.1.1 Neutrality in Political News Interviews

Interviewers need to maintain a formally neutral stance while interacting with their guests (Clayman 2002).<sup>5</sup> If they do abandon their role as questioners they use certain strategies to maintain a neutral stance (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991). A frequent technique is to produce assessments on behalf of others. Such statements can be used to focus on but not to align with an interviewee's expressed position (Heritage 1985; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991; Clayman 2010), (Clayman 1988:483):

(1) Excerpt 1 (Nightline 7/22/85:17)<sup>6</sup>

((Discussing violence among Blacks in South Africa))

IR: → Reverend Boesak let me pick up a point the ambassador made.

What assurances can you give us that talks between moderates in that country will take place when it seems that any black leader who is willing to talk to the government is branded

→ as the ambassador said a collaborator and is then punished

IE: → The ambassador has it wrong. It's not the people ...

Here, the interviewee rejects the assessment by rebutting the words of the same third party that the interviewer introduced previously. Another procedure called "mitigating" (Clayman 1988:487) is used when the interviewer produces an evaluative statement and mitigates its strength. S/he is able to express her/his own point of view and in doing so can minimize the importance of her/his opinion. Such techniques allow the interviewer to be interactionally

<sup>5</sup> Since the late 1990s it could be argued that in some cases interviewers have abandoned their neutral stance in certain institutionalized frameworks, especially in the case of the American 24 hour news channels (CNN, Fox, MSNBC).

<sup>6</sup> Here, "IR" stands for "interviewer," and "IE" for interviewee.

confrontational while remaining officially neutral (Clayman 1988). A further technique is called “formulating” (Heritage & Watson 1980; Heritage 1985; Clayman 2010). Formulations can be used to clarify, refocus or underline prior talk, as well as to cooperate or challenge interviewees’ statements. Again, by using these formulations the interviewer can maintain a neutral stance.

Interviewees can also make use of question reformulations to avoid some aspect of an interviewer’s question. Before providing an answer they can paraphrase the question that was asked. After reformulating interviewees continue talking, and such subsequent talk builds on the reformulation rather than on the original question (Clayman 1993).

As has become obvious, interviewers can do more than ask questions in the course of an interview. They often implement argumentative statements in their questions that can challenge interviewees’ positions. Such evaluative statements are embedded within interrogatives, so that each complete turn can be regarded as a question, indicating a neutral stance.<sup>7</sup> However, interviewees can challenge interviewers’ neutral stance, showing that they are constrained by interviewees’ responses (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Roth 1995).

### **3.1.2 Interviewees can challenge the Interview Format**

Interviewers have the rights to manage the introduction and organization of topics. Generally, interviewees are not able to shift from one topic to another. However, there are instances where interviewees can challenge the normative question-and-answer format of the interview in order to control the discourse. One way to accomplish this is to talk about something else prior to answering an interviewer’s question. Greatbatch (1986:443) calls this practice “pre-answer agenda shifting”. Another practice, called “post-answer agenda shifts” (Greatbatch 1986:443), allows interviewees to change the topic after answering an interviewer’s question. Both shifts are always produced in combination with a response. Also, they do not challenge the turn distribution rights of interviewers since interviewees do not speak out of turn (Greatbatch 1986).

Interviewees can also control the topic of their talk by ignoring the focus that has been established by a previous question, meaning they do not produce an answer but talk about something else (Greatbatch 1986). Generally, instances where interviewees take a turn that is not a response to interviewers’ questions represent a violation of the normative question-and-answer sequence of interviews (Haworth 2006).

### **3.1.3 Conflictual Potential of Political News Interviews**

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<sup>7</sup> It needs to be mentioned here that not all interrogatives indicate a neutral and objective stance in the same way. Some questions, like negative interrogatives, are often more partial than others (Heritage 2002).

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Clearly, political news interviews include a fair potential for conflict. In situations where interviewees talk before interviewers have introduced the actual question, the concept of the interview breaks down. In such circumstances, as Schegloff (1988/89) noted of a 1988 interview with then vice-president George Bush that quickly turned antagonistic, the “interview ... turned into a confrontation” (p. 224). That is, when participants discard the regulations of political news interview interaction and start engaging in hostile talk, the interview structure is abandoned (Schegloff 1988/89; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991).

According to Schegloff (1988/89) the transformation of an interview to confrontation consists of two parts; the institutionalized turn-taking system breaks down and competitive overlap occurs (Schegloff 1988/89:231-232).<sup>8</sup>

(2) Excerpt 2 (Bush/Rather, c. 04:15)

- [ ]
- Rather: But Mr. Vice President, you went to Israel in  
<July of Nineteen Eighty [six?> ]
- Bush: [Yes ]
- Rather: . hhhh And- a member of your own staff Mister Craig  
Fuller.- ((swallow/(0.5)) has verified. And so did  
the only other man there. Mister Nir. Mister  
Amiron Nir, .hh who's the Israeli's .hh to:p anti-  
terrorist man,
- Bush: [Ye: [s.
- Rather: [.hh [Those two men >were in a meeting with you an'  
Mister Nir not once, < but three: times. three times.  
underscored with you that this was a straightout  
arms [fer hostages swap.] = .h h h ] =
- Bush: [W h a t t h e y:: ] (.) were doing.] =
- Rather: =Now [how do you- How] do you reconc- ] I have (sir)]
- Bush: [Read the memo ] Read the memo.] What they::]  
were doing.
- Rather: How: can you reconci:le that you were there <Mister  
Nir a- underscored three:: separate occa:sions. .hh  
that it was a- arms fer hostages swap an' to:ld you  
we were dealing with the most ra:dical elements in  
Iran:. You were dealing straightaway with the  
Ayatollah [Khomejini

<sup>8</sup> In the Language & Gender literature, overlap, in comparison to interruptions, is seen as being a rather supportive device in interaction (Zimmerman & West 1975; Eckert & McConnell-Ginet 2010).

Bush: [I was told what they: were doing, and not  
what we were doing en that's the big difference ...

Here, the interviewee abandons his utterance in progress to respond to something said in overlap, the response itself being in overlap, and then returns to his previous talk. This shows that both interviewer and interviewee are closely monitoring what the other person is saying. As has become obvious, instances of political news interviews in which interviewees try to take control over the interview show how the normative turn-taking system of such interviews is abandoned.

In conclusion, from a conversation analytic perspective, there are several interactional characteristics for the conduct of political news interviews. Interviewers usually do not express their personal opinions and perspectives on the topic of discussion. If they abandon their role as questioners, they can make use of certain strategies to still maintain a neutral stance (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991). Such strategies include the use of assessments on behalf of others (Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988, 2010; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991), mitigating a statement (Clayman 1988) or reformulating interviewees' earlier statements (Heritage & Watson 1980; Heritage 1985; Clayman 2010).

There are also instances where interviewees can challenge the institutionalized question-and-answer format of the interview, by using pre-answer agenda or post-answer agenda shifts to control the topic of their talk (Greatbatch 1986). In situations where participants discard the regulations of political news interview interaction and start engaging in hostile talk, the interview structure is abandoned (Schegloff 1988/89; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991). In what follows I will discuss critical discourse analysts' research on political news interviews.

### **3.2 Political News Interviews from a Critical Discourse Analytic Perspective**

In this section, I will analyze the following characteristics of political news interviews from a critical discourse analytic perspective: neutrality in political news interviews, questions and the exercising of control as well as the conflictual potential of such interviews. Proponents of CDA begin with the assumption that the distribution of the discursive roles of questioner and answerer is asymmetrical (Fowler et al. 1979; Becker 2005; Lorda & Miche 2006). Media discourse is used to construct identities and interpersonal relations with respect to power and ideology (Lauerbach 2006).

Strategies within political news interviews, such as the degree of indirectness and confrontativeness of interviewer questions display discursive power techniques. During the exchange, identities, status, roles and relations are negotiated between the participants. In this way meaning is co-constructed while an overhearing audience is watching (Johansson 2006; Lauerbach 2006; Becker 2007).



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As in a conversation analytic study of political news interviews, then, conflict is a central component of a critical discourse analytic investigation. Indeed, often such interviews are described as creating discursive conflict between the interactants (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997; Johansson 2006; Lorda & Miche 2006). In this situation, it is the role of the interviewer to orient questions toward the audience members as well as the interviewees as a means of eliciting relevant information for the overhearing audience (Johansson 2006).

### 3.2.1 Neutrality in Political News Interviews

In the traditional interview format the interviewer is supposed to hold back explicit personal comments and opinions. The goal of the interviewer's neutral stance is to create an unassailable position in a potentially antagonistic interaction (Weizman 2006). Whereas interviewers have to maintain their position as independent inquirers, it is the aim of politicians to represent themselves as powerful and competent (Holly 1994; Fairclough & Mauranen 1997). The interviewer not only needs to maintain a neutral stance, but also needs to create an engaging interview. One such journalistic technique is embedding critical comments into quotations of others (Holly 1994:428):

(3) Excerpt 3 (Fritz Pleitgen, Editor in chief of the West German Broadcasting Corporation, March 1991.)

*Pl ... wenn ein mann wie Theo Waigel der ja gewiss abwägend  
is und bestimmt kein Strauss sie immer ungenierter kritisiert ...*  
Pl .... when somebody like Theo Waigel, who is certainly thoughtful  
and definitely does not behave like Strauss, is criticizing you  
more and more blatantly ...

Interviewers can quote outside sources in order to confront interviewees with critical statements as well as to emphasize the power of their questions. Another strategy is that of "ventriloquizing" (Lauerbach 2006:198), in which interviewers ask questions enunciated by actors outside the context of the interaction as a means of maintaining neutrality. In this case, the interviewer generally does not quote what outside authorities or actors actually said but what they might or could have said or thought, but which was never clearly admitted. Usually, such ventriloquized utterances suggest attitudes like fear, anxiety or doubt as a means of eliciting conflict. Also interviewees can make use of the strategy of quoting somebody else's words to support their own stance.

According to CDA scholars, politicians commonly use news interviews to present their knowledge and reliability to an audience in order to obtain or maintain social power (Simon-Vandenberg 1996). As in the case with "ventriloquizing," in order to present a public self-image of power and confidence, politicians can quote others as evidence or to distance themselves

from a claim (Simon-Vandenberg 1996). A lack of evidence can be used as a technique to dismiss an opponent's point of view. Another way to appear confident is to play down the importance of challenging facts (Simon-Vandenberg 1996). In situations where politicians have to respond to conflictual questions they also have additional techniques like being vague and ambiguous or certain and confident (Holly 1994; Simon-Vandenberg 1996; Becker 2005; Johansson 2006).

### 3.2.2 Questions and the Exercising of Control

In political news interviews, the major task for interviewees is to answer questions. When they refrain from doing so, the function of eliciting information and the exercising of control by the interviewer cannot be accomplished (Lord & Miche 2006), so it is interactionally achieved. In the following example a journalist interviews former Prime Minister of Spain José María Aznar; here, the interviewee does not clearly answer the interviewer's questions, so that the interviewer is forced to display his own conclusion at the end of the exchange (Lord & Miche 2006:462):

(4) Excerpt 4 (News director of the private Spanish channel *TELE5*, Juan Pedro Valentín (V), interviews José María Aznar (A), on 10 March 2003.)

V: We would like to start with a question: very concrete | will there be war, Mr President?<sup>9</sup>

A: (( )) This is a question that only one person can answer, and that is ahh Saddam Hussein | he is the one who is responsible | it is he who has to face the consequences because he can disarm and therefore it is he who knows | and he who can avoid it.

V: Do you trust that Saddam Hussein will disarm?

A: (( )) I do not trust Saddam Hussein at all [...]

V: Later if: | m: | it only depends on Saddam Hussein and you do not | trust that he will disarm | should we prepare ourselves for an armed conflict?

### 3.2.3 Conflictual Potential of Political News Interviews

According to CDA scholars, the social status and power of politicians and the genre-dependent discursive power of interviewers frequently clash leading to practices such as interruptions, outright denial of the response and open confrontation (Lauerbach 2003; Becker 2005; Johansson 2006). Interruptions are

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, the meaning of the transcription symbol | used here by the authors is nowhere explained in the article.

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here regarded as controlling the contributions of other interview participants (Fairclough 1989).<sup>10</sup>

Politicians can also decide whether they collaborate with their interviewers or not (Johansson 2006). The format of political news interviews requires that interviewers conduct the interaction. However, there are cases where interviewees win significant influence on the interview organization (Holly 1994). Generally, interviewers manage the introduction of new topics (Lord & Miche 2006), but sometimes interviewees can reject the relevance of interviewers' topics and introduce their own (Becker 2007). In other cases, interviewees simply respond to interviewers' confrontational questions, often carrying controversial and offensive presuppositions, while fighting for turns (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997).

Interviewers are often unsuccessful in interrupting interviewees to ask another question (Holly 1994; Fairclough & Mauranen 1997). Following is an example taken from an interview of former British Prime Minister Thatcher, which illustrates several unsuccessful attempts of the interviewer to ask his question (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997:102):

(5) Excerpt 5 (Interview with Margaret Thatcher conducted by Robin Day in 1983.)

Thatcher: The scare was cruel callous and designed to make frightened the very people we all wish to protect. There's another one on

Day: If we-

Thatcher: the National Health Service, but you carry on with your questions

Day: if I may

Thatcher: and I'll try to supply the answers. But they must not heed those

Day: if I may Prime Minister because

Thatcher: scares. They're cold, callous and ruthless. And make frightened

Day: (unclear)

Thatcher: the very people we should be protecting.

Day: If we go back to 19 April 1979, that happens to be the same date on which you said you'd no intention of putting up prescription charges.

In political news interviews, interviewees can interrupt the ongoing discourse to justify their stance, to avoid answering a question or to oppose interviewers' suggestions. Interruptions signal disagreement and rejection and they usually appear when interviewees are in a difficult discursive position (Lord & Miche 2006). When interviewers' critical stance is too obvious, interviewees can interfere and take over the discourse conduct (Holly 1994). Interviewers also have the right to interrupt their interviewees. Here, such interruptions function as

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<sup>10</sup> Interruptions can also have a supportive function. For such cultural differences see e.g. Reisman (1974).

a form of interactional control. Generally, however, all participants need to maintain a minimum consensus in order to avoid a breakdown of interview discourse.

Obviously, there is great potential for conflict in political news interview discourse, like overt competition for turns and fighting for points between the participants (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997). Dispute between interviewers' questions and interviewees' responses dramatizes politics and is designed to entertain the audience (Holly 1994; Fairclough & Mauranen 1997; Lauerbach 2004, 2006; Johansson 2006). Holly (1994:423) calls this effect "confrontainment." This tendency shows that audience members are addressed as consumers as well and are positioned as viewers of a competition between interviewer and interviewee (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997).

In conclusion, from a critical discourse analytic perspective, there are several interactional characteristics for the conduct of political news interviews. Generally, the interviewer is supposed to refrain from expressing explicit personal comments and opinions. The goal of this neutral stance is to create an unchallengeable position in a potentially antagonistic interaction (Weizman 2006). In order to maintain a neutral stance during confrontational exchanges, the interviewer can make use of certain journalistic strategies, such as embedding critical comments into quotations of others (Holly 1994) or ventriloquizing (Lauerbach 2006).

There are also instances where interviewees can challenge the institutionalized interview organization, by quoting others, by implying that there is a lack of evidence that can be used to dismiss an opponent's point of view, by playing down the importance of challenging facts, by either being vague and ambiguous or certain and confident or by rejecting interviewers' topics in order to introduce their own (Holly 1994; Simon-Vandenberg 1996; Becker 2005, 2007; Johansson 2006). Furthermore, interviewees can interrupt the ongoing discourse to avoid answering a question or to oppose interviewers' suggestions (Holly 1994).

The social status and power of interviewees and the genre-dependent discursive power of interviewers, in addition, frequently clash, which can lead to interruptions, denial of the response and open confrontation (Lauerbach 2003; Becker 2005; Johansson 2006). According to critical discourse analysts, such confrontation between interviewers' questions and interviewees' responses dramatizes politics and is designed to entertain the audience (Holly 1994; Fairclough & Mauranen 1997; Lauerbach 2004, 2006; Johansson 2006).

#### **4. Discussion**

There are few differences between CA and CDA regarding the analyses of political news interviews. Within CDA, for example, interactional confrontation between interviewers and interviewees is regarded as a form of entertainment that promotes political organizations as well as politicians and their opinions (Holly

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1994; Fairclough & Mauraen 1997; Lauerbach 2004, 2006; Johansson 2006). Audience members are therefore not only addressed as citizens but also as consumers of staged entertainment (Fairclough & Mauraen 1997). Within CA, however, interactional confrontation between interviewers and interviewees is regarded as a breakdown of the normative turn-taking system (Schegloff 1988/89; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991), where the argument is produced for an overhearing audience (Heritage 1985; Clayman & Heritage 2002; Clayman 2010).

In what follows, I would like to discuss a number of points that constitute shared concerns of both CA and CDA in their analysis of political news interviews. On the basis of my discussion of political news interviews I suggest that both approaches are increasingly converging toward the analysis of power relations, at least defined narrowly, especially as they are exhibited in the turn-taking behavior of interviewer and interviewee, and in the struggle over neutrality.

By power, I mean interactionally asymmetric participation rights between the participants of news interviews. Conversation analysts argue that talk is “context shaped” and “context renewing” (Goodwin & Heritage 1990:289; Schegloff 1992), thus power is emergent in the ongoing interaction. Critical discourse analysts, on the contrary, claim that power is a social category that already exists outside the interaction (e.g. Fairclough 1989). As will become obvious in my following analysis, CDA sees power operating through the formal elements of institutional interaction. However, what sets it apart from CA is that critical discourse analysts also focus on the discursive content in their analyses.

In particular, both approaches seem to share a similar analytical position regarding the ability of the interviewee to contest the authority or power of the interviewer. In this context, the interviewees’ strategies as described by conversation analysts can be taken to indicate a contest over power between the interview participants, and critical discourse analysts can be seen to also focus on how power relations are interactionally managed.

Conversation analysts have examined interviewees’ ability to control the topic and thus exert power in interview conduct. The discursive roles of interviewer and interviewee can be regarded as default positions for participants in political news interviews. Even though these roles are predetermined, how each participant uses them to achieve specific interactional goals is not (Holly 1994; Haworth 2006; Weizman 2006). As mentioned above, scholars from a conversation analytic point of view have shown that interviewees are able to challenge the institutionalized question-and-answer format of interviews. They can control the topic by ignoring the focus established by interviewers’ questions (Greatbatch 1986). This suggests that the interactional roles of interviewer and interviewee are not as asymmetrical as previously assumed by critical discourse analysts. Interviewees can resist interviewers’ topical agenda and can steer the interview in a more favorable direction for themselves.

Furthermore, conversation analysts have shown how interviewees can defy the authoritative power of interviewers. Instances in which interviewees take

a turn that is not a response to interviewers' questions indicate a situation where conflict can emerge. Harris (1989:140-6) identifies such "counter-questions" as a means to resist power and control. However, the fact that interviewers can either re-establish the focus of the talk or introduce a new topic shows that they may try to maintain authority over the interview. This becomes especially obvious when they linguistically sanction interviewees and produce a paraphrased version of the unanswered question (Greatbatch 1986). In short, they may attempt to maintain control over the interview.

In addition, the technique of reformulating, as described by conversation analysts, shows how interviewees can gain power and control over the interview setting. Scholars of CA claim that interviewees can also make use of question reformulations to avoid answering interviewers' questions. After reformulating, their subsequent turn builds on the reformulation and not on the original question (Clayman 1993). This is another instance where interviewees possess control over interviewers' previous turns. It allows them to take over interviewers' role as questioners in order to answer their own questions (Haworth 2006).

The CA approach to the struggle between the interviewer and interviewee is then similar to a critical discourse analytic approach that recognizes the ability of interviewees to gain control over the interview conduct, by introducing new topics, fighting for turns with their interviewers (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997; Becker 2007) or interrupting interviewers' questions (Lord & Miche 2006). Consequently, from both a conversation analytic and critical discourse analytic perspective, interviewees are able to resist interviewers' authority to a certain degree, but it is usually the interviewer who is in a position to limit the extent of conflict by re-directing the focus of the talk (Greatbatch 1986). However, even though interviewers do finally have the overall control in an interview setting, both approaches acknowledge that interviewees have several strategies at their disposal to momentarily resist that authority.

Interestingly, both CA and CDA are in agreement that interviewees have the choice of whether to collaborate with their interviewers or not in challenging discursive situations. Interviewers' conduct is thus constrained by the cooperativeness of their interviewees (Clayman 1988; Heritage & Roth 1995; Johansson 2006) and suggests the extent to which interviewees can influence the conduct of political news interviews. As a result, both approaches agree that all participants need to maintain a minimum consensus in order to avoid a breakdown of discourse (Schegloff 1988/89; Holly 1994).

CA and CDA thus not only share a common interest in the analysis of the power dynamic between interviewers and interviewees, whether this interest is made explicit or implicit in the analysis, but also in the shared use of the concept of neutrality. Both approaches analyze interviewers' neutrality, meaning that interviewers usually do not express personal comments or opinions during interviews (Clayman 2002; Weizman 2006). Research in CA shows that if interviewers discard their neutral stance, they usually use certain linguistic techniques like producing assessments on behalf of others (Heritage 1985;

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Clayman 1988, 2010; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991), mitigating the strength of an evaluative statement (Clayman 1988) or refocusing and thereby challenging interviewees' statements (Heritage & Watson 1980; Heritage 1985; Clayman 2010). Such confrontational statements are embedded within interrogatives, so that each complete turn can be regarded as a question, generally indicating a neutral stance.

Critical discourse analysts have pointed out that even though interviewers usually need to maintain a neutral stance on the one hand, they also need to create an engaging interview on the other. In order to achieve this they can embed critical comments into quotations of others (Holly 1994), described by conversation analysts as assessments on behalf of others (Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988, 2010; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991). Such assessments are used to indicate distance between the speaker and the utterance (Heritage 1985; Clayman 1988, 2010; Heritage & Greatbatch 1991). But interviewees can also quote others as evidence or to distance themselves from a claim as described by critical discourse analysts (Simon-Vandenberg 1996). From a conversation analytic perspective such quotations are used when interviewees reject an assessment by rebutting the words of the same third party that the interviewer has introduced previously (Clayman 1988).

Moreover, critical discourse analysts have noticed that interviewers can also abandon their neutrality by openly maintaining their own interpretations of the situation (Fairclough & Mauranen 1997; Becker 2007). Fairclough & Mauranen (1997) and Becker (2007) for example have analyzed Finnish and German data and conclude that here interviewers can explicitly show when they think interviewees are wrong or contradicting themselves. By doing this they insist on their own views or highlight the respective contradictions. They overtly compete with the interviewees' perspectives and opinions.

Additionally, conversation analysts seem to covertly employ notions of power. The strategy called "formulating" (Heritage & Watson 1980; Heritage 1985; Clayman 2010) can also be seen as a way of exercising power in institutional contexts (Stubbe et al. 2003). By summarizing arguments of other participants or "formulating," speakers provide their own view of what has been discussed and thereby determine the upcoming interactional moves of others. The act of summarizing emphasizes and strengthens the dominant person's perspective of the situation (Stubbe et al. 2003). This shows not only how interviewees have control over interviewers' preceding turns (Haworth 2006), but also how participants exert control over the interaction. In short, by using the strategy of "formulating" interviewers can determine the topic of discussion and interviewees can simultaneously steer away from what would be an answer to a challenging question. Additionally, I would argue that the process known in CA as "mitigating" (Clayman 1988), by which interviewers can mitigate the strength of their evaluative statements, can also be seen as exercising power over the discourse as well as the discourse participants by directing the interactional focus

to a more conflictive issue. Thus CA does address issues of control and power, although not explicitly.

On the basis of the similarities I have noted between CA and CDA one could suggest that, as several scholars have already argued, it is unproductive to regard CA and CDA as two opposing ends of a continuum (van Dijk 1999; Mills 2003; Stubbe et al. 2003; Haworth 2006). Heritage (2008), one of the foremost scholars of CA working on political news interviews, has already said as much when he argues that the contribution of CA is to establish organizations of human interaction, and then to position them within social relations, which also suggest power relations.

According to Oliver, Serovich & Mason (2005), the essential difference between CA and CDA is that the former focuses on how utterances are conveyed in discourse and the latter focuses on the utterances themselves. However, as I have shown, this is not necessarily the case. Fairclough (1993) claims that power relations are only captured in the content of the discourse and not in the technical details. I would disagree with Fairclough, however, and concur with Kitzinger (2000) who focuses on feminist research and argues that CA can be used to analyze power relations, since gender relations can be inherent in acts of overt domination and can also be (re)produced and shaped through talk.

It can be seen that conversation analysts and critical discourse analysts come to similar conclusions, based on a narrowly defined concept of power, which is here understood as interactionally asymmetric participation rights, in their analyses of political news interviews. Nonetheless, there are still major differences between CA and CDA in that the former focuses on the sequential structure of interaction and the latter on broader discursive issues such as the extent of the impact of technological, cultural and economic globalization on political discourse and what these shifting practices reveal about social and cultural change (Fairclough 1995b; Fairclough & Mauraanen 1997).

## **5. Conclusion**

Conversation analysts focus on how participants construct interaction as an ongoing mutual achievement. In contrast, critical discourse analysts focus on the question of how discourse discriminates against powerless groups of people, although this turns out not to be the focus of their work on political news interviews. As I have suggested, despite differences in methodology, conversation analysts and critical discourse analysts both reveal similar orientations in their research on political news interviews.

Both approaches converge toward the analysis of power relations between interviewers and interviewees, albeit in a formalistic way, in particular as such relations are not only displayed in turn-taking sequences but also in the struggle over neutrality. Critical discourse analysts, in addition, also focus on the interactional organization of such power relations. Even though there are



remaining differences between the two approaches, it has become obvious that regarding political news interviews, their findings are becoming more and more similar. This leads to the conclusion that the differences acknowledged in the literature about the two approaches, in terms of institutionalized interaction, might be overstated and the two modes of analysis should rather complement each other.

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## ***Appendix***

### Transcription Conventions:

[	beginning of overlap
]	end of overlap
=	latching
-	cut off of the prior word or sound
<b><u>a</u></b>	underscoring indicates emphasis
:	lengthened sound
<b>A</b>	volume is indicated with capital letters
?	raising intonation
.	falling intonation
,	continuing intonation
( )	hearing the talk was unsuccessful
<b>.h</b>	in-breath
<b>(0.5)</b>	milliseconds in parentheses indicate silence
<b>(.)</b>	a dot in parentheses indicates a silence that is hearable but not measurable
> <	'more than' and 'less than' symbols indicate that the talk is rushed
< >	used in the reverse order they indicate that the talk is slow
<	'less than' symbol indicates that the following talk is started with a rush
(( ))	description of events