Gender differences in answering questions in a News Interview:
a study of male and female answers in *The Andrew Marr Show*

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine possible differences in the way male and female politicians answer questions in a news interview, with focus on hedging expressions, answer resistance strategies and negative mentions of other politicians and political parties.

The study is based on analysis of 13 interviews with British politicians made for the BBC One programme The Andrew Marr show in 2013 and 2014. The data used for analysis is transcripts and recordings of the interviews, and the study uses conversation analytical tools to in detail examine the answers in relation to conversational phenomena and techniques.

The results show several significant differences in the way men and women answer questions. Women use more hedging expressions, minimal response and overt resistance than men, whereas men covertly resist questions to a greater extent than women. Men also seem more likely to mention colleagues or other political parties in a negative manner in a way to pass blame. These results are discussed in relation to social structures in society as well as former studies on the matter.

Keywords: conversation analysis, language use, gender differences, news interview, hedging, answer design,
Transcript notations:

- .
  - falling intonation
- ,
  - slightly rising intonation
- ?
  - strongly rising intonation
- (.)
  - noticeable pause
- (0.3)
  - timed pauses
- A: word [word
  - overlapping speech
  B: [word
- .h, hhh.
  - audible breathing, the greater the number of h,
    the longer the aspiration
- word
  - noted stress or emphasis
- <word>
  - stretched out talk, slower than surrounding talk
- >word<
  - compressed or rushed talk
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1. Introduction

Conversation can be seen as the way people socialise, the way they develop and sustain relationships. It is a big part of our everyday lives, and the way we use language influences the way we are perceived. It is therefore interesting to study language use with the aim of saying something about society as a whole, and this is the idea behind conversation analysis, a sociolinguistic and sociological form of analysis which aims to answer questions about how we use language in different situations through detailed analysis of conversations.

The aim of this study is to discuss the possible differences in how men and women answer similar questions in interviews that focus on news and current affairs. The study looks at the use of hedging expressions and minimal response, different strategies for resisting answers as well as negative mentions of other politicians and political parties in 13 interviews, to find possible differences between male and female interviewees. The questions this essay aims to answer are: Are there any differences in the language use between women and men in an interview situation, and, if so, how can these differences be explained?
2. Theoretical Background

2.1 Conversation Analysis

2.1.1 What is conversation analysis?

The focus of Conversation Analysis (CA) is the language of social interaction. The object of study in CA is generally everyday conversation, which is “natural” as opposed to scripted or forced. Questions asked in CA are of the kind: How is speech structured? How do participants make sense of a conversation? What are the mechanisms of turn taking? How do people show understanding? What roles do quasi-lexical items play in conveying meaning?

CA springs from sociology, and is normally based on orthographical transcriptions of audio or video recordings of speech in different situations. Recordings are almost crucial for conversation analysts, as they make it possible to look at the material over and over again, and thereby see or hear things that would be impossible to remember if conversation was analysed at the moment it happens (Stivers 2012).

2.1.2 Historical Background

Conversation has been studied for centuries before the emerging of what today is known as Conversation Analysis, although previous work had a strongly rhetoric approach and consisted in the forming of rules of conversation which one had to follow to become what was called a "good conversationalist".

Conversation Analysis (CA) as we know it today was developed in the 1960's through the work of Harvey Sacks, Emanuel Schlegloff and Gail Jefferson. It was then seen as a new and innovative branch of linguistics with a different approach to language and the interaction between speakers, but the basis of the approach had already been created by two important sociologists, Erving Goffman and Harold Garfinkel. They both proposed that conversation should be given more attention in sociological studies, as the ability to manage this complex web of standards, rules and conventions is exceptionally delicate, as well as extremely important in order to be a part of society (Goffman, 1957). Conversation analysis as we know it grew out of the work of Goffman and Garfinkel, as well as studies from other social sciences and humanities such as anthropology and psychoanalysis.

Anthony J. Liddicoat, in his book An Introduction to Conversation Analysis describes the core assumptions of conversation analysis as follows:

1. **Order is produced orderliness.** That is, order does not occur of its own accord nor does is
pre-exist the interaction, but is rather the result of the coordinate practices of the participants who achieve orderliness as they interact.

2. *Order is produced, situated and occasioned.* That is, order is produced by the participants themselves for the conversation in which it occurs. The participants themselves orient to the order being produced and their behaviour reflects and indexes that order. This means that in analysing conversation as an academic activity, orderliness being documented is not externally imposed by the analyst but internally accomplished by the participants. This observed order is not the result of pre-formed conceptions of what should happen, nor is it a probabilistic generalization about frequency.

3. *Order is repeatable and recurrent.* The patterns of orderliness found in conversation are repeated not only in the talk of an individual speaker but across groups of speakers. The achieved order is therefore the result of a shared understanding of the methods by which order is achievable. (Liddicoat, 2011:5)

To summarise, it becomes clear that to conversation analysts conversation is neither random nor unstructured. However, order does not automatically apply to all conversations. Rather, the participants of every conversation create not only the conversation but also the orderly ways of it.

2.1.3 Turn-taking

Turns in conversation are stretches of language which vary in form and length. They are not always full sentences, but anything that contains information in one way or another, or carries the conversation forwards. Turn-taking is a socially constructed behaviour and as we interact with other people almost every day of our lives, humans have grown extremely skilled at the art of turn-taking. Gaps, pauses and overlaps do not occur nearly as often as one would assume, and if there is the slightest pause between turns, participants will immediately think that the other participant/s have not heard or understood the preceding turn. Conversation analysts point out the important fact that the action of turn taking is not "imposed externally on a conversation, but is run internally by the participants themselves" (Liddicoat, 2011), i.e. is organised at the moment it happens by the participants themselves.

Turn-taking is somewhat different in an interview situation, as it is not really a normal conversation. The interviewer has a much greater responsibility to make sure the conversation runs smoothly than the interviewee and this creates an uneven work load. On the other hand,
none of the participants have to worry about selecting the next speaker, as no one else is present, or at least eligible to speak (Heritage 2005).

2.2 Language and Gender

2.2.1 Sociolinguistics & Gender

Sociolinguistics is the field of linguistics that studies social aspects of society, such as norms, group dynamics and context, with the focus on language use. Sociolinguists are interested in how language affects society, as well as how society is mirrored in the use of different aspects of language. It is closely related to the study of pragmatics, and historically related to anthropology (Coates 1993).

Sociolinguistics studies how the use of different language varieties differs according to different variables, e.g. ethnicity, religion, class and age. One such variable that grew to be a popular field of study in the 1960s and 1970s is gender, and the question of whether men and women use language in different ways, and if so, how these differences are realised. Scholars are also interested in looking at why certain differences have appeared.

2.2.2 Lakoff's 'Language and Woman's Place'

Robin Lakoff is a professor of linguistics at University of California, Berkley, and has since the beginning of her academic career focused her work on the differences in which men and women talk and interact in conversation. Even though it has been almost forty years since the publication of her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), which in many ways was the first of its kind, the majority of studies today still stem from Lakoff's ideas.

Lakoff means that language use can tell us a lot about ourselves and the society we live in. *Language and Woman's Place* sets out to discuss what language can tell us about the nature of any inequality. How are women taught language differently from men, and how does language use reflect the gender stereotypes of modern life? This study has been strongly criticised for its lack of empirical evidence. Lakoff bases her study on observation of her own and her friends' speech and used her own intuition to analyse it. This does of course affect the validity of the study negatively, but Lakoff writes in the introduction to her study that her work is in no way final or perfect, but suggests one possible approach (Lakoff, 1975).

Lakoff talks about a more frequent use in female speakers of so called tag questions, "a declarative statement without the assumption that the statement is to be believed by the addressee" (1975, 48), and rising intonation in declarative statements, which will leave the
answer, decision or statement open without imposing the speakers own view on the matter. All of these are used to weaken the force of the utterance; a device expected of women in a male-dominated society; they should to a great extent avoid being forceful. Lakoff states clearly and repeatedly that these linguistic gender differences mirror non-linguistic differences rather than being the source of inequality, and they are clues that point to an unequal society.

It is easy to jump to the conclusion that all recurrent use of typical feminine linguistic features will be gender specific and mirror an unequal society, but other scholars, such as Cameron, McAlinden and O'Leary, in their 1988 article "Lakoff in context: the social and linguistic function on tag questions" have pointed out the fact that what Lakoff calls "women's language" might actually be the language of a socially subordinated group, which may include aspects such as class, age and social position. As a conclusion, it must be considered that studying gender differences in language must be done carefully and with great consideration, as 'women' do not constitute a homogeneous social group.

2.2.3 Gender and Conversational Style
This section pays attention to some of the aspects of language and conversation which, according to earlier studies, have been seen to differ in the speech of men and women. There are many more aspects that would be interesting to look at, but these are the ones that will be the focus of the analysis in this study.

2.2.3.1 Verbosity
The gender stereotypes of modern society say than women talk more than men. Women are known to always be on the phone or gossip with their friends, or 'talk around' what they are trying to communicate, whereas the stereotypical man says what he wants to say and then keeps quiet. This theory has been proven wrong by almost all research carried out on the subject. Men talk more than women in almost all settings, such as staff meetings (Eakins and Eakins 1978), panel discussions broadcasted on TV (Bernard 1972) and spontaneous conversation between spouses (Soskin & John 1963). In an experiment made by Marjorie Swacker in 1975, where subjects were asked to describe three pictures, men took on average four times as long to describe each picture.

It has been suggested that because men normally dominate the conversation in situations with both sexes present we have different expectations on male and female
speakers (Spender 1980). Since men are supposed to dominate and lead the conversation, and women are supposed to stay silent to a much greater extent, we will perceive women talking at the same length as men as much more talkative.

2.2.3.2 Minimal Response

Minimal response are paralinguistic features such as "mm" and "yeah", which are used to show support for the current speaker, and give him or her a sign that he or she can continue speaking. They are not used to introduce a new turn or grab the floor; they are brief and are not uttered with the intention of answering the speaker's question. Minimal response can be verbal, in one-syllable utterances such as "uh-huh" or "yeah" or even short clauses such as "that's true" or "I agree", but also non-verbal responses such as nods, shakes of the head or laughter (Knapp & Hall 1997).

Studies have shown that women use minimal responses more frequently and more appropriately than men (Strodtbeck & Mann 1956), i.e. they use them to show support and keep the conversation going. Men do use minimal responses as well, but almost exclusively to show agreement, and in many cases the response is somewhat delayed, which instead of support indicates lack of interest in the conversation (Zimmerman & West 1975:110).

2.2.3.3 Hedging

Hedges are linguistic forms, a word or a clause, used to show the speaker's certainty or uncertainty about the subject of the utterance. It can also be seen as a communicative strategy to make a particular line of reasoning more acceptable to an audience, or indirectly show support for an argument by weakening the claim. This latter use can be seen more as a rhetorical strategy than a subconscious conversational tool, and it is this use of hedging that will be the focus in this essay. Lakoff claimed that women tend to use more hedges because women "are socialised to believe that asserting themselves strongly isn't very ladylike, or even feminine" (Lakoff, 1975:54). Studies after Lakoff have shown that women do use more hedges, but also state that it is important that scholars working with this hypothesis are sensitive to the different functions of hedges, as well as discuss the androcentric suggestion that hedges are linked to weakness.

Studies by Coates (1987; 1989) focused on single-sex conversation, and found that women use hedges more frequently when speaking to each other. Coates argued that hedges in most cases should be seen as a strength rather than a weakness. In many cases, the use of hedges makes conversations about highly sensitive topics less face-threatening.
2.2.3.4 Politeness

In linguistics, politeness is most commonly discussed in terms of face. In conversation we respect face by showing consideration for two basic human needs: (1) the need not to be imposed on; and (2) the need to be liked and admired. The first need is dealt with by respecting someone's negative face, whereas the latter is called positive face. In conversation, we wish to protect both our own, and the other participants faces (Soskin & John 1963).

Brown (1980) tested the hypothesis that women are more polite than men in a study of a Mayan language in Mexico, and found that women speaking to women used much more "polite particles" than men speaking to men, and that women in general seemed to care more about keeping both positive and negative face in both intersex and single-sex conversation. In short, it seems like women are more polite.

2.3 The News Interview

2.3.1 Institutional Talk

Drew and Heritage (1992) define institutional talk with three basic statements, which embody the differences between talk between friends around a table at a bar, and conversation in a formal situation, such as a court hearing, a lecture, a visit to the doctor, a business meeting or an interview:

1. Institutional talk involves an orientation by at least one of the participants to some core goal, task or identity (or set of them) conventionally associated with the institution in question. In short, institutional talk is normally informed by goal orientations of a relatively restricted conventional form.
2. Institutional interaction may often involve special or particular constraints on what one or both of the participants will treat as allowable contribution to the business at hand.
3. Institutional talk may be associated with inferential frameworks and procedures that are particular to specific institutional contexts. (22)

Heritage (2005) takes the religious marriage ceremony as an example. In a formal situation like this, participants have a clear goal: to get married/marry. They have roles they have to stay true to, and must enact the marriage ceremony as written. To depart from the written schema of the ceremony would be unacceptable, and only if everyone involved stick to their
roles can the goal be achieved. Written and rehearsed conversation like that of a marriage ceremony has not been given a lot of attention from conversation analysts over the years, as it allows almost no variation, but other institutional talks, courtroom examinations, classroom lessons and television debates have been given a lot of attention, especially in the last twenty years.

2.3.2 Using CA on News Interviews

As mentioned earlier, news interviews were among the earliest forms of institutional talk to be investigated within Conversation Analysis, as they are one of the strongest areas of institutional talk, with specialised turn-taking system and specific roles for the participants. The news interview is made to convey and create news, as well as express opinion, and even though it is not scripted, it is somewhat pre-determined, and many features - the turn-taking system in particular - are unlike those of ordinary conversation. Although both subject and length of the turn are somewhat pre-determined, the news interview creates interesting data for conversation analysis, as these pre-determinations are often interrupted, and aspects such as keeping face are not as important as in ordinary conversation (Clayman 2012).

One of the most characteristic features of news interview, which is also the one most examined by scholars, is the elaborateness of both questions and answers. To motivate questions, they are often preceded by declarative statements. This is also done by the interviewer (IR) to engage the audience in the subject discussed. Interviewees (IEs) are generally quiet during these declarative statements, even if they go on for longer than what would be a turn in normal conversation. If the IE were to break in, that would break the agreement of his or her role as 'answering questions' as no question has yet been asked. Answers normally tend to be elaborate as well. For instance, yes/no-questions are normally answered with the expected affirmation/negation, followed by an elaborated explanation of the answer.

In interviews in general, and news interviews in particular, IRs tend to give more minimal response that the IEs, possibly because part of their role in the situation is to keep the conversation going and make sure the interview moves forward with the right speed to cover as much as possible on the restricted time for the interview. Minimal response from the IE is relatively rare (Clayman 2012).
2.3.3 Designing Answers
In comparison to studies made on question design, the area of answer design is much less developed. Most of the attention has been devoted to mechanisms of resistance, i.e. responses that decline the topic or agenda of the question or change the topic completely. Resistant responses are IEs' only tool for controlling the situation and the topics discussed in the interview, aspects which IRs normally have the power to decide on (Clayman 2012).

Resistant answers are normally divided into two groups: overt resistance and covert resistance. Overt resistance is the approach to be up front and explicit about ones intentions, which might minimise the risks of damage. This can be done by asking for permission to diverge from the subject, and then do so, with or without permission given from the IR, in constructions such as "Let me just comment on what was said earlier", which is a tool commonly used in debates. It is also common for IEs to take one step further and actually explain and justify their resistance, possibly by saying "I am not able to answer your question..." (Ekström 2009). This can be done both to address failure to answer the question or the pursuit of a different agenda.

To use covert resistance, is to divert from the question without any explicit acknowledgement of the fact, and is often done by trying to obscure the diversion by making it look like an answer when it actually is not. This can be done by using lexical items from the question in the response to camouflage the shift of subject. Similarly, the IE can also reference to or paraphrase the question asked in an attempt to modify it and possibly make it easier to answer, or even change the agenda. If this is executed skilfully, the response can be seen, at least by the audience, as answering, even if the IE is not answering the question initially asked (Ekström 2009).
3. Data & Method

3.1 Data

The data used for analysis in this study is thirteen interviews from the British television program *The Andrew Marr Show*. Since this study focuses on differences between the language use of men and women the data is made up of six interviews with male interviewees and seven interviews with female interviewees. All interviews except one are conducted by Andrew Marr. The interview with Natalie Bennet is conducted by James Landale. All interviews were broadcasted live in 2013 or 2014 on BBC One on *The Andrew Marr Show*. All the interviewees, interviewers and the broadcast date for their interview can be seen in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>DATE OF BROADCAST</th>
<th>TOTAL INTERVIEW TIME</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Natalie Bennett</td>
<td>February 10th 2013</td>
<td>4 minutes, 30 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>George Osborne</td>
<td>September 1st 2013</td>
<td>13 minutes, 15 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caroline Lucas</td>
<td>September 22nd 2013</td>
<td>4 minutes, 26 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ed Miliband</td>
<td>September 22nd 2013</td>
<td>21 minutes, 22 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theresa May</td>
<td>October 6th 2013</td>
<td>12 minutes, 53 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria Miller</td>
<td>November 3rd 2013</td>
<td>7 minutes, 41 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yvette Cooper</td>
<td>November 24th 2013</td>
<td>9 minutes, 10 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Mandelson</td>
<td>December 21st 2013</td>
<td>6 minutes, 33 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David Cameron</td>
<td>January 5th 2014</td>
<td>23 minutes, 38 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nick Clegg</td>
<td>January 12th 2014</td>
<td>17 minutes, 50 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Hague</td>
<td>January 26th 2014</td>
<td>10 minutes, 1 second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harriet Harman</td>
<td>February 2nd 2014</td>
<td>10 minutes, 22 seconds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rachel Reeves</td>
<td>February 9th 2014</td>
<td>8 minutes, 34 seconds</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews with female interviewees were chosen as they were the only ones made during this time period where both transcripts and video recordings could be found, whereas the interviews with male interviewees were randomly picked with consideration of availability of transcripts and recordings. The female interviews are 57 minutes and 36 seconds in total, whereas the male interviews add up to 94 minutes and 44 seconds.
All analyses have the transcripts made by the BBC as their base, but as they are not sufficiently detailed for conversation analysis, additional transcription from the video recordings is used for sequences particularly relevant to the study.

All interviewees are prominent British politicians who are used to interview situations such as these. They are all being questioned about current affairs and topics concerning current politics and their respective parties. Even though there is a great degree of variation between the interviews, the interviewees can be seen as being more or less in the same position, as they are being asked critical questions on subjects they know relatively well.

3.1.1 The Andrew Marr Show
The Andrew Marr Show is a British television program broadcast on BBC One on Sunday mornings, and was first broadcast in 2005, after David Frost retired. He had been the host of the long-running programme Breakfast with Frost. The BBC website says that The Andrew Marr show "has become the place where top politicians make news, cultural icons inform and entertain and the UK's most influential commentators share their analysis and insights" (BBC One, 2014).

Andrew Marr is a Scottish journalist with a first-class degree in English from Cambridge University. He has worked with some of the UK's biggest newspapers, as well as hosted radio shows on the BBC and written several books on politics and history (BBC One, 2014).

3.2 Method
3.2.1 Quantitative Methodology
This study is based on both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the primary data. That being said, the study is primarily qualitative and based on methods used in Conversation Analysis. The quantitative analysis is used mainly to support the qualitative analysis.

The first thing measured was the percentage of the interview time that the interviewees speak, in relation to the time the interviewer takes to ask questions or give information.

Secondly, the number of hedges used by the interviewees was counted. Hedges are typically expressions which could soften and lessen the impact of an utterance. This essay mainly studies constructions such as I think or As far as I am concerned, which could be seen
as unnecessary, as the clause would have been complete without these softening expressions. As an addition to this, occurrences of the hedging tag question you know were also counted.

Thirdly, actual questions asked, and the answers to these questions, were categorised. The questions were divided into "yes/no-questions" and "other questions", and the answers were likewise divided into the subgroups "answering the question", "overtly avoiding answering" and "covertly avoiding answering". An answer was labelled "answering the question" if the interviewee simply gives an answer to the question asked at one point in the following turn. An answer was labelled "overtly avoiding the question" if the interviewee does not give an answer to the question, but is seen to be upfront and honest about his or her resistance, for example by saying that he or she is unable to answer the question or asking for permission to diverge from the subject. If the interviewee on the other hand did not give any reason for not answering the question or departed from the subject without being open about doing so, the answer was labelled "covertly avoiding the question".

Finally, the number of mentions of other parties or colleagues in a negative manner was counted. To count as a "passing blame"-unit, the utterance had to clearly mention another party or politician, and additionally point out something negative about their actions or statements.

3.2.2 Qualitative Methodology

As mentioned before, the news interview is an interesting platform for Conversation Analysis as the situation is predetermined in many ways, but also allows for both interviewers and interviewees to diverge from the rules and conventions of an interview. These characteristics will therefore ideally create interesting data for conversation analysis.

This essay has a focus on gender differences in answers to interview questions in the interview situation. The qualitative analysis took as its starting point the results from the quantitative analysis, i.e. seeing if there were any differences in the use of hedges, as well as the frequency of covertly and overtly resisting questions. In addition to these results, the qualitative analysis also looked at the types of hedges IEs use and in what way, and with what possible purpose, they overtly or covertly avoid questions. Additional attention was also given to the phenomena of passing blame, or the negative mentioning of other parties or politicians. These mentions were looked at from a point of view of how they were delivered, as well in what situations they occurred. Finally, minimal response given by the IE was marked and analysed with focus on how and in what situations it occurred.
4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Verbosity

Even though there is a stereotypical presumption that women speak more than men, studies have shown that it is the other way around (see for example Swacker 1975). Men speak more than women in almost all situations. This does however not seem to be the case in what analysing the interviews used for this study. In this interview situation, where there are very few pauses, i.e. there is almost always someone speaking, the female interviewees speak 68% of the total interview time on average (see Table 4.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NATALIE BENNET</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MARIA MILLER</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAROLINE LUCAS</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YVETTE COOPER</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HARRIET HARMAN</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>THERESA MAY</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RACHEL REEVES</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE PERCENTAGE</strong></td>
<td><strong>68%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>PERCENTAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DAVID CAMERON</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED MILIBAND</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GEORGE OSBORNE</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NICK CLEG</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LORD MANDELSON</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WILLIAM HAGUE</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>AVERAGE PERCENTAGE</strong></td>
<td><strong>59%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The same percentage for the male interviewees is 59%, which can be seen in Table 4.2. This suggests that women will use more time, or possibly be given more time by the interviewer, to answer questions than their male colleagues.

Although the average percentage suggests that women have a higher verbosity than men in The Andrew Marr Show interviews, we can note that the highest percentage of
speaking time is a male interviewee, Lord Mandelson, who speaks 77% of the total interview time. The highest percentage for female speakers is only 74%.

It must also be noted that the interviews with male interviewees were generally longer. The average interview time for men was 15 minutes and 28 seconds, whereas the interviews with female interviewees were in average 8 minutes and 14 second, which might suggest that men indeed speak more than women. On the other hand, it can be argued that this tells us more about the power relation between men and women with respect to the amount of space they get in the media. It may be that people in higher positions, such as the Prime Minister or party leader will be of more interest to the public, and will therefore be given more air time. The two longest interviews used for this essay are the one with David Cameron (23 minutes, 38 seconds) and the one with Ed Miliband (21 minutes, 22 seconds). These men are the party leaders for the two biggest parties in the UK, which could explain the generous length of their interviews. This could be compared to the interview with Natalie Bennet who, as a party leader for the much smaller Green Party and as a woman, only has a total interview time of 4 minutes and 30 seconds.

4.2 Hedging

Studies have shown that women tend to use more hedging expressions than men. Hedges are, as mentioned before, linguistic forms used to show uncertainty or lessen the impact of an utterance. 297 hedging constructions were found in the interview transcripts. To count as a hedge, the expression had to be used in a context where it did show some uncertainty or hesitation, i.e. where the speaker could have used a sentence without the hedge and the utterance would have conveyed the same information. In the example below Harriet Hartman is talking about changes in the Labour party member policy, and uses the hedging expression I think, which was the most commonly used hedge found in the transcripts, as a way of lessening the impact of her utterance:

1 HH: well I hope that they'll listen to the arguments and be (0.3) very much in in favour of it. I mean what <is> important I think, is that members of parliament will decide the shortlist

In this situation, if Hartman had not used the hedge, and instead just said: "What is important is that members of parliament will decide the shortlist", the sentence would not have changed in content, but would most likely have been interpreted as a stronger statement.
Another commonly used hedge in the interviews is you know. This construction is almost exclusively used as a hedge to express uncertainty or hesitance. In some cases, however, it is used in a more assertive manner, as in the example below where Ed Miliband is asked about the Falkirk scandal:

1 EM I didn't think that was the way politics should be practised and (I think most people would know this about me and)
2 AM [did you know this about the briefing] or seen the [ leaks ]
3 EM [was more] you know what it's like in politics

Miliband here uses you know with certainty, in this case certainty that Marr does indeed know what it is like in politics. In addition to this must be added that even when expressions like you know are used to show assertiveness, they still function as a way of establish an interpersonal rapport (i.e. making a connection with a co-communicator), which also relates to hedging. These cases were however extremely rare.

Out of the total 297 hedging expressions found, 116 were used by women, and 181 by men. Again we must compare these numbers to the total length of the interviews, and when taking that into account we can see that women use hedges on average 2 times per minute, whereas the same number for men is 1.9 times per minute. In other words there is no significant difference in the frequency of hedges between men and women in these interviews, although there seems to be a much greater range in usage among the female interviewees. Rachel Reeves, whose interview is 8 minutes and 34 seconds, uses only two hedges, whereas Yvette Cooper uses 30 hedges in a 9 minutes an 10 second long interview. Additionally, no differences in what kind of hedgers IEs use were found. I think and you know are used in all interviews, whereas other hedges are only used once, e.g. I'm not sure or appear to be. What can be noted though is that men use expressions which show strong certainty with much higher frequency than women. These constructions often contain an adverb showing strong conviction about the statement, adverbs such as definitely or certainly. Over all, these occur relatively rarely, possibly because the IEs are in an exposed situation where being too certain might harm their appearance and the public's perception of them. One of the few IEs that uses constructions showing strong certainty repeatedly is Nick Clegg, talking about the proposed referendum for EU membership in utterances such as:

1 NC well I'm clearly not in in favour of it h.

There is here no question about what Clegg thinks about the matter. The subject discussed in
the interview will play a part in how certain an IE can in his or her statements, which this example shows. Clegg, and the Liberal Democrats, for which he is the leader, have clearly stated where they stand in the matter, which enables Clegg to show certainty.

4.3 Designing Answers

4.3.1 Answers & Resistance

Politicians are known for not directly answering questions that could possibly harm their personal image or the image of their party, i.e. questions in which the party does not have a clear opinion, or where opinions are divided within the party. Questions could also include a subject that the IE does not want to talk about due to previous failures or due to the fact that their answers will not sound appealing to most voters.

As mentioned before, there are different ways of dealing with questions from the IR. The IE can answer the question asked straight on, and then, if needed, explain the reason for his or her answer. If the IE for some reason does not want to answer the question, they can either avoid it by plainly talking about something else and in that way try to steer the conversation onto a subject they are more comfortable with or which they think are more important, or they can be upfront about not being able/not wanting to answer the question. The former will in this analysis be called covert resistance and the latter overt resistance.

Table 4.3 Numbers of different responses to questions asked female IEs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WOMEN</th>
<th>ANSWERING</th>
<th>OVERT</th>
<th>COVERT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES/NO QUESTIONS</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER QUESTIONS</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>34 (43%)</td>
<td>21 (27%)</td>
<td>23 (30%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4 Numbers of different responses to questions asked male IEs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEN</th>
<th>ANSWERING</th>
<th>OVERT</th>
<th>COVERT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>YES/NO QUESTIONS</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OTHER QUESTIONS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>38 (38%)</td>
<td>16 (16%)</td>
<td>47 (46%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A collocation of the analysis can be seen in Table 4.3 and 4.4. These results point to several interesting things. First of all, the vast majority of the questions asked in the interviews are yes/no-questions, more than 80% for both male and female IEs. Secondly, IEs resist answering around two thirds of all questions asked, which seems to confirm the general image of politicians as dodging questions they do not want to answer. These results also show that the news interview is a situation that must be given further attention from a conversation analysis point of view. Studies show that, in general, yes/no-questions are answered with the
expected affirmation/negation, but that is not the case in this particular situation (Clayman 2012).

When it comes to gender differences, we can see that women answer almost as many questions as they resist, and overtly resist almost as many questions as they covertly resist. Men on the other hand answer fewer questions than women, and covertly resist more than twice as many questions as they overtly resist. Even if the men were asked 24 more questions than the women, women still had more overtly resistant answers than men. Although the collocation of results shows significant differences between men and women, it must also be noted that there are many individual differences within the two gender groups. Rachel Reeves for example, uses no overt resistance at all, but tends to resist covertly to most questions asked. Natalie Bennett on the other hand, answers almost all of her questions without resistance.

4.3.2 Overt Resistance

When they overtly resist questions, women tend to point out flaws in the questions asked, or straighten out misunderstandings concerning the subject of the question. This enables them to not answer the questions and still keep their face. Below are two examples, in the first one Natalie Bennett talks about environmentalism:

1. JL what is a greater priority, economic growth (0.3) or protecting the environment?
2. NB hh. that's an entirely false dichotomy because what we need to do is invest in things like (0.4) home insulation in renewable energy

and in the second one Harriet Harman answers a question about the Labour Party's trade union members:

1. AM and th. it will be the activists who are m m more likely to come in inevitably (0.4) then <that> is going to tilt the labour party more in a trade union direction it's obvious, it's kind of (0.3) night follows day isn't it?
2. HH well I don't know what you mean about ey trade union direction?

In the first example, Bennett dismisses the question per se and implies that she is unable to answer the question due to its dichotomous nature, whereas Harman questions the construction of Marr's question, as well as the question in itself, as she reuses his formulation and his word against him. As mentioned earlier, this is a tactic which IEs sometimes use to
gain control of the interview situation, as they switch the predetermined roles of questioning and answering.

The male IEs, on the other hand, mostly use overt resistance to ask for permission to diverge from the subject or possibly comment on something mentioned earlier. Below is an example of Ed Miliband being asked about increased taxes:

1 AM rachel reeves has said that people earning around six thousand pounds are not considered by (0.7) one nation labour to be rich people. is that true? aha are they as it were <safe> from tax increases?
2 EM well let me first deal with the nonsense story that you that you erh mentioned

and here Nick Clegg being asked, once again about a possible EU membership referendum:

1 NC when over three million jobs in this country are directly or indirectly dependent on our position within the world's largest borderless single market but can i just come to this point? look (0.4) politically we now have two parties.

Clegg asks if he can "just come to this point", which in this case means changing the subject of the conversation, but it is not really meant as a question which needs an answer. It is more likely a strategy to avoid answering the previously asked question by a self-face-saving act, which might make the departure from the subject seem less abrupt. These strategies are rarely found in the interviews with female IEs, a fact that might go hand in hand with men's greater frequency to covertly avoid questions. Whereas women use overt resistance as a way of pointing out that they in one way or another cannot answer the question, men use it to covertly resist answering, but in a more polite way.

The most common use of overt resistance is simply pointing out inability to answer the question. This is used by both men and women, and the statement often contains or is followed by a reason why they cannot answer the question. In the example below, Theresa May is asked about a scheme in the police force, which includes vans driving around the country with the goal of finding illegal immigrants:

1 AM do you think it worked so far? cus i mean there's been a lot of criticism saying these vans didn't work anyway so
2 TM well i'm waiting to see the evaluation
3 AM [okay alright alright]
4 TM [i'm not gonna sort of] pluck an answer off the shelf

Here, May does not answer Marr's question, but says she needs to see the evaluation before voicing an opinion, i.e. giving a reason for resisting answering, something which Marr seems
to show understanding of. A similar example is David Cameron being pressed on the number of immigrants that he expect will come to Britain the coming years:

1 AM So you you must have a number, you must have [clever people giving you]
2 DC don't have a number

Cameron, just like May, points out that he cannot answer the question, as he does not have a number. It is highly likely that Cameron does have a number, which Marr points out, but he gets away with not answering the question by saying that he does not have one.

It is difficult to say whether the results show any evidence of gender differences in language use over all. Overt resistance can be seen as more polite than covert resistance, and in that case, the results of this analysis would mean that women, in an interview situation, are more polite than men, and that they care more about their own positive face. They want to point out that not answering question has less to do with ignorance or arrogance than problems with the question or actual inability to give a truthful answer.

But if women were to be more polite than men, as previous studies have shown (Brown 1980), would that not mean that they would also be more likely to ask for permission to diverge from the subject, a phenomenon which has been observed much more frequently with male IEs? It would take much more thorough research to find out if women in situations where men tend to use these constructions of pointing out diversion, instead go straight into the next subject, or if they avoid changing the subject in the same way.

4.3.3 Covert Resistance

In contrast to overt resistance covert resistance involves divergence from the question without any explicit acknowledgement of the fact. This occurs relatively often in the data used for this study. As seen before, men covertly avoid more questions than they answer, and both groups use more covert resistance than overt. Again, there are personal differences in the use of covert resistance between the IEs. Yvette Cooper does for example not use covert resistance at all, whereas George Osborne and David Cameron use covert resistance as a response to more than half the questions.

In this analysis, an answer is marked covert resistance when the IEs is asked a question, but does not, in the proceeding turn, give a straightforward answer. There are two main ways of covertly resisting an answer, and these occur in both groups. Firstly, IEs can ignore the question completely, and talk about something else, i.e. change the subject without
any mentioning of doing this. It is very rare that an IE changes the subject completely, probably because the pre-determined roles on the news interview do not allow it, but it IEs can fairly often be seen ignoring the question, as in the example below, where Ed Miliband is asked about housing taxes:

1 AM [...] do you have a clear view yet on a top rate of income tax for people who by most standards have paid a lot of money?
2 EM look we'll set out our tax plans at the erm election we've said for example that (0.4) on the issue of eer a tax on homes above two million pounds, we think that's erh something we want to do, to bring in a new ten pence starting rate on income tax [i don't think anyone]
3 AM [is that a tax on the] total value of the house or a bit above of of the value that's above two million?
4 EM well we're looking at exactly how that's done but the principle is very very clear on this hh. which is that we do want a fairer tax system and we want to have different choices that a labour government would make

Marr here asks two questions, both of which Miliband does not answer. After the first question, he almost overtly says that he cannot answer this question now, but will do so closer to the election. After the second question, he ignores the question and instead talks about the tax system in general, and how a Labour government will deal with this.

Secondly, IEs can also 'talk around' the question, i.e. talk about things related to the subject of the question, but not answer the actual question asked. If this is done with skill, IEs can make covert resistance seem like an answer to the audience, for example by rephrasing the question or use lexical items from the initial question in the answer. David Cameron does this when asked about free movement within the EU:

1 AM would you agree that as you look at your relationship with the EU, the free movement of peoples inside the EU has becomes possibly (0.3) the key issue to discuss?
2 DC hh. well i think th th there are good parts to movement within the EU. there are many british people who take advantage of going to >live and work< elsewhere and britain has benefited and will continue to benefit from people with skills coming to britain and contributing to our economy,

Cameron can here be seen to talk about what Marr has asked, but not giving a direct answer. He also uses lexical items from the question, "free movement within the EU", which might make the covert resistance seem more like an answer. As an audience we are possibly used to this type of covert resistance, and will therefore not react negatively to this type of resistance.
These two strategies are not clearly separate, but have similar and overlapping qualities. There is therefore a grey area between the two, which sometimes makes it troublesome to distinguish between them.

When looking at gender differences in the use of covert resistance, there are no strongly significant results, except men's more frequent use. The most common way of using covert resistance, for both groups, is to stay within the subject of the question asked, but not answer, i.e. finding ways of 'talking around' the question. All IEs use this strategy, but with varying frequency. The other strategy, to avoid a question by ignoring the question or changing the subject, is more commonly used by men. Women can be seen to stay closer to the question in their turns, for example by implying answers or almost overtly delaying the answer. Once again, this could possibly be related to politeness. By not changing the subject, or ignoring the question, IEs both pay attention to their negative face, and respect the predetermined roles of the interview situation. The use of covert resistance does noticeably go hand in hand with the use of overt resistance, as well as the frequency of which IEs answer the question. It can be said that, naturally, IEs will answer questions that are easy to answer, i.e. where they have a clear answer which the main part of the party agrees on, and overtly resist questions where it is acceptable to not give an answer, but this analysis does not primarily focus on the questions asked in relation to the response from the IE. Future studies should possibly focus what types of question men and women tend to avoid or covertly resist, to see if any differences can be detected.

4.3.4 Passing Blame
Yet another thing that politicians are commonly known for is passing blame. By telling the public about mistakes and ill formed opinions other parties or people have made, they can make themselves look better, and sometimes justify that things have not gone according to plan due to former government's decisions. This is a phenomenon that occurs frequently in the interviews used in this study. The IR very rarely asks about an IE's opinion on other parties, but IEs tend to mention other parties as a comparison in situations where they think they themselves have made better choices, or maybe to lessen the impact of thing they have not succeeded in doing. In the example below David Cameron is asked about earnings:
While talking about how they are going to make the earnings go up, Cameron admits that earnings have not gone up as much as he would have wanted them to, but says that this is not due to decisions that he and his party have made, but the fact that Labour lead the country into a recession.

62 occurrences of IEs passing blame or mentioning other parties with a negative agenda were found in the interviews. More than two thirds of the occurrences were uttered by men, i.e. men passed blame twice as much as women. Again, the total interview time for men was longer than for women, but there is still a significant difference between the two groups. No particular difference was observed when comparing IEs in government with IEs in opposition.

It may seem rude to speak in negative terms about someone who is not present to defend him/herself, but to put one's own opinions in relation to others', as well as passing blame, is and has always been a meaningful part of the political debate. It is both a way of carrying society forwards by pointing out things that are not working, and a way of saying: "maybe we did not do very well, but neither did they!". Therefore one can expect relatively many occurrences of these constructions. Differences between men and women on the other hand were less expected. If passing blame is a natural part of the political climate one could expect that it would occur equally between the two groups. The difference could, once again, possibly be explained in terms of politeness. It has in an earlier section been pointed out that women are more concerned about their negative face than men, and these results possibly show that they are also more concerned about keeping other people's negative face, even if the person is not there, i.e. being more polite.

4.4 Minimal Response
In addition to the results presented above, the analysis also included the use of minimal response, i.e. paralinguistic features that express support for the current speaker. In line with previous studies (Strodtbeck & Mann 1956), it is found that women use more minimal response than men, as well as in more diverse ways. Throughout the interviews all female IEs use both verbal and non-verbal minimal response the interview when the interviewer is speaking, mainly by nodding, but also by using utterances such as yes or I agree. Nodding in
a way to express support or agreement is almost never found with male IEs, and only David Cameron uses verbal minimal response in a way to show agreement, as in the example below:

1 AM i-if i go to america, i get a a slip of paper and have to tear of part of it and they know then i leave again
2 DC yeah h.
3 AM we don't have that system

The differences found in the analysis show evidence of the fact that women feel more obliged to keep the conversation running smoothly, by encouraging the IR to keep talking until he is finished. This is not always the case, as female IEs do not nod or comment every time the IR is talking, and often interrupt the IR, but there is a higher tendency among the women to protect the other persons negative face, again proving that women are more concerned with politeness than men.
5. Conclusion

This study has focused on possible differences in the way female and male interviewees answer questions in the BBC One-programme *The Andrew Marr Show*. The aim was to look at different aspects of answering questions in a news interview, and through conversation analysis detect dissimilarities between the two groups.

It was first of all found that significantly more men were interviewed in the programme in the time frame used for the selection of interviews, and the majority of the longer interviews were made with men. Although, in relation to this, it was found that female interviewees use a higher percentage of the total interview time. They speak on average 68% of the total interview time, whereas the same percentage for men is only 59%.

Looking at transcripts and recordings of the interviews, the analysis studied hedging expressions, minimal response and resistance techniques. No significant difference in usage of hedges showing uncertainty was found between the two groups, neither was there any difference in what types of hedges the participants used. One thing that was noted was that men to a greater extent show strong certainty than females.

Minimal response was marked both in its verbal and non-verbal form, and it was noted that the female interviewees gave significantly more feedback, in particular non-verbal feedback such as nodding, which was almost never found in the interviews with male interviewees.

When looking at answer resistance, i.e. if and how the participants did not answer the questions asked, several results were observed. Firstly, it was noted that the vast majority of questions asked were yes/no-questions. Further, it was found that interviewees resisted almost two thirds of all questions, a founding which was not in line with previous studies. In addition to this, men tended to answer fewer questions than women, and they also used covert resistance more often than women. The female interviewees tended to use overt resistance, i.e. overtly pointing out their resistance or explaining why an answer cannot be answered. This points to the conclusion that women are more concerned with politeness in a conversational environment than their male colleagues.

In addition to this, the study also looked at the strategy of passing blame, which in the study was realised by negative mentions of other parties or political figures. This strategy was relatively common, but significantly more commonly used by male interviewees; more than two thirds of these negative mentions were uttered by men. This finding was again discussed
with focus on politeness, with the conclusion that women, as well as caring about their own face, respects other peoples face to a greater extent.

Finally, it must be mentioned that there were many individual differences between the participants, but the results from the study can nevertheless point to a trend in differences in language use between men and women in the news interview situation.

Future studies should possibly look closer at what types of question IEs tend to avoid, both overtly and covertly, to find possible differences as well as a more elaborate explanation for these differences. In addition to this it would of course also be interesting to see if the patterns found in this study concerning a News Interview-situation are detected in other interview situations.
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