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## 'Doing' Interviewer Roles in TV Interviews

Mie Femø Nielsen

Within journalism, it seems to be taken for granted that a certain variety of interviewer roles exists as a phenomenon. Practitioners doing media interviews operate with a range of emic categories of interviewer roles. An example of a list of typical roles could be midwife, buffoon, skeptic, microphone holder, chairperson and tease (Harms Larsen 1990:115,116). Such lists generally consist of a mix of attitudes, metaphors and professional roles. Instead I would like to suggest an action-based taxonomy for interviews that reflects the interviewer's behavior, depending on whether the interviewee is invited to, e.g., produce an argumentation for or account of something, to declare something or to tell a story.

The concept of *doing being something or somebody* is taken from Harvey Sacks. Sacks makes an important point about being able to recognize a certain behavior and being able to redo it when it is called for in a specific situation (Sacks 1984). He calls this phenomenon 'doing being' something. For instance, a very important competence in society is the ability to do 'being ordinary'. In his paper *On doing being ordinary* he discusses our tacit knowledge about what constitutes being considered ordinary and how we behave in order to be considered as such. For instance, one does not call people in the middle of the night just to say 'Hi!', but instead must have a very good reason, a kind of emergency. And the reason for the call should be enacted via sequential positioning of the reason for the call, voice and speech rate if the caller is to be considered ordinary.

According to Goffman, what makes a person a leader is that he acts like one (Goffman 1959); that he exhibits the performance of a leader. This is why impostors can often be very successful at fooling people into believing that they are doctors, politicians or whatever role they are enacting. Such resources are drawn on when journalists perform in a certain interviewer role. But the fact that they 'know' how to do these roles, and that the audience is able to recognize them as such, is not enough. It is necessary to explore what the doing being-ness consists of when a person is doing a certain role.

While studying Danish media interviews I've become interested in the embodiment of interviewer roles. It is interesting how much of this conver-

sational work in order to be doing being a certain interviewer role seems to be accomplished nonverbally. Doing being a certain interviewer role is indeed a matter of enactment, of correspondence between turn construction, the use of formulations, continuers and responses, as well as the handling of pauses and posture, gesture and facial expression.

Using the conversation analytic method, I will analyze a range of Danish interviews. The data are from different editions of two Danish TV interview programs: *Profilen* (The Profile) with one long interview, *Damernes Magasin* (Ladies' Magazine) with a series of interviews, and one edition of an audience discussion program, *Camilla*. All programs are from the period 1992-1997.

Initially, I will show three different examples of very different interviewer roles and how they are done. In the first excerpt, the IE is Chief Editor of a leading Danish newspaper, which printed then – Danish EU-commissioner Ritt Bjerregaard's diary as a separate section of the newspaper, after she had been forced by Jacques Santer to withdraw it. Afterwards, the commissioner sued the newspaper for stealing her book, and in this excerpt the IR challenges the chief editor, who on the contrary thought of the deed as a case of bringing necessary information to the Danish public.

#### Ex 1 Persecuted innocence<sup>1</sup>:

- IR: that's <sup>1</sup>a kind of <sup>1</sup>sto:len goods?  
((14 turns omitted))
- IR: [we're talking about a CRiminal 1act,  
they will go into the 1criminal 1law,  
'hhh and persecute youhh.
- IE: The manipulations continue. 'hhh=  
IR: 'h'o::h?  
IE: =let's for a mo::ment hold [on to,  
IR: {you're=<sup>a</sup>  
percuted innocence you [are,  
IE: [What are  
you saying?  
IR: you s- you SO::und like the persecuted  
innocence, thlat you really can't=  
IE: [ bu::t, ]  
IR: = expect [one to] believe?,  
IE: [but- ]

In this interview we see a very lively combat, and both IR and IE clearly seem to enjoy a battle with a worthy opponent.



The IR embodies a fencer or a swordsman in good form. His gestures are used in aiding the production of his questions.

The IR has abandoned the neutral stance in this interview. He is counter-arguing ("that's <sup>1</sup>a kind of <sup>1</sup>sto:len goods?"), arguing ("you s- you SO::und like the persecuted innocence, you really can't=expect one to believe that?") and assessing ("you're=<sup>a</sup> persecuted innocence, you are,"). Later he in fact himself uses the expression "quarrelling" about what they are doing in the interview.

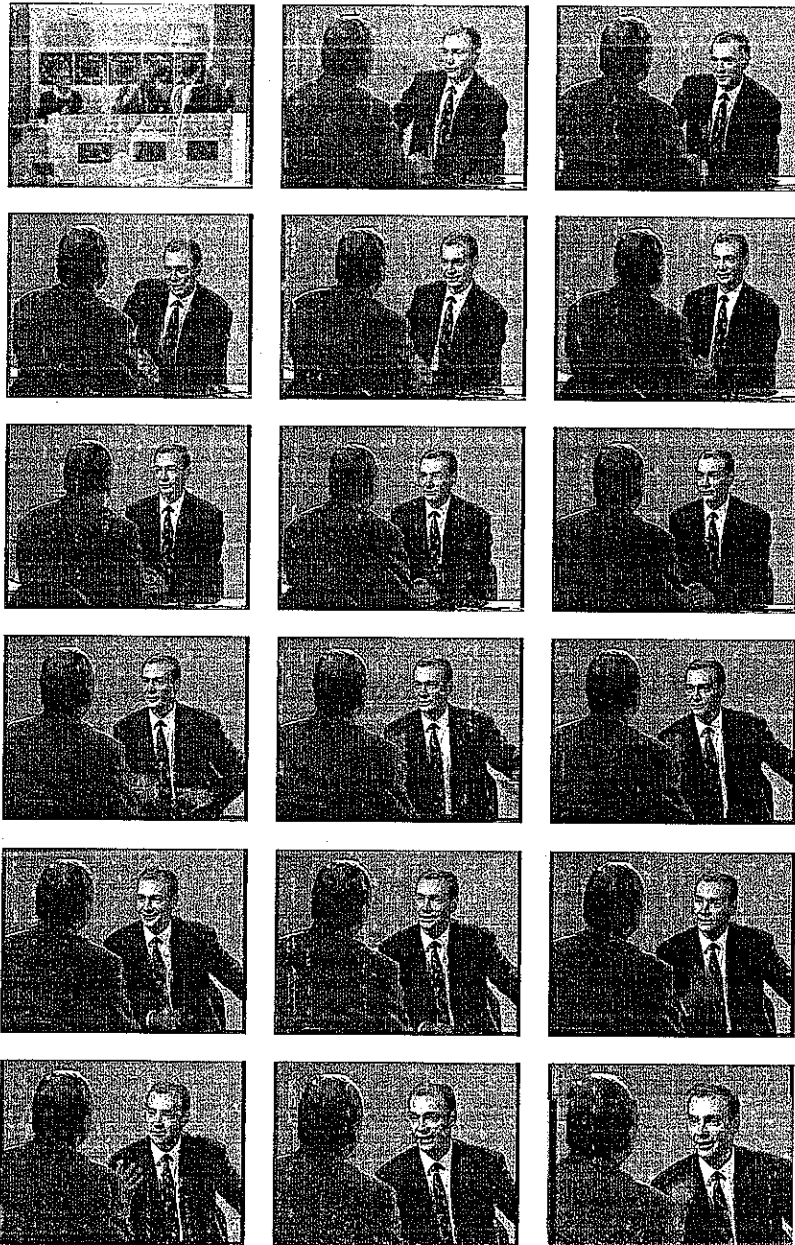
The IR is here sitting directly across from the IE, separated only by a narrow table. While talking, the IR sits erect, leaning forward and approaching the IE. His gestures closely accompany the production of the question. He also makes large gestures and talks fast-paced, as does the IR. The limited space in this chapter does not allow an extensive look at this.

But the embodied 'setting of the scene' for this activity can be studied. In another excerpt from the same interview they, and we, see a series of on-location interviews in Brussels, after which we return to the studio, where the IR and IE are ready to go on with the interview.

#### Ex 2 (ProSei 13:8-12): Fascinating material

- IR: yes and before we start with this FAScinating  
material=then- then we'll ha:ve to argue about one  
last thing in rellation to<sup>1</sup> the  
[(grins through his nose)]  
pr(h)a(h)cticalities ov' the boo:k.  
(.)  
'hhh the:re're y'know those=who sa:y that this  
not at all vis (0.2) as it appeared i:n  
the beginning of our conversation in the  
program.=

Note how the IR shifts position in order to get ready to shift from TV-viewer to interviewer:



Note how the interviewer is leaning to his left (the viewer's right) in a relaxed position, resting his arm on the table while watching the footage, and how he sits upright while gesticulating quietly near the table, but continues this motion until he is leaning to his right (the viewer's left) and forward towards the interviewee, enlarging his gesticulation.

The IR sets the stage for the IE to defend and explain himself when counter-arguing and demanding an account that is then attacked. In the interview, the interviewer energetically argues several contradicting hypotheses, giving the interview an overall appearance of being neutral even if there are several examples of locally departing from the neutrality. Furthermore, posture is used to stress the offensiveness.

The second excerpt is from an interview with a front figure in the Conservative Party. The party barely survived the election the week before the interview, but this man had an exceptionally good personal result in the election, in spite of a drunk-driving accident that had cost him the leadership of the party the year before. Now the IR wants to know if he is indeed the informal leader and is now preparing to take over again.

### Ex 3 Full speed <sup>2</sup>

- 1 IE: =turns a e:h tremendous defeat, (.)  
 2 to new ↓progress for the party.  
 3 IR: .h >>yeah but let me then †ask you<<,  
 4 becau:se e:h you: sa:ɪd ɪn a eh  
 5 >>there were many<< †interviews >with you  
 6 up< to the election here  
 7 >BE†cause it of course< also  
 8 as we have been ta:lking about  
 9 has been con†sidered a=  
 10 >what should one say<  
 11 your (0.6) °your° ap†PRENiceship exam  
 12 or- (.) >>whatever one could †a:ll it<<  
 13 IE: [yeah.]  
 14 IR: °i-in° re†lation to the ↓voters,  
 15 and you †sa:ɪd y'know to: †Berlingeren, ((name of newspaper))  
 16 (.) at eh the beginning of March here.  
 17 there you †said that,  
 18 (.) .H (.) †AFTER the election  
 19 then you †sa:ɪd thi(h)s about eh  
 20 (.) .h (.) >the drunk-driving accident  
 21 last year  
 22 as a< period you now have put †behind you,  
 23 (.)  
 24 .H (.) AND †then >>you would °be able to°  
 25 go: at it<< at †full ↓speed,  
 26 (0.3)

27 .hhh what is implied in that about  
 28 going >at it at< full speed,  
 29 (0.3)  
 30 IE: .hhh in that is implied that (.)

The interviewer, Kurt Strand, sits directly across from the interviewee, Hans Engell, separated only by a narrow table. During the interview he leans forward and gesticulates while talking. He also butts a little with his head, tipping his forehead forward.



The question is long and complex. It is a multi-unit turn with several 'pre-supposition markers' ("of course< also as we have been talking about" and "y'know"). It is prefaced with an action projection (">>yeah but let me then ask you<<") after which no question appears immediately (Schegloff 1980). He builds unity by shifting to a 'generic' footing (Goffman 1981, Clayman 1992, Femø 2001), an unnamed source in the form of an unnamed community behind the reflection ("it of course< also as we have been talking about has been considered a=>what should one say< your (0.6) °your° ap↑PREnticeship exam or- (.) >>whatever one could cla:lll it<<"), and by citing Engell, to which he has shifted footing to, a footing he renews several times (l. 4, 15 and 17). While quoting, animating Engell's speech, his speech is accompanied by gesticulating hands, figuratively putting it on the table.



"March here"  
 (hands in home position)



"↑AFTER the election"



"↑full ↓speed"  
 (hands back in home position)



"that about going"

In the question he also uses embodied modality to distance himself from the speech, or the opposite, e.g. the rapidly inserted word search marker ">what should one say<", with little nods forward accompanying "of course also" and with lifted eye brows on "ap↑PREnticeship exam".



"as we have been talking about"



"of course also"

(compare with the next two stills) (small nods forward)



">what should one say<"  
 (lifted eye brows)



"ap↑PREnticeship exam"  
 (frowning)

This shows a speaker who is very conscious of his own speech during the discussion, and who is careful to mark ownership or non-ownership of the speech. He says a great deal, also with a character of assessment, without leaving the neutral stance (Heritage & Greatbatch 1991).

Through footing shifts he manages to provide the background for the question in production and to show its implications and what would qualify as an answer. Beforehand he has asked something very similar (not shown), which is why the mere existence of the new question (">>yeah but let me then ↑ask you<<") implies that the former question was not answered satisfactorily, and is produced as a consequence of the answer to the former question ("then"). This makes it relevant for the interviewee to deliver something else, more as an answer to the new question (Heritage 1995, Heritage 2002, Femø Nielsen 2001). When the IR finally reaches the interrogative, it now consists of only a single-turn constructional unit ("what is ↑implied in that about going >at it at< ↑full speed"). All this preparatory work is referred to in "that about". This construction gives the question a very different weight and impact than if it had merely been 'what do you mean full speed' or 'what is implied by going at it at full speed'. Such questions would have been banal and meaningless, and would not have put pressure on the IE to discuss his future position in the Conservative party.

He is doing – embodying – the neutral opposition, never leaving the neutral stance, while insisting that the IE legitimate, argue and explain himself. The stage is set for argumentation and legitimation from the IE, and the means is a complex question design with advanced footing shifts that are also mimicked and accompanied by shifts in body posture.

The next excerpt is from a magazine program about incest, and the IE is herself a victim. Her stepfather started abusing her when she was eight years old, her own mother having made the arrangements and being present during the act. She tells how her mother woke her up in the middle of the night, asking her to accompany her into her bedroom and lie next to them during the act, reading a magazine. After this story, the interviewer responds:

#### Ex 4 Stepfather<sup>3</sup>

- 1 IR: Your OWN mother was then (.) not only  
 2 aware, but simply assisting  
 3 your stepfather in abusing you  
 4 IE: yeah, °w(h)as she°=  
 5 IR: =why do you think she acted that way  
 6 (0.2)  
 7 IE: becau:se e:h (.) really, a- I  
 8 believe that at that, (.) ng- really- a-  
 9 I believe that a- at at that time m- my  
 10 my mother was sick,  
 11 and I don't thi- I don't think she  
 12 herself (.) could satisfy him,

- 13 (.)  
 14 sexually,  
 15 .h and then she had eh ↑then I cou-  
 16 ↓I probably could do it,  
 17 (.)  
 18 IR: so she (.) in fact gave you to him,  
 19 IE: yeah,  
 20 (.)  
 21 IR: .hh do you remember, how you felt,  
 22 when you were lying there  
 23 and he was fiddling with you,

The interviewer's first turn in this extract is a response to the interviewee, a formulation that achieves a confirmation from the interviewee. The interviewee's answer is designed as a hypothesis that at the same time constructs her mother as a pathetic figure and her stepfather as a man with unquestioned needs. Again the IR responds with a formulation, this time removing the hypothesis and constructing it as factual ("so she (.) in fact gave you to him"). The IE's response to this is a confirmation.

Several times, the IR leaves the neutral stance and takes a position. The formulation "Your OWN mother was then (.) not only aware, but simply assisting your stepfather in abusing you" could also have been designed along the lines of "Your mother was then (.) aware and also assisting your stepfather in abusing you". Instead she shows affiliation with the IE: "your OWN mother" (stressing the horror of the abuse since her mother should be the person closest to her and should have protected her from the abuse), "not only aware of" (prefacing a contrast-coupled implication of the mother's complicity) and "simply assisting that" (pointing to the core and low level of the crime), showing the strong front the little girl was up against from her own point of view. She does not design the representation as a statement or an account of an order of events but presupposes the order of events as factual, accentuating the absurdity of the presupposed horrible situation and affiliating completely with the interviewee.

While posing the questions the IR gesticulates, and while the IE answers the IR sits in a relaxed position leaning her head slightly to one side, with eyes opened wide, and moves her left hand from supporting her chin to playing with her left ear or the hair on her neck. She makes this motion especially during the first part of the interviewee's answer to the first question in the excerpt.



"why do you think"



During "becau:se that e:"



During "I believe that at that"



"remember, how you"



"fiddling with you"



During ensuing response from IE

Note the relaxed position of the IR, her soft voice and how she repeatedly touches herself. The interviewer's questions help her construct the role of 'midwife', as she aids the interviewee in telling her story. But they do more, expressing sympathy and letting her enter an alliance with the IE against the figure in the story that the mother represents. Helping the IE tell the story along with the invitation to think causes relations, and with that produces new knowledge, making the interview seem therapeutic (see Bruun 1995).<sup>4</sup> The positive affiliation points to some other activity than therapy. The questions are designed as formulations, extracting the gist of the talk, elucidating points and bringing forward hypotheses that are afterwards confirmed, so that the story is told, interpreted and digested during the telling. The IR's posture makes her appear not confrontational but attentive and sympathetic.

### Different interviewer roles or just different interviewees?

These were three examples of very different IR roles, with the difference in IR role seeming to correspond with a physical enactment of that role.

A very obvious objection to make here would be that there is certainly a difference in posture and body language, but this is because we are looking at three different interviewees, not just three different interviewer roles. And, naturally, these three different people are doing the interviewer role differently.

But countering evidence is not sufficient. To illustrate my point, I have also collected different kinds of interviews with a single IR doing different IR roles. Looking at these, the embodiment of the different roles becomes very clear.

Let us first look at an excerpt from the same program as in Example 4: the same topic, concerning the same individual, but now a double interview with the doctor of the incest victim.

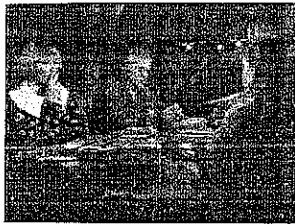
#### Ex 5 Sixteen years<sup>5</sup>

- 1 IR: Hans, †you are Pia's general practitioner,
- 2 (.)
- 3 how old is Pia,
- 4 when she becomes your patient,
- 5 IE: †she is, (.) †sixteen years old,

Here the interviewer sits across from two interviewees at a dining room table, i.e. a different set design than during the interview with Pia, the incest victim. The result is a larger physical distance between IR and IE, and for the IR a less relaxed body posture. She sits erect on a dining-room chair, leaning forward towards the table, as opposed to before when she sat relaxed, reclining, in a living room chair. She now sits at the same end of the table as Pia, forming a 'we' with her. At some point while interviewing the doctor, she looks at her cue card, showing a mental distance from the interviewee.

She now produces gestures, pointing with one hand, compared to before when she sat touching herself, and makes little nods forward with her head.

The interviewer is talking to the doctor about Pia, and they refer to her in the third person ("she", "her"). The gesticulation accompanying "her being an", pointing towards Pia, increases the turning of Pia into a third person.



"how old is"

(pointing to Pia)



"you have no idea"

(gestures with right hand)



"her being an incest victim"

(pointing to Pia)



IE talking

(looking at cue card)



Listening to the doctor

(head rests on hand)



One could think that this (Examples 5 and 6) is a typical expert interview, compared to Example 4 in which a weak person needs help in telling her story. This is not the case.

The doctor is not interviewed as an expert. In fact, the IR does a great deal of work to 'un-expertify' him, deconstruct him as an expert. He is first addressed, but by first name only, just like the incest victim. He is then presented to the viewers with the words "you are Pia's general practitioner," in Danish "privat praktiserende læge." He is introduced as a generalist, not a specialist. The Danish word "privat", meaning 'private' is stressed, both prosodically and with a jerk forward of the IR's head. He is constructed as a

family doctor, appearing in the program as a private person through the use of only his first name. Then follows the interrogative "how old is Pia, when she becomes your patient,". The question is constructed in present tense, and the clock is turned back to when Pia first appeared in his consultation. The combination of the use of first name only, the non-expertliness and the positioning on Pia's story timeline makes him a part of Pia's story. Through the use of present tense, he is invited to co-tell the story. The interviewer does not merely ask for facts, as a construction like 'how old was Pia when she became your patient' could have accomplished.

He is, however, not invited to tell the same type of story as Pia is. The question design is similar to the questions posed by Kurt Strand to Hans Engell in Example 3. The design is addressee + pre + micro pause + interrogative. Factual information is requested, and a format for the answer is given (age). But, contradictory to Strand's question, the question does not voice any opposition, and present tense is used. Through this, the doctor is invited to tell a factual story, to make a report – not a very personal and emotionally straining story, and not his own story. And this is exactly what he does in the interview: He reports in the present tense the course of events from when he first met Pia and, also in present tense, his thoughts in relation to the events.

#### Ex 6 Mental institution<sup>6</sup>

- 1 IE: treatment (.) of that, so I refer her
- 2 to eh (.) eh Nordvang,
- 3 as it's called,
- 4 a mental institution
- 5 (.)
- 6 IR: h and you have no idea of
- 7 (.)
- 8 her being an incest victim
- 9 IE: I know nothing of it no,
- 10 we did not get into that at all
- 11 (.)
- 12 at that time there

In this interview, the interviewee is invited to tell a fact-oriented story. The questions are designed (i.e., the formulation "and you have no idea of (.) her being an incest victim") to help the IE make a report, and the answers are not challenged nor even acknowledged. The questions are accompanied by gesticulation and erect posture, and the physical distance between them is enlarged.

The different IR role is underlined by moving the IR and the former IE to another setting for the double interview. They are now not sitting across each other in armchairs, but around a dining table, the two IEs beside each other.

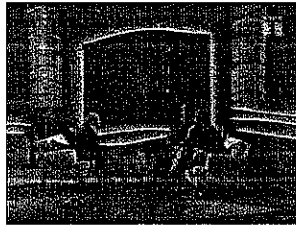


This shift in setting aids the IR in shifting IR role, and the shift in setting is probably also intended to allow her to shift to another interviewer role.

However, in both cases she is doing the role of an interviewer helping a story to be told or helping the IE make a report. To compare, let us look at the same IR as she appears in an audience discussion program about fatness.

### Ex 7 Excuse for being stout<sup>7</sup>

- 1 IR: ↓Lars,  
 2 (.)  
 3 ↑what is your excuse for being stout  
 4 IE: I don't >really have an excuse< for being  
 5 stout(h), not at all  
 6 IR: you don't have one,  
 7 IE: ↓no.  
 8 IR: don't you want one,  
 9 IE: noe. ↑I have a good life like I am,  
 10 IR: .hh ↑you weighed y'know,  
 11 already as a fifteen-year-old  
 12 you were up to a hundred kilo,  
 13 IE: yeah?  
 14 IR: ehm, ↑did it not cause some problems  
 15 there during the teenage years,  
 16 IE: no: eh it didn't really,



The first question is designed as addressee + micro pause + interrogative. It holds many presuppositions (that his name is Lars, that he is fat, that one needs an excuse to be allowed to be fat, that he has such an excuse, and that he will come forward with it). The interview opening "↓Lars," is uttered with a 'frame shaping' intonation. It sounds like a social worker planting herself deep in the chair to really have a heart-to-heart talk with her client. It constructs her as someone above him, bringing herself down to his level. The mere maneuver of placing herself at his level is negated by the reciprocal elevated stance simultaneously constructed. Lars confirms in his answer all the presuppositions, except that of having an excuse. By "re-

ally" he confirms that he knows that he ought to have one or that it would be relevant to have one, but that he nonetheless does not. It is weakening and disarming, compared to a more direct 'I don't have an excuse'. Had he said 'in fact' instead of "really", he would be aligning with it more. Saying "stout(h)" also holds a distance to the word 'stout'; he perhaps does not see being called stout as unproblematic. The tag "not at all" withdraws the reservation of the absent excuse.

The interviewer returns with the declarative "you don't have one," uttered with continuation intonation that allows it work as question and conclusion at the same time. He is thus invited to expand on not having an excuse and why he does not have one. Lars answers simply "↓no." with both locally and globally falling intonation. Through this, he effectively marks that nothing will be added to the *no*. He creates an explanation slot for himself (Antaki 1994), but does not fill it with an explanation. In not making the absent excuse accountable, he makes a very strong statement that he does not feel that he has to legitimize himself. The continuation is thus much stronger than the first collaborating answer, when he did not "really" have an excuse. Now he does not have one, period!

The interviewer follows up on precisely this in her interrogative "don't you want one,". Again he refuses: "noe.", this time filling an explanation slot: "↑I have a good life like I am,". The IR continues, but the note is stricken. This is not a victim meeting his compassionate and understanding helper.

By voicing opposite viewpoints and elucidating the empty explanation slots, in this interview the IR gets the IE to produce clear-cut viewpoints. Here we see her in a much more confrontational style, leaning forward and gesturing while talking, although this is difficult to see at this particular camera angle. Instead of helping a story, she is voicing reverse viewpoints in order to make the IE produce clear-cut viewpoints. The furniture here is in fact similar to that used in the incest interview, but the set is very different due to the position onstage in front of a live audience. So even though the large armchairs could make a relaxed reclining position relevant for the interviewer, she does not sit in that position. Instead she lets her body form a sharp angle in order to be able to lean forward towards the interviewees. The interviewer role is thus not shaped by choice of furniture, but the setting and choice of furniture can *collaborate* in making a certain posture relevant. The IR chooses her posture and gesticulation in relation to the speech, not the set.

This 'punchline catalyzing role' is even more obvious when she brings the audience into the discussion.

**Ex 8 People themselves are to blame<sup>8</sup>**

- 1 IR: rolling over in slim offers  
 2 as never before.  
 3 (0.2)  
 4 .hh ↑Lene, (0.2) do you think there's  
 5 any excuse today for being (.) f(h)at.  
 6 IE: No I don't think so actually,  
 7 I think people themselves are to blame  
 8 for being overweight.  
 9 and stout.  
 10 and fat,  
 11 one can say no thanks=  
 12 =there's y'know no one force-feeding you  
 13 (0.6)  
 14 IR: ↑°o°kay,  
 15 (0.4)  
 16 .hh (.) ↑we don't really ↑have toeh  
 17 go to bed hungry

This is not an excerpt from the interview but the entire interview. The IR returns to her later in the program, however, for a longer interview.

The IR's invocation of the IE sets the tone for the interview. With upward local intonation, loud voice on the first part of the IE's name and the design of an exclamation ("↑LEne!") she already at the turn beginning shows notifies a confrontational style. In her other interviews, her pronunciation of the interviewee's name shows what kind of a question she is about to pose (see Examples 5, 7 and 10).

After having almost invoked the IE, the IR poses a question designed to generate a negative answer ("do you think there's any excuse today"; note "any" and "today"). The interviewee's negative answer comes promptly and with emphasis, and she expands it by producing something that looks like a list of three items, but is not prosodically designed to be a list but instead features two items each 'added on' to the first. Each of the two following items ("stout." and "fat") is added using "and", and each of the two first items is produced with final intonation, as if nothing more is to come. Furthermore, the three items are not elements within the same category, as often seen in lists, but represent the same element subsequently produced in an upgraded version: "overweight." is upgraded to "stout.", which is again upgraded to "fat.". A nice version is delivered first, then a doing-being-provocative version matching the category in the IR's question, and then finally an actually more provocative version, using a term usually seen as derogatory and just used by the IR.

A provocation is then delivered from the IE, though not uncommented. Her "actually," marks affinity, upgrading the statement and simultaneously distancing herself from it. Through this she is marking the words as provoca-

tive. Her intonation makes the said defiant, which the context reinforces. The program is about fatness, and two interview subjects are already lined up on the stage, of which one of them, Lars, is large. The TV viewers have not seen this yet (the interview in Excerpt 6 happens immediately after Excerpt 7), but the audience has, looking at the stage in front of them. The IR is heading towards the stage when she makes a stop to talk to Lene. When Lene is producing her punchline, she makes eye contact with the IR and gives her a short nod, as if to say 'there! that's it'.

The IR merely acknowledges the contribution from the IE ("↑°o°kay,") and then moves on to the next point to be made in the discussion and to the next IE on the stage. She is no longer helping a story but is now a catalyst of IE punchlines that she acknowledges and then moves forward from. A statement meets a receipt. There is no follow-up question and no footing shift to an opposing viewpoint. A strong statement makes an account relevant, as the provocation creates an explanation slot, making relevant a follow-up question with a demand to expand. When the IR instead simply receives the answer and moves on, the provocation is reinforced because it is not made accountable. The provocation is treated as not provocative, but as an expected answer to the question. At this point the IR is collaborating in 'doing being provocative' - a provocation she does not seem to align completely with, which is underlined by several things. Especially noteworthy is how the IR pronounces the word 'stout', the Danish 'tyk', with a pointed mouth on an exhale and on precisely the stress makes a nod with her head and jerks her upper body backwards and upwards in one motion, as if to back out of her own words. Through this action she is placing her words in italics with respect to prosody, facial expression and embodiment. Note how the interviewer is as erect as can be, in standing position, and that she nods forwardly towards the IE.



"LEne! (0.2)"



"stou(h)t"



It could seem obvious that the type of program determines the choice of interviewer actions and activities that shape the role of the interviewer. But even within the same program type, the interviewer role varies in accordance with topic and IE. The IR shows her attitude towards the topic *and* tunes in to the IE while shaping the interviewer role.

Let's return to the magazine program. This time the topic is prostitution, and the IE is a call girl. Note the facial expression of the IR, especially her eyes and smile.

### Ex 9 Escort girl<sup>9</sup>

- 1 IR: (0.5) .hh (.) ↑now you must really  
 2 excuse me Gitte=but (.) really, (0.6)  
 3 ↑you look completely average?  
 4 (0.4)  
 5 I thought you would look  
 6 completely different,  
 7 (0.6)  
 8 IE: >so I do when I go=out,<  
 9 (0.5)  
 10 IR: you do? when you {go out},  
 11 IE: [yeah]  
 12 (0.5)  
 13 IR: can't I eh, can't I watch? how you look  
 14 when you're all gun-powdered up,  
 15 (0.5)  
 16 IE: >sure,<  
 17 (0.2)  
 18 IR: a::rh, you've brought all the  
 19 equipment  
 20 (0.8)  
 21 IE: .h wha- do you ↑work every single night,  
 22 (0.7)  
 23 IR: >no I don't.<



"excuse me Gitte"



"completely average?"



"completely different,"

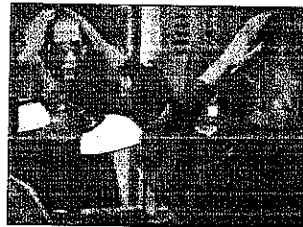


"when you {go out},"

Here the interviewer is seen leaning forward and butting a little with her forehead, with a broad smile and large amused eyes. From her facial expression we don't get an impression of prostitution as a sad story or social problem. Instead, we see a nosy woman ("excuse me Gitte=but (.) really, (0.6) ↑you look completely average? (0.4) I thought you would look completely different," and "can't I eh, can't I see?" and "a::rh, you've brought all the equipment"), wanting to enjoy a good show, and at the same time showing a wish to share intimate secrets with another woman.

This part of the interview is separated into three distinct parts, one concerning the looks of the IE, the next establishing a scene in which the IE is to put on make-up in front of a mirror while being interviewed, and the third mapping the IR's 'workday'. Between each part are pauses, and the interviewee answers the questions minimally. There is not much to follow up on, and the IR moves on to the next item on the agenda. The interview does not seem to be running very smoothly (as seen in the many pauses and minimal answers); the IR has to work hard.

It is clearly prearranged that the IE is to be filmed in front of a mirror during the interview while putting on makeup. She is placed in front of the mirror before the IR's request to be allowed to "watch", she has brought her equipment with her to the studio, and from the beginning she is wearing large makeup glasses, which she does not wear at the end of the program after the makeup scene.



It therefore demands a great deal from the interviewer to 'do being surprised' convincingly, something her "a::rh, you've brought all the equipment" does not accomplish. On the contrary, it seems unauthentic and diminishes the credibility of the relationship the IR is attempting to create with the IE.

Her word choice works in the same direction. The self-invented "gun-powdered up" seems young-with-the-young-ish, which is remarkable since the IE seems to be older than the IR. Also the "brought all the equipment" gives a vapor of professionalized heartiness that is probably meant to make the IR appear open-minded and set the scene for a frank conversation with juicy details, but since she overdoes her lack of prejudice she instead appears to be talking down to the IE.

Even though the IR apparently works hard to create a relationship with the IE and be hearty, she simultaneously creates a distance between the two of them. The question "(0.5) .hh (.)↑n<sub>ow</sub> you must really excuse me Gitte=but (.) really, (0.6) ↑you look completely average?" is designed with a pre- in the form of an excuse followed by the contrast marker 'but'. The statement "I thought you would look completely different," is produced, presupposing and voicing the IR's presuppositions, since she thematizes that it would have been natural to expect the IE to look non-ordinary. The IE does not respond to this, and a pause follows before the IR creates a new response point by expanding the question with a voicing of the particular expectation: "I thought you would look completely different," without explaining what she did expect. Again there is a relatively long pause before the IE finally answers that she does look different when she "go(es)=out.". The IR follows this up with an echo question (Ferrera 1994), achieving a confirmation from the IE.

That the IR does not align herself with the IE is also observable elsewhere. For example, she does not say "every night" but "every single night,", stressing "every" and "single" as if to stress the extent of the interviewee's escort business. This could be a reason for the IE's reluctance.

The IR invites the IE to legitimize and explain herself, but the IE does this only reluctantly. This is perhaps because the IR's somewhat confrontational speech inviting argumentation from the IE does not match the setting, facial expression or word choice, which are all working to create a 'boudoir' atmosphere with an exchange of intimacies. So it is important that the role be done in an integrated way, not with features pointing in different directions.

One could assume that the closer and more potentially face-threatening a question is, the more confrontational the IR style is. But this is not necessarily so. Take the following example: This is the same program about prostitution, and this time the IR is interviewing the mother of the call girl. It turns out that the call girl began as a street prostitute at only 12 years of age. Now, the IR wants to know why her mother never discovered what she was doing. Asking a mother why she didn't discover that her 12-year-old was a prostitute is potentially very face-threatening – almost the same as assessing her as a bad mother. But note the mother's response:

#### Ex 10 Your own daughter<sup>10</sup>

- 1 IR: and(h) (0.4) an important part of your  
2 family is sitting right next to you  
3 (0.5)  
4 Lone:m (1.0) ↑h<sub>ow</sub> could you miss (0.4)  
5 discovering  
6 (0.6) wha(h)t your own child  
7 (0.2) was up to  
8 (0.5)  
9 IE: I actually don't know, because eh  
10 (0.4) ↑Gitte visited my place y'know weekends  
11 every two weeks  
12 just like (0.8) the settlement said  
13 (0.3)  
14 <sup>2</sup>after the divorce  
15 I had  
16 ↑right↓  
17 (1.2)  
18 soeh (0.2) I didn't feel any of that,=  
19 =and when she was there she played with  
20 her sister,  
21 (3.0)  
22 IR: You did not notice anything  
23 (.)  
24 different  
25 o:r  
26 IE: ↑not at all,  
27 (0.7)  
28 IR: .h when did you get suspicious,  
29 (1.0)  
30 IE: I only got suspicious when Gitte was about eh  
31 (.) fifteen years old  
32 (0.4) tsk (.) where she came and told me=  
33 =that she worked (0.7) inside at a porn  
34 shop=where she sold tickets,

The interviewee can at least choose between two different relevant answer strategies. She can choose to answer with an explanation of how it could be explained technically that she did not discover it, or she can choose to answer the implicit accusation of having been a bad mother. She chooses the former. She describes the circumstances of her life at the time and constructs these as an explanation of her non-discovery. She does not appear to have given the subject much thought since then. She does not treat the question as potentially accusing or insulting her.

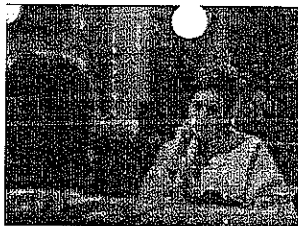
In this excerpt the interviewer is seen reclining, tilting her head to one side. She speaks slowly in a soft voice, and moves her right hand forward from home position in her lap and prepares to gesticulate with one hand. Accompanying her prosodic stress of "miss", she makes a small toss of her head to the left, making an underlining gesture with her right hand that she repeats in weak form on "discovering" and in strengthened form on "wha(h)t". After this the hand returns to a new rest position, supporting the face. At "own child" she plays with her right ear, and on "was up to" she moves her fingers at her right ear or plays with the hair behind the ear.



"Lone:m"



"miss"



"own child"



"was up to"

In the interviewer's treatment of Lone's answer, we see that her question was not merely asking for technical information of how to miss discovering anything. She could have responded several times during Lone's answer: after "the settlement was", during the pause of 0.3 seconds, after "I had" (l. 15), after "↑right↑", during the very long pause of 1.2 seconds, after "any of that," after "her sister," and during the extremely long pause of 3 seconds. She could have responded minimally with an "mm" or a follow-up or new

question, but says nothing and, in this, lets the IE know that her answer is not finished; she has more explaining to do. When she finally does say something, it is the question "You did not notice anything" which at first does not receive a response from the IE. She then creates a new response point by adding on "different" and yet another by adding on "o:r". Finally, the interviewee responds with "↑not at all," which the IR treats as a response that makes an expansion relevant by not responding for 0.7 seconds. But the IE does not say any more and the IR asks the next question, which requests factual information. Thus, the interviewer does treat the interviewee's answer (and behavior at the time of the events) as accountable.

In this interview the IR makes it relevant for the IE to legitimize her behavior, explain herself and defend herself. But compared to Excerpt 9, where the confrontation was done via question design, here it is done sequentially, by not coming in when she could have, by not saving the IE from the pauses. The IR's posture and self-touch set the scene for confidence and delicate topics, here supported by the speech that does not confront the IE. Still, the IE is challenged, and the viewer is left with an impression of the IE that does not have to be explained by e.g. formulations, as in Excerpt 4.

Looking at the interviewer, there seems to be a pattern in comparison to her interviews on the other programs. She does not lean forward but has a relaxed posture, sitting on a sofa. She speaks in a soft voice and although there is some gesticulation, she touches herself when the question is most confrontational.

When the program *Damernes Magasin* (The Ladies' Magazine) was aired, there were voices in the public debate labeling the interviewer, Camilla Miehé Renard's, style 'the professional girlfriend' (Bruun 1995). The preceding analysis in this chapter shows that this characteristic does not encompass the many roles she can do, even within the same program type and within the same program.

## Summary

It seems obvious that speech, in collaboration with posture, gesture and facial expressions, together shape an interviewer role. The complex coherence of role and behavior demands a study of the interaction with the entirety of social actions, turn construction, footing, sequentiality, prosody, gesture and posture. Interactional behavior can also be helped by the physical setting, but do not predetermine it.

The aim of this chapter has not been to show the practitioner's taxonomies as wrong, but to show how interviewer roles are done in order to suggest an action-based taxonomy for interviews that reflects the interviewer behavior:

- Argumentation
- Declaration
- Storytelling

The rationale has been to work backward from the interviewee turn types and use them as a name for the specific kind of interview.

In the 'argumentation interview' the interviewer exploits the footing of the neutral opposition to make it relevant for the interviewee to, for example, account for and legitimize something (as in Excerpt 3, going at full speed), defend and legitimize something (as in Excerpts 1 and 2, printing the diary), or to reluctantly legitimize something (as in Excerpt 10, not discovering the daughter's prostitution). The interviewee is not let off the hook without having accounted for, explained and defended his/her position.

In the 'declaration interview' the interviewer makes it relevant for the interviewee to declare, e.g. admit, something (as in Excerpt 7, no excuse for being fat), claim something (as in Excerpt 8) where a punch line is invited and acknowledged – not challenged or made accountable, but merely received. The invited declaration could also be a promise, a commitment, an appreciation or a mood report.

In the 'storytelling interview' the interviewer does not voice opposite viewpoints, e.g. uses formulations aligning with the IE or present tense to make it relevant for the interviewee to tell a story. This can, for example, be a fact-oriented story (as in Excerpts 5 and 6, the doctor) or an unfolding story told to a supporting midwife aiming to understand the events and rationale (as in Excerpt 4). It could also be a collaboratively told story in a double interview.

The analysis of the interview excerpts in this chapter could lead to formulating some hypotheses regarding the relationship between interviewer role, question design and posture: The posture supports the IR turn construction in appearing either confronting, challenging, aligning or sympathetic. Thus, if the IR leaves the neutral stance in the question design, his/her posture can either enhance or soften the challenge, depending on the delicacy of the topic. And if the IR does not leave the neutral stance in the question design, his/her posture does not have to 'repair' the relationship with the IE. These hypotheses could be explored further in larger studies than this inductive, explorative study has made possible.

Many names and taxonomies can be relevant for a categorization of interviewer behavior. The speaker action approach is one suggestion for condensing the complex construction of an interviewer role. Hopefully, this could bring us further in the study of the TV interview and the interviewer role.

## Notes

1. This excerpt and the next are transcribed by Lone Laursen, retranscribed by Johs. Wagner and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The symbols in the English translation are highly questionable, but are meant to give a feel for the speech. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
2. Transcribed by Martine Falbe, Sophie Lundbæk and Pernille Brandis, later retranscribed by Louise Hørslev, Thomas Iversen, Ninna Friis, Lone Kindberg and Rikke Rosenbjerg, and again retranscribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
3. Transcribed by Mie Femø Nielsen. The symbols in the English translation are highly questionable, but are meant to give a feel for the speech. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
4. It is not therapy, partly because it is a staged interaction in which the IE and IR have rehearsed or gone through the course of the interview in advance, and partly because it is part of the program's concept not to interview people in the middle of a crisis but instead only those who have overcome the crisis, e.g. with the aid of a therapist.
5. Ex 4 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
6. Ex 5 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
7. Ex 6 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
8. Ex 7 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
9. Ex 8 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).
10. Ex 9 was transcribed and translated by Mie Femø Nielsen. The Danish version can be seen at [www.femoe.dk](http://www.femoe.dk).

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