INTERRUPTIONS IN A POLITICAL INTERVIEW

Bachelor's thesis

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Haastatteluja on analysoitu politiikan kontekstissa monesta näkökulmasta. Suuri osa aiemmin tehdyistä tutkimuksista keskittyy haastatteluissa tapahtuvaan vuorotteluun ja kysymystyyppeihin. Vähemmän tutkimustietoa on olemassa keskeytyksiin liittyen, ja siihen, kuinka ne esiintyvät ja kuinka tehokkaita ne ovat.

Tämän tutkimuksen tarkoituksena on lisätä tietoa poliittisissa haastatteluissa tapahtuvista haastattelijan tekemistä keskeytyksistä. Keskeytyksiä analysoidaan keskusteluanalyysin keinoin ja aineistona on kolme televisiohaastattelua. Haastattelut on litteroitu ja tutkimuksessani esittelen esimerkit niissä esiintyneistä keskeytystyypeistä.

Keskeytykset on tutkimuksessani jaettu eri kategorioihin. Ensin analysoin keskeytyksiä, joiden tarkoitus oli hallita haastateltavan puheenvuorojen pituutta ja ohjata haastattelua uuteen aiheeseen ajanhallinnallisista syistä. Tällaiset keskeytykset olen lisäksi jakanut kahteen eri kategoriaan: onnistuneisiin ja epäonnistuneisiin haastattelijan yrityksiin. Seuraavaksi tarkastelin haastattelijan tekemiä keskeytyksiä, joiden tarkoituksena oli esittää lisäkysymys tai hakea selvennystä johonkin haastateltavan antamaan vastaukseen. Nämä keskeytykset ovat analyysissani puolestaan jaettu kolmeen eri kategoriaan: keskeytyksiin, jotka eivät millään tavalla haasta toista osapuolta, keskeytyksiin, jotka ovat luonteeltaan vihamielisempiä, ja keskeytyksiin, jotka suoraan haastavat haastateltavan lausunnon.

Tutkimuksessa selvisi, että haastattelija joutui usein tekemään useita yrityksiä siirtyäkseen uuteen aiheeseen haastattelussa. Tutkimus osoitti myös, että haastattelijat pyrkivät usein kysymyksenasettelullaan ohjaamaan haastateltavaa tietynlaiseen vastaukseen, ja selvennystä hakevia keskeytyksiä esiintyi silloin, kun tämä oletus tietynlaisesta vastauksesta ei toteutunut. Tällaiset keskeytykset voivat myös olla luonteeltaan vihamielisiä silloin, kun haastattelija yrittää reagoida vastaukseen, jonka hän kokee välttäleväksi. Keskeytykset, jotka haastavat haastateltavan väitteet puolestaan voivat johtaa ns. mikroväittelyihin haastattelun sisällä.

Tämä tutkimus lisää ymmärrystä poliittisesta haastattelusta genrenä. Lisäksi tutkimukseni auttaa ymmärtämään tapoja, joilla haastattelijat pyrkivät hallitsemaan ja ohjaamaan haastattelua, sekä tarvittaessa haastamaan haastateltavan poliittiseen haastatteluun kuuluvalla tavalla. Lisätutkimusta vaadittaisiin paremmin ymmärtämään esimerkiksi sitä, kuinka nämä tavat vaikuttavat siihen, kuinka katsoja seuraa ja ymmärtää haastattelua, ja toisaalta kuinka yleinen kukin keskeytystyyppi on laajemmassa mittakaavassa.

Asiasanat – Keywords Conversation analysis, political interviews, interruptions, clarification questions

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1 INTRODUCTION

News interviews have been studied through various points of view in the field of linguistics. Conversation analysis is a method which has been widely used in this context and which allows for detailed examination of spoken language. Previous research has widely focused on areas such as turn-taking and question types in news interviews (Sacks, H., Schegloff, E.A., Jefferson, G.,1978).

However, less research exists on the topic of interruptions and how they occur in interviews, as well as how they accomplish their task within the structure of the interview, or if they do so at all. In my study, I will focus on examining news interviews from this point of view. The focus of the study is on political interviews (also referred to as accountability interviews), in which the interviewee is a politician. My aim is to analyze interruptions made by the interviewer and examine what techniques interviewers use to interrupt the interviewee. I have chosen three interviews for the study, each from a different news organization. For the purpose of the present study it is also important to distinguish between different types of interruptions. Using conversation analysis, this study tries to answer the following research questions:

1) What kinds of interruptions are made by the interviewer?
2) What do the interviewers seek to accomplish with their interruptions, and how successfully are these goals met in the interview?

The thesis is organized as follows. A review of background literature will focus on three categories: The political interview as a genre, question types, and turn-taking and interruptions. In the third section I will introduce my data and explain the methods of analysis used in the study. In the analysis section, I will discuss the different types of interruptions that occur in the data, using transcription extracts as examples. Finally, I will conclude my thesis with discussion on the results and implications of the study.

2 BACKGROUND

In this section I will introduce the key concepts and terminology of the study and describe previous research related to questioning and interruptions in political interviews. First, I will discuss the genre of a political interview and the practices in interviews in general. This forms the contextual

basis for my study. Then, I will discuss question types and how they are used in interviews. Finally, interruptions in interviews will be discussed from the point of view of why and how they are made, as well as turn-taking in interviews.

2.1 The political interview

The genre of an interview is special in that its very format is based on the assumption that an asymmetry of knowledge exists between the participants. This is reflected, for instance, in the different roles between the participants, as well as what is expected of them in terms of who has a right or a responsibility to ask questions (Koskela 2011: 19). In addition to this asymmetry of knowledge, the participants are also equipped with different tools and resources to interact with one another, and to reach the objectives that the context places on them (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 96).

According to Leech (2002), interviews can be categorized as *journalistic* interviews or *ethnographic* interviews. In the former category, the intention of the interviewer is to present him or herself as already knowing everything, and thus trying to "pin the responder down" with the questions. In the latter category, the interviewer presents him or herself as knowing less, in an attempt to "enter into the world of the respondent" (Leech 2002). The political interview could be seen as a combination of the two: the interviewer can ask simplified questions as a way of serving the audience's interests and allowing for the interviewee to explain his or her positions, but an interviewer is also expected to have pre-existing knowledge about the subject(s) of the interview.

Ekström and Patrona (2011) divide news interviews into four different categories. These categories are 1) The expert interview, 2) the affiliated interview (an interview with another journalist), 3) the accountability interview (an interview with a politician), and 4) the experiential interview (an interview with a 'normal' citizen) (2011: 34). In my study, I will focus on category 3, the accountability interview. These interviews are often campaign interviews, which have a potential consequentiality because the interviewee is seeking political office or trying to promote a policy, for instance.

Various different techniques can be used, and are used, by interviewers in these interviews. A fairly new, but somewhat uncommon, technique is what Roth (2005) calls the "pop quiz questions". These are the types of questions which challenge the interviewee's knowledge about established matters of fact, and which have a single correct answer. These questions can be embarrassing for the politician, as they put the politician on the spot.

Another technique used in accountability interviews is the "repair sequence" (Schegloff, Jefferson and Sacks 1977). Repair sequences can be initiated by the interviewer to request clarification or confirmation for something that the interviewee has said (Schegloff et al., 1977). Sometimes the interviewer might also partially repeat what the interviewee has said. This can initiate a repair sequence, or it can be done for the benefit of the audience to clarify or highlight something (Clayman 2010). Often these partial repeats are issued when the interviewee expresses what could be considered an extreme position (Ekström and Patrona 2011: 25).

This is an important aspect to take into account. As Clayman and Heritage (2002) state, the interviewer is expected to stay neutral, but at the same time, is also expected to challenge the interviewee. The previously mentioned techniques are ways of doing exactly this: presenting challenges to the interviewee in a way that does not express the interviewer's opinion, or engage in a debate, argument, or criticism (Clayman and Heritage 2002: 98-99).

2.2 Question types

From the point of view of my study it is important to explore and understand the practice of asking questions, as well as the different ways in which questions can be asked. Clayman and Heritage (2002: 192) describe three features of the agenda setting that often characterizes interviewers' questions: 1) They determine the subject matter that the respondent should discuss, and what the response should be like, 2) they display presuppositions or assert propositions about the topic that is being discussed, and 3) they are designed so that a particular type of answer is preferred.

Fiengo (2007) states that the act of asking a question itself always shows or implies an "incompleteness" in the questioner's knowledge. He calls the incompleteness or ignorance "a lack", and language a way to address it. Fiengo divides questions into two different categories: open questions and confirmation questions. The former are asked using what Fiengo calls *deformed* sentence-types, whereas the latter are asked using *un-deformed* sentence-types. The difference between these two question types is that the asker presents him or herself as having a different lack.

In a confirmation question the asker presents him or herself as not having the required information or the required beliefs to complete his or her speech act. An example of this could be an uncompleted sentence, such as, "*Your name is…?*". In this example, the speaker leaves the sentence incomplete and thus asks the hearer to make it complete by adding the missing part. Confirmation questions can also be yes-no -questions, which are seeking a short and direct answer (*"Is your name*

John?"). These kinds of questions can also be referred to as closed questions: the possibility of answers is limited by the question itself ("*Do you want to <u>stay</u> in the EU or <u>leave</u> the EU?"*).

An open question, in turn, is directed more at probing the beliefs of the other person, and the questioner presents his or her lack of knowledge about said beliefs. These questions can be seen as the opposite of the previously mentioned closed questions, and they allow room for elaboration. An example of an open question could be, "*How would you deal with the financial crisis?*". In other words, asking an open question presents the questioner as believing that the point of question is open, and allows for the responder to explain his or her view on the matter (Fiengo 2007).

Clayman and Heritage (2002: 100) also point out that it is important to make the distinction between an utterance's grammatical form and its use in a particular context. This is to be taken into account because the grammatical form of an utterance does not always correspond with the action it performs in spoken language. In linguistics, grammatical forms are described as "declaratives" or "interrogatives", whereas the actions are described as "statements" or "questions". In spoken language, a grammatical declarative can act as a question, and vice versa (Clayman and Heritage 2002).

These kinds of discrepancies between grammatical form and action represent a departure from the traditional norms of an interview and can lead to sequences where the *question – answer* format is replaced by what resembles a structure of *assertion – counter assertion* (Ekström and Patrona 2011). In a format like this, the interviewer, grammatically speaking, asserts something (e.g. "*The national debt is rising"*). This assertion (declarative) performs the action of a question and the interviewee responds with a counter-assertion (e.g. "*No, it is not."*).

It is also important to understand the difference between presupposing and asserting. An assertion is a complete sentence-type. This act ought to be accompanied by certain beliefs, which can be verified (Fiengo 2007). However, if an assertion is made without having such beliefs, it no longer is an assertion. Fiengo gives an example of such a speech act: If one looks at the Mona Lisa painting and says, "*Da Vinci painted that*" with a rising intonation, the sentence is grammatically complete and grammatically reads as an assertion. However, because rising intonation indicates an incomplete belief in the assertion, it makes the sentence into what closely resembles a confirmation question, with the speaker seeking confirmation for his or her claim. Assertion, therefore, requires the knowledge and the belief of something, but a complete sentence-type does not always constitute an assertion.

Presupposing, in turn, refers to the fact that certain assumptions are visible in questions. For example, the question "*Who are you talking to*?" presupposes that the other person is indeed talking to someone. It is common for questions to show presuppositions about the subject at hand, or to show expectations about the response (Clayman and Heritage 2002).

For the purpose of my study, examining different question types is important as it also links to the discussion on turn-taking sequences in interviews. For example, it could be assumed that a confirmation question will evoke a shorter interviewee turn than an open question.

2.3 Turn-taking and interruptions

News interviews (political interviews) typically have a simple question-answer format, which also helps the audience make the distinction between them and, for example, chat shows. A news interview, in this regard, is less conversational than a chat show (Clayman and Heritage 2002).

In a chat show, conversation can flow freely and the constraints between the participants are limited. For instance, the guests (the interviewees) can initiate topics if they so wish. In a news interview, on the other hand, the roles of the participants are more fixed: the interviewer asks questions, and the interviewee responds (Clayman and Heritage 2002). In fact, this format is so commonly used that according to Clayman and Heritage (2002: 100) over 85% of interviewers' turns in an interview end in a question, and the numbers are strikingly similar for both British and American interviews.

This is important to understand for the purposes of the present study. There is a set of rules for news interviews, and any departure from these rules in the form of interruptions or unusual turn-taking sequences are of great interest in this study. This also relates closely to the organization of turn-taking in conversation. According to Sacks et al. (1978: 699), the allocation and transition between turns is a finely coordinated process. Turn-transfer sequences revolve around transition relevance places (TRP), which are determined by what the parties perceive as completion points of turns. In other words, transition relevance places are moments in conversation in which the turn naturally shifts from one participant to the other. An example of this could be a short pause, or a change in intonation.

Interruptions represent a departure from the traditional interview format and understanding TRP is also an important factor in analyzing interruptions. If a transition relevance place is present occurs, a brief overlapping of participants' speech does not necessarily constitute an interruption. In an

interview, however, significant overlapping is relatively rare. Clayman and Heritage (2002: 104) state that just under half of interviewer turns include more than a single question unit. This can be a setup for the question to come, or the establishing of the context. Interviewees rarely respond in any way to these setups, because the expectation is that a question will come at the end of the interviewer's turn. Even small injections, such as "uh-huh", or "yes" in the middle of the other participant's turn are rare. This further speaks of the rigid, fixed format of the typical news interview. In other words, there is a collaborative effort from both parties to adhere to the "rules" of an interview (Clayman and Heritage 2002).

In analyzing interruptions, then, it is important to draw the distinction between different types of interruptions. Interruptions can come at the end of extended interviewee turns to turn the conversation towards another direction. They can also occur when the interviewer sees one of the interviewee's claims as disputable, creating grounds for interruption (Ekström and Patrona 2011: 53). In these situations, interviewers are to question the claim in the name of the viewing public; to play the "devil's advocate". Interruptions like this can lead to "micro-arguments" within the interview, temporarily halting the Question-Answer turn system (Ekström and Patrona 2011: 53). Interruptions can also initiate repair-sequences (Schegloff et al. 1977).

3 THE PRESENT STUDY

3.1 Data

My data consists of interview videos. I have chosen three political television interviews, each from a different news station and with different participants. The interviews are all between the years of 2016 and 2017 and between fifteen and twenty minutes in length. The interviews have been chosen so that each has examples of turn-taking sequences, interruptions, and different question types. The interviews have been taken from the news organizations' YouTube channels, which are freely available.

The first interview is a 20-minute interview from July 31st, 2016 on American television network ABC News. The interview is conducted by George Stephanopoulos and the interviewee is the current president of the United States, then candidate Donald Trump. The second interview, also from the United States, is from the CBS News program *Face the Nation*. This interview is from January 15th, 2017 and is roughly 15 minutes in length. The politician interviewed is then Vice President-elect and current Vice President of the United States, Mike Pence. The interviewer is CBS

News' John Dickerson. The third interview is about 17 minutes long and was broadcast on the British channel Sky News on May 21st, 2017. The interviewee is Jeremy Corbyn, a British politician from the Labour party, and the interviewer is Sophy Ridge.

3.2 Methods of analysis

My study is qualitative in nature and I use conversation analysis (CA) as my main method of study. Conversation analysis is interested in the details of people's practices in interaction with one another. The strengths of CA are numerous and include, for example, its closeness to the phenomena it studies: it works on the basis of detailed recordings and transcripts and is therefore better able to account for detailed and subtle nuances of interaction (Ten Have, 2007). In addition, CA studies language as it naturally occurs, rather than relying on researcher-provoked or experimental data. The video interviews have been transcribed and analyzed using CA conventions (see Appendix), which allows me to study both the verbal and non-verbal communication, and also get an idea of, for example, the frequency of interruptions or certain kinds of utterances. Specific focus will be on sequences during which the participants talk over each other or interrupt each other.

After transcribing the videos, I have identified from the data the sequences in which the participants talk over each other. These sequences were analyzed in more detail and divided into different sections in my analysis depending on the functions they performed in the interviews.

4 ANALYSIS

The analysis of the data is separated into different sections, in which I describe the different types of interruptions that occurred within the interviews and utilize data extracts as examples. As the analysis below will show, various kinds of interruptions were present in the data, and embedded within these interruptions were numerous question types, which will also be briefly discussed.

First, I will examine two types of non-adversarial interruptions which are made for the purpose of time management (Chapter 4.1). These interruptions are divided into successful and unsuccessful interviewer attempts. Then, I will discuss interruptions which initiate additional questions or clarifying questions in the middle of the interviewee's speech (Chapters 4.2.1 and 4.2.2). Finally,

my analysis will examine interruptions in which the interviewer challenges the interviewee's claims (Chapter 4.2.3).

4.1 Interruptions for the purpose of time management

The format of a television interview is bound by certain limitations, such as the length of the time-slot dedicated to the interview. My data shows that the interviewer is in some cases forced to try to interrupt the interviewee to move on in the interview, or simply cut off a lengthy interviewee turn. These interruptions do not include the interviewer making claims, challenging the interviewee, or initiating repair sequences. It could be stated that they occur somewhat naturally as one line of questioning, or a specific topic, comes to an end and the interviewer wants to either move on to something else, or close the interview. My data shows that these interruptions most often occur at the end of lengthy interviewee turns, or after the interviewer makes the judgment that a satisfactory answer has been achieved. These interruptions are divided into two categories in my analysis: successful and unsuccessful interruption attempts by the interviewer (IR).

4.1.1 Successful interviewer attempts

In my analysis, successful interviewer attempts at moving to a different topic are considered such attempts that relatively quickly change the speaker turn. In other words, in these cases the interviewer is able to quickly move to another topic after initiating a change in the line of questioning.

My data shows, however, that it is quite typical for these interruptions to occur in multiple parts. In other words, the interviewer will have to hint several times at cutting off the interviewee in the middle of his or her turn. These interruptions can also be sharp, audible inhalations to indicate that the interviewer is looking for a speaker turn in the conversation. In the extract below from John Dickerson's interview with Mike Pence this pattern is well visible.

Extract 1:

1	IE:	Well of course not. And I think to suggest that is to give credence to some of, uh,
2		of these, uh, these bizarre rumors that h(h)a(a)ve swirled around the candidacy and
3		the fact that, that [a]
4	IR:	[mmm-h]
5	IE:	few news organizations, not this one,
6	IR:	Right.
7	IE:	actually trafficked in a, in a memo that was produced as opposition research and

8		associated that [with]
9	IR:	[.hh]
10	IE:	intelligence efforts, I think could only be attributed to media bias, >and, and< as I
11		said this week at the press conference John, the American people are tired of it. We're
12		coming into this week with a great sense of optimism, the American people know
13		that we can have government in [Washington]
14	IR:	[(x)]
15	IE:	D.C. as good as our people, we can get this
16		economy moving again, we can rebuild our mili[tary, we]
17	IR:	[let me move on]
18	IE:	can, we can be standing tall in the world again, and those are the reasons why
19		Donald Trump is gonna take that oath of ↓office [on Friday.]
20	IR:	[let's move-]
21		let's move to the world.
22		What does Donald Trump feel about Vladimir Putin and Russia?

The interviewer (IR) makes short injections such as "mmm-h" (1.4) and "Right" (1.6) quite early in the interviewee's (IE) turn, which, as discussed earlier, is not very usual in the rigid format of an interview but here, could be seen as acknowledgement tokens which indicate that the IR is listening and paying attention to the IE's response. As stated by Clayman and Heritage (2002: 98), these responsive acts can be seen as departures from the interview format and could even be seen as the IR showing agreement with what is being said. As the IE turn continues, the IR then makes a small injection again, this time non-verbally with an audible and sharp inhalation (1.9). This inhalation indicates the IR's intent to say something in the middle of the IE's turn. He intervenes again (1.14) shortly after. These injections are not necessarily made with the idea of getting the speaking turn right away; rather, the IR might be trying make the IE aware that he wants to take the turn. As the IE continues his turn, the IR finally indicates very clearly that he wants to move the interview along, by saying "let me move on" (1.17). On this occasion he talks over the IE in an attempt to get the turn. Very shortly after this, the IE indicates with a dropping intonation that his turn has finished (1.19).

In this short extract the interviewer made a total of four interruptions, first to hint at the line of questioning coming to an end, and later, to indicate that the interviewee should end his turn. The very clear "let me move on" (1.17) affects the interviewee's behavior as well, as he becomes aware that the interviewer is trying to cut him off. As a result, he finishes his turn shortly after by lowering the intonation of his voice (1.19) and thus indicating that he is done talking. In this sense, the interviewer's attempt can be considered successful: he indicated to the IE that he was looking for a turn and when he indicated that it was time to move on ("Let me move on"), he was quickly able to present a new question.

4.1.2 Unsuccessful interviewer attempts

Unsuccessful interviewer attempts at moving to a different topic are considered such which do not result in a change of turn and thus do not allow the IR to move to a new topic. Despite an attempt from the IR to do this, the IE's turn continues.

An example of this occurs later in the same interview examined in Extract 1. The IR tries to move to a different topic and ask a new question. In the following extract, like in Extract 1 before, the IR again makes several attempts to end the IE's turn. On this occasion, however, the IE turn continues despite the new line of questioning presented by the IR.

Extract 2:

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1     IE:      I think Rex Tillerson will have, and has no confusion, [about who will]
2     IR:                                                     [>Let me ask you<]
3     IE:      be making the decisions in the Trump administration, and that's true of all of us,
4              I mean, what- [what- what's -what's]
5     IR:             [>let me ask you about Mike Flynn<]
6     IE:      so encouraging, to be around Donald Trump, and literally be sitting
7              side by side with him, during the course of this transition,
8              when he's done hundreds of interviews and made- made decisions that have attracted
9              men and women of extraordinary caliber to this cabinet, I think we may well have the
10             entire cabinet named before the inauguration, is to see a leader who is decisive,
11             he asks incisive questions, he gets [straight]
12    IR:                                          [right]
13    IE:      to the point, he knows what he's looking for and when he [sees it]
14    IR:                                                        [let me-]
15    IE:      he makes ↓the decision.
16    IR:      Let me ask you about, it was reported by David Ignatius that the incoming national
17             security advisor Mike -Michael Flynn was in touch with the Russian ambassador
18             on the day the United States government announced sanctions for Russian interference
19             with the election.
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IR talks over IE to make the first attempt at asking a new question (2.2). An almost identical sentence is uttered again shortly after, on line 5. Both of these initial interruptions occur in the middle of the IE's turn and are also characterized by the IR's attempt to speed up his speech in order to say what he wants to say. After an extended IE turn the IR again makes a similar short injection as in Extract 1 (2.12) and talks over the IE again (2.14) to try and get the turn, which he finally gets shortly after when the IR finishes his sentence (2.16).

The IR makes a clear indication (lines 2 and 5) that he wants to move to a different topic. On this occasion, however, the IR talks over the IE, but the IE's turn continues, and is only affected by the IR's attempt on line 4, when the IE's speech is clearly disturbed by the IR's injection. Despite this,

however, the IE does not give the IR an opportunity to move on to another topic but rather, is adamant to finish his own answer. Because of this, the IR attempt can be considered unsuccessful.

4.2 Interruptions for clarification

In some cases, the interviewer challenges the interviewee's statements in the interview. This can be done through clarifying questions or partial repetitions of what the interviewee has said and is done for the benefit of the viewing audience (Clayman and Heritage, 2010). These kinds of interruptions are divided into three categories in my analysis. First, I will analyze non-adversarial interruptions which seek to clarify or confirm a point of question, but do not dispute or attempt to correct the IE's statements. Secondly, the analysis will focus on interruptions which do not dispute or challenge the IE's statements per se, but which do appear slightly combative or even adversarial in their wording and presentation. Finally, interruptions which directly challenge the IE's claims will be analyzed.

As will be made evident through the analysis, whether or not these interruptions are classified as adversarial is dependent upon the context in which they occur, as well as the way in which the interviewer presents the additional questions. For example, an interruption beginning with the word "but" could be seen as adversarial as it immediately places in contrastive relationship the statements previously made by the IE. In other cases, the adversarial nature is less evident or simply does not exist.

4.2.1 Non-adversarial interruptions

Clarifying questions can often occur as interruptions, as I will discuss in this section. These interruptions can happen when the IR sees one of the IE's claims or statements as disputable or wants to draw attention to something (Clayman and Heritage, 2010). In the case of non-adversarial interruptions, the purpose of the IR is to confirm a point or to simply seek clarification for something.

An example of this kind of clarifying questioning is an extract from an interview on Sky News. In this particular extract, the interviewer Sophy Ridge is questioning the Labour party's Jeremy Corbyn about ending the spending freeze on universal benefits. The IR appears not to be satisfied with the response and rather quickly interrupts to ask a clarifying question, in the middle of the interviewee's turn, where there was no clear indication that his response was nearing completion.

1	IR:	Cause what I'm a little bit confused about here is that you say that there's this big
2		of money set aside, uh,
3	IE:	mmh
4	IR:	and in your manifesto you say two billion pounds a year
5	IE:	((nods))
6	IR:	is being spent on things around universal credit.
7	IE:	mmh-h.
8	IR:	So, where is the three billion a year
9		that the IFS say would be needed to end (.) the freeze on those benefits?
10	IE:	The issue about universal credit is that it includes housing costs, and housing costs
11		are actually the biggest part of it in some parts of the country, and so we need to look
12		at that and see if there can't, in the longer term, be a separation of them
13		be[cause-]
14	IR:	[>so would you<]
15		end the freeze, I'm just trying to [get to the bottom of it]
16	IE:	[yes, the free- the freeze]
17		The freeze would be ended, because it's very, very unfair to those in receipt of
18		those benefits.

In this example, the IE is showing his attentiveness during the IR's turn as the IR asks a prefacing question (3. 1-2, 4, 6): a type of question that involves statements before the actual question that comes in line 8 (Clayman and Heritage 2002:104). The IE also shows agreement with the IR's statements by nodding his head during the IR turn (3.5). The IE begins to respond to the question (3:10) but quite shortly the IR interrupts him to clarify a specific item (3.14). While the interviewer's initial question is a wh-question, the interruption (line 14) is a confirmation question. The format of the confirmation request manifests that the interviewer was looking for a more concise answer in the first place. One could even say that there is a bit of confusion between the IR and the IE: The interviewer's first question (*Where is the three billion a year that [...] would be needed to end the freeze?*) implies that she lacks the knowledge about the financial aspect of the issue, and is asking for clarification, as also indicated by her own admission of confusion (3.1). With the confirmation question, however, she presents herself as having a completely different lack: does the IE want to end the freeze? The interruption (line 14) is made for the purpose of getting a specific answer and clarifying the IE's view on the topic.

4.2.2 Combative interruptions

In some cases, the IR can present a clarifying question in a way which is more combative than the example analyzed in Extract 3. In the following extract the IR again begins her turn with an admission of having a lack in her knowledge and seeking confirmation. The initial question (or a statement which functions as a question) functions very much like an alternative question, as the

interviewer clearly asks the interviewee to choose between two alternatives, "up" or "down". As the IE refuses to say either or in his response, the IR very quickly interrupts to get the interviewee to answer the question.

Extract 4

1	IR:	So I'm still not quite sure if you want immigration to go up or down.
2	IE:	I want there to be <u>fair</u> immigration based on the needs of our society and that
3		uh, is a proper way of approaching it
4	IR:	[>it's not quite what I asked though< is it]
5	IE:	[consider- (.) well it's not what you]
6		asked but it's what, it's what the conservatives have offered in the last three elections-
7		last two elections plus this one, they're gonna bring it down, they didn't and they
8		<u>cou</u>ldn't, and I'm saying there will be <u>fair</u> migration based on the needs of the society
9		>but there will also not be< the undercutting of, uh, working arrangements in this
10		country by the bringing in of whole workforces to work for very low wages, to
11		destroy working conditions in the society, so there will be an end to those agencies
12		that are trying to recruit workforces ↓overs[eas.]
13	IR:	[So] you won't say if you want it to
14		go up or down.
15	IE:	I want us to have a society that work and a balance that works and I cannot get into
16		numbers games because I don't think it works [in- in- in]
17	IR:	[>Well it's just a direction of travel]
18		you know I'm not asking for, you know, a target or a limit, I'm just saying, would you
19		like it to go <u>up</u> or <u>down</u>.
20	IE:	What I want is a society that works and what I want is fair migration, it will probably
21		be lower but I don't- I c- I won't- I don't wanna start making predictions on that.

The interviewer's initial interruption (4.4) is not only an attempt to guide the response towards a more specific answer, but it is also a quite direct acknowledgement that the IE is trying to avoid answering the question directly and within the parameters that the initial question laid out. This can be seen as a somewhat adversarial speech act from the IR, as she uses a negative interrogative to combat the IE's evasiveness (*It's not quite what I asked though, is it*). Clayman and Heritage (2002: 240) talk about this ability of an interviewer to counter evasiveness as "fundamental". The example provided by this extract is also in line with Clayman and Heritage's (2002: 242) implication that the participants do not always see the respondent's evasiveness in the same way: the interviewer might often think that it is more improper or of more importance than the interviewee. This is evident when IE also acknowledges the fact that he is not directly answering the IR's question (4.5), but despite this, goes on to partially repeat what he said before, without addressing the "up or down"- question. After the IE indicates with his dropping intonation that his response is complete, the turn changes and the IR insists with the same question (or a statement that functions as a question) again (4.13). This is also another acknowledgement of what the IR considers evasiveness on the IE's part. Finally, the IR interrupts the IE for a second time (line 17) to clarify and perhaps justify her

question ("I'm not asking for, you know, a target or a limit") and to partially repeat the initial question, with emphasis on the words "up" and "down". Despite this, the IE does not directly answer this question.

4.2.3 Challenging IE claims

Some interruptions make attempts to challenge or dispute the IE's claim. Such interruptions are adversarial by their very nature, and in these sequences, the IR can, for instance, rely on third-party information or other additional data to strengthen his or her position. Presenting additional information can strengthen the IR's epistemic claim (Koskela, 2011).

The following extract is an example of this kind of sequence. In this extract, the interviewer George Stephanopoulos is questioning then presidential candidate Donald Trump about his relationship with Russian president Vladimir Putin. The IR challenges the IE's answer to the question by presenting additional information, which results in what Ekström and Patrona (2011: 53) call a "micro-argument" within the interview.

Extract 5

1	IR:	Let's talk about Russia. You made a lot of headlines with Russia this week.
2		What exactly is your relationship with Vladimir Putin?
3	IE:	I have no relationship with Putin. I have no relationship ↓with Pu[tin.]
4	IR:	[But if]
5		you have no relationship with Putin, then why did you say, in 2013,
6		((looks at paper)) "I do have a
7		relationship, in 2014, "I [spoke]
8	IE:	[because he]
9		has said nice things about me over the years. I remember years ago he said something
10		many years ago, he said something very nice about me. I said something good about
11		him when Larry King was on, this is a long time ago, and I said, he is a tough cookie,
12		or something to that effect. He said something nice about me, >this has been< going on
13		we did 60 Minutes together, by the way. Not together together, meaning he was
14		probably shot in [Moscow and I was shot in New York]
15	IR:	[>Well he was in Moscow, you were in New York, but<]
16	IR:	that's the thing-
17	IE:	No, just so you understand, he said very nice things about me, but I have no
18		relationship with him, [I don't- I've never met him.]
19	IR:	[Yet you said for]
20		three years, 13, 14 and 15, that you did have a relation[ship with him]
21	IE:	[I have no-]
22		Look, what do you call a relationship, I mean he treats
23		[me with great respect]
24	IR:	[I'm asking you]
25	IE:	I have no relationship with Putin.

In this extract, the IE gives a very straight-forward answer to the initial question (5.3) but is immediately challenged by the IR who begins his follow-up question with the word "but" (5.4) and then confronts the IE very directly with additional information while looking at the papers in his hands (5.5-6). The interviewer is thus building his epistemic position by referring to these previous statements, and by relying on the papers in his hand to recite this information in form of direct quotes. Koskela (2011) categorizes these kinds of acts as linguistic or multimodal resources, which are utilized to "realize epistemic practices." On lines 3 and 4 the participants' speech briefly overlaps, but rather than an interruption, this is a transition relevance place, where the IE's lowering intonation indicates a natural change in turn.

The IR and IE then talk over each other again (lines 14 and 15), with the IR increasing the pace of his speech before using the word "but" to start a contradicting claim, which is then interrupted by the IE (5.16-17). The IR then interrupts him to insist that the IE has previously made contradicting statements, using the tone of his voice to emphasize the word "did" (5.20) to highlight this contradiction, which is then interrupted by the IE. The IR's use of the words "but" and "yet" is a very clear way to draw attention to the contradictions he is trying to highlight.

What is also evident here is that the interviewer does not wait for the interviewee's response to be complete, but rather intervenes to ask the clarifying question or to challenge the claim, and in doing so, interrupts and talks over the interviewee.

5 CONCLUSION

The aim of this study was to provide an answer to two research questions about what kinds of interruptions are made by the interviewer in the course of a television news interview, as well as what the IR seeks to accomplish by the interruptions, and how successful he or she is in accomplishing these goals. I have divided interruptions into different categories to distinguish between their types as well as their objectives. In my analysis these categories are 1) interruptions for the purpose of time management, 2) interruptions for the purpose of clarification, and 3) combative interruptions for the purpose of challenging the interviewee.

The analysis has shown that interruptions in category 1 often occur in multiple parts, and their success has here been determined by whether or not they initiated a quick change in topic or gave the interviewer the turn to speak. In the successful IR attempt in Extract 1, the interviewer's interruption does not instantly end the IE's turn, but it can be considered successful because the IE

ends his turn very shortly afterwards, presenting the IR with a chance to ask a new question. The unsuccessful IR attempt in Extract 2, in turn, exemplifies a situation in which the IR does not manage to initiate a change of topic despite an attempt to cut the IE's turn by increasing the pace of his speech, as is evident on line 5 of Extract 2.

In category 2, the IR's interruption occurs for a different purpose: to clarify a specific item and get a simple and clear answer. Extract 3 exemplifies a situation in which the IR and the IE do not appear to be in agreement about what the appropriate answer for the question is, prompting the IR to interrupt the IE in order to clarify. This is in line with what Clayman and Heritage (2002: 192) write about agenda setting: the IR's question is designed to prefer a specific type of answer; it sets the agenda for the IE's response. When the IE does not respond to the expectation of a preferred answer, a micro-argument of sorts is initiated by the IR to press on the specific point of question.

A similar pattern is evident in Extract 4, which provides an example of the interviewer trying to combat what she interprets as evasiveness on the IE's part and is much more combative in nature than Extract 3. The use of a negative interrogative by the IR calls attention to the perceived evasiveness, but unlike in Extract 3, the IR's attempt to get a clarified and simple answer ("yes" or "no"; "up" or "down") is not successful. Due to the small scale of the present study it is not possible to make a generalized statement, but based on the data examined, it appears that a more combative approach was less successful from the IR's point of view. Perhaps this could be attributed to Clayman and Heritage's (2002) research on interviews, which indicates that both parties are expected to adhere to the common set of "rules" for an interview. A departure, such as a combative interruption, from these rules is here greeted with a negative response.

Finally, in category 3, I have analyzed IR interruptions which aim to challenge the IE's claims or statements. By their very nature, these interruptions are combative and adversarial, and as seen in Extract 5, can also lead to micro-arguments within the interview. As Craig (2016) states, these micro-arguments increasingly often characterize the modern political interview and could be the result of the increasing prominence of the journalist or the interviewer as a persona, or a television performer. Further research could be conducted to better understand the quantity of these micro-arguments, or to study their implications on the viewing public's comprehension and perception about politicians or news media.

The small scale of the study presents certain limitations: as mentioned before, it is not possible to make generalized statements based on my data. In addition, the focus of my study was on analyzing specific examples rather than trying to provide quantified information about different interruption

types. The strengths of this study are related to its implications for television audiences, who benefit from being able to understand interview practices at a more detailed and analytical level. Implications are also made for journalists and interviewers, whose tasks as not only television performers but also as fact-checkers requires a deep understanding of these practices, as well as the knowledge about effective and non-effective ways to accomplish their institutional goals in the interview.

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Appendix: Transcription conventions (adapted from Jefferson (2004))

.	downward/stopping intonation at the end of a prosodic entity
,	continuing intonation at the end of a prosodic entity
?	rising intonation at the end of a prosodic entity
¿	slightly rising intonation
↑	rising intonation, marked prior to the syllable or word where occurs
↓	falling intonation, marked prior to the syllable or word where occurs
<u>what</u>	word emphasis

>what<	speech pace that is quicker than the surrounding talk
<what>	speech pace that is slower than the surrounding talk
°what°	speech that is quieter than the surrounding talk
WHAT	speech that is louder than the surrounding talk
wha:t	a sound or a syllable is extended

(1.9)	silences timed in tenths of a second (approximately)
(.)	micro pause, which marks a clear stop in the speech too short for measuring
((laughs))	transcriber's comments about the character of talk or addressed recipients
(xxx)	unrecognizable/unintelligent item – sentence length
(xx)	unrecognizable item – phrase length
(x)	unrecognizable item – possibly one word
(what)	dubious hearings

hhh	audible aspiration
.hh	audible inhalation
.yeah	a period in front of a word: the word is said with an in breath
ye-	a cut-off word

[	left-hand bracket indicates the beginning of overlapping utterances

|] | right-hand bracket indicates where overlapping speech ends |
| = | contiguous utterances or units of talk |

wh(h)a(h)t laughingly uttered word or phrase