

Enquiries into Newscasts: The Discursive Organisation of Televised Criticism and Debate¹

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Looking critically at the way in which media construe and relay complex matters in the public sphere is a common enterprise for social sciences and communication studies. More and more it is also an issue addressed by specialised radio and television programmes. Their journalists are specifically committed to a critical approach of one kind or another of the way in which their colleagues do their job, by reporting and commenting on events.

An aspect of special interest is the ground on which a critical approach is pursued and makes sense. Instead of relying on a generic definition of what a 'critical approach' consists or should consist in, providing ground for a methodologically ironic perspective (Anderson and Sharrock, 1981; Carlin, 2002), this study, dedicated to an ethnomethodological approach, aims at exploring it as an 'organisational phenomenon' (Garfinkel, 2002). This means that, following Garfinkel and Sacks (1970), we are concerned with the way in which the notion of a 'critical enterprise' gets its status as such from the witnessable details of the concerted course of action to which it gives shape and refers, and does so as a concerted achievement of a local cohort. The public issue addressed here is that of peoples' insecurity in public places in the face of crime and delinquency.

The problematics and elements of context on the programme 'Freeze Frames'

I shall be concerned with a programme on French TV called *Arrêt sur Images* (Freeze Frames). I will mention it subsequently as 'ASI'. It has pioneered a new genre of television programme in France – a genre

which comments upon and criticises televised news and current affairs.

This weekly television programme, led by its anchorman, Daniel Schneidermann and assisted by some collaborators, Candice Mahout being one of them, is recorded in advance and broadcast on Sunday afternoons. It is presented as an investigation, based on television excerpts from other television programmes, that fuels a panel interview whose guests have a special link with the topic of the week. It intends to 'decipher' (*décrypter*) - in its own terms - the way in which the topic concerned has been dealt with in the broadcasts' excerpts examined.² Regarding the ASI broadcast on 030202 the first six minutes of which we are going to examine, it is a matter of the media covering of two news items by the two main French newscasts, that is TF1 and France³ (F2).³ We are going to focus on the first topic ASI dealt with on that day. That is the issue of the rate of increase in delinquency in France whose annual statistics were disclosed in January 2002.

The aim of this study is to enquire about the way in which the broadcast's own critical viewpoint is set up. Several interrelated aspects, through which Daniel Schneidermann's and Candice Mahout's talks articulate and elaborate each other, contribute to the achievement of this goal throughout the broadcast.

Therefore, this issue will be addressed through the investigation of ASI's presentation of its comparative analysis of the two newscasts.

Special attention will be paid to the way in which this presentation progressively makes accountable its affiliative link with

the initial glosses through which the anchorman introduced the agenda of the broadcast at the outset, including the outcomes of ASI's enquiry. Accordingly, the present study will focus on those glosses that happen to provide the gross features on which the subsequent programmes' critical orientation is based. These glosses are accounts. As such, they render accountable the programme's general presentation. That is, they are self-commentating, self-explicating features of the presentation, however adumbrated.

Two key phrases, given by Daniel Schneidermann, represent two poles. The first phrase is '*differences in tone*', the second '*a wish not to amplify things*'.

Thus, one of the main tasks of the analysis is on the first hand to describe the process through which the first gloss mentioned in Schneidermann's talk accountably leads to the second and, on the other, to show how is the second assessment made intelligible as an 'unglossing' and explanation of the first one, at least in part, throughout Candice Mahout's presentation.

Within this framework also, a third statement regarding the '*journalistic choices*' of the two newscasts is mentioned before the previous ones. It is the most global formulation of which the two subsequent ones appear as a more precise characterization. In that way, the '*differences in tone*' might give evidence of different or even diverging '*journalistic choices*', while the presumed '*wish not to amplify things*' might specify the prevailing orientation. According to ASI, this orientation characterizes the editorial choice of one of the two newscasts under study, a feature that, in this particular setting, may ground a critical perspective against that newscast.

It is through this sequential ordering that the phenomenon ASI has pointed out is progressively characterised in the focal

sequences of the broadcast. The analysis will closely inspect the practices that may subsequently fulfil the meaning of those key terms formulated at the outset of the broadcast. This way of doing things connects what is being done (by Candice Mahout) with what has been said (by Daniel Schneidermann) as a local mutual working out of one by the other, monitored by a practical criterion that is publicly available. This amounts to regarding those sequences as enacting language games.

Description of sequences

I shall first briefly describe the successive sequences that constitute the beginning of the broadcast.

Thus, the first excerpt is the starting point of the broadcast [B.1-7]. Its main presenter, D. Schneidermann, nominates the topics. He introduces the guests, who are the two newscasters of the two main French newscasts, Patrick Poivre d'Arvor for TF1 and David Pujadas for F2. Finally, he mentions the enquiry that has been achieved for the broadcast and introduces his co-presenter, Candice Mahout, who will present the investigation's upshots. As a conclusion, he invokes the comparative orientation animating this enquiry when he evokes the '*journalistic choices which, sometimes, bring [both newscasts] closer and sometimes distinguish [them]*' [B.6-7].

The second sequence concerns D. Schneidermann's topic initiation about '*security statistics*' [B.8-12]. He places the emphasis on the qualitative differences between the two newscasts. Then, he passes to C. Mahout. In so doing, he sets up two kind of things: on the one hand, he assigns to his collaborator the task of delivering the main results of this investigation of the two newscasts; on the other, he focuses the broadcast audience's attention solely on the differences in the two newscasts and no

longer on the converging points of their ‘journalistic choices’.

Mahout starts presenting quantitative data comparing the number of reports and the allotted time devoted by the two channels to the insecurity issue throughout the previous month [B.13-18]. From this investigation, she concludes that the attention dedicated to this topic by both newscasts is approximately comparable. Then, she turns to the comparative investigation of qualitative evidence, namely the newscasts’ excerpts, searching for the ‘differences in tone’ Schneidermann mentioned previously.

The covering, on 17/01/02, by the two newscasts of the provisional delinquency and insecurity statistics, before the government published the official ones, is cited first [B.20-32]. Then their respective reports on the official statistics are cited, the day they are made available, that is on 28/01/02. Mahout presents her investigations’ outcomes in two phases. First of all, she considers F2’s chart before showing the map of France used by TF1 as a way to illustrate the figures [B.32-43]. After that, she rapidly opposes the comments offered by both newscasters the same day [B.47-55].

Finally, Mahout compares the covering by both newscasts of a news item relative to an event that occurred on 29 01 02 in a Parisian middle school [B.56-78]. This event concerns the throwing of a bottle filled with an explosive liquid into a middle schoolyard in the Parisian region. Immediately after the broadcasting of this news item’s excerpts, Schneidermann addresses a critical question to F2 newscaster [B.79-80]. The analysis will stop at this point.

Analysis

Deriving its general methodology from some features of Sacks’ lectures (Sacks, 1992) and of EM respectively, the analysis

of the material will start with a gross characterisation, before considering, in particular, some features made available in the data under investigation.

The Main Points

Above all, the serial organization of the first six minutes of the broadcast is worth describing. It has three successive stages:

In presenting the insecurity issue, Schneidermann is delivering the provisional gloss of his broadcast’s preliminary enquiry when he specifies its goal, which is: checking off the ‘differences in tone’;

Secondly, in the delivering of the outcomes of her investigation, based on the comparison of the two newscasts’ video-data, Mahout offers evidence-reading instructions with a view to ‘finding’ or recognizing in that evidence variations in the ‘differences in tone’ initially announced;

Thirdly, Schneidermann’s critical question about the reason why F2 didn’t send reporters immediately on the place where a bottle with an explosive liquid was thrown – that is : *Is it a wish by you not to amplify those things or is it just a failure?* – is formulated after the end of the presentation of the preliminary enquiry’s outcomes. It points out what this stressing on the ‘differences in tone’ has led to, namely: the explicit formulation of one of the two viewpoints.

Now, a crucial analytical feature worth mentioning is the one revealed by the distribution of membership categories as between Daniel Schneidermann and Candice Mahout. He announces the successive points in the broadcast’s agenda, and concludes with the phrase ‘differences in tone’.

This word operates as a gloss of which Mahout's subsequent talk aims to un gloss and to contextualise it in relation to the evidence. In this respect, the gloss precedes its 'accountable texts', in Garfinkel and Sacks's terms. In fact, Mahout's talk practically answers the following question: what does Daniel Schneidermann mean when he talks about 'journalistic choices' and 'differences in tone' between the two newscasts? In other words, these phrases are glosses for Mahout's subsequent clarifying activities. They instruct the audience how to look at the evidence like ASI did in pursuit of its own preliminary inquiry. It is a condition for them to find in the newscasts' excerpts details that might appear as proper instantiations of what the gloss 'actually means' or 'stands for'⁴. As such Mahout's presentation is not merely the summing up of the main outcomes of a past enquiry. Moreover, in the broadcast's temporal unfolding, it operates as an 'explicative device'. Through this device, like in the example below, the first instance in the series (B.60) gives a clue on the relevant way to look at the following instance(s) (B.72), with which it shares the same pattern⁵ of which Schneidermann's key phrases minimally circumscribe the borders.

Example 1: Candice Mahout; The schoolyard's news item

CM: 56/ And then when some news items, some events happen, like for instance the
57/ explosive bottle that last Tuesday was thrown right into the middle of that schoolyard of a
58/ [schoolyard]
(...)
-> 60/ TF1 is there
(...)
-> 72/ And on the other hand F2 arrives at nightfall. The schoolyard is already empty.

In this example, the pattern of the 'difference in tone' finds one of its local illustrations (among possible others) in the

contrast stressed in the commentary between the picture of a schoolyard seen in daytime and the picture of the same schoolyard shown at night.

The details of the sequences

After having defined the overall contrastive dynamic that the broadcast's critical approach draws upon, let us examine more closely the way in which this way of looking at things and making sense of the evidences is locally and temporally accomplished in and through the way each of the newscasts' sequences are examined by ASI.

We will start with the first sequence about the presentation of the outcomes of ASI's preliminary enquiry. It relies on excerpts taken from the two newscasts. This sequence is about the 'leak' reported by AFP, the French news release agency, about the then forthcoming 2001 delinquency figures in France.

One interest of this sequence lies in its setting up of a contrast. Around it is going to be organised the unfolding of this televised investigation as much as the modalities of the guest interviews. The structure to which we refer is constituted at the intersection of the setting up of the news by the newscasts and of the introductory comment by Mahout [B.21-7]. Here is the way in which the contrast operates.

Example 2: Candice Mahout; the unofficial figures

DaS: 19/ [That's it. Difference but a tiny one]
CM: 20/ That's it. Tiny. On the other hand it's more at the level of the way the
->21/ news is illustrated that differences have been noted. For instance, before
->22/ the official figures came out, the increase in delinquency figures is in TF1
23/ main titles and even more in the launching of the night news. Let's watch it.

24/ TF1 evening news excerpt 170102 – PPDA : The rate of increase in delinquency
 25/ reached 7.7% in 2001 according to AFP, the French news release agency. For the first
 26/ time, this figure is over 4 million crimes and offences. The year before, the increase was 5.7%
 -> CM : 27/ That's it. On the other hand, on F2, it's a short news item that comes 11 minutes after the beginning of the newscast.
 28/ F2 evening news excerpt 170102 – DaP: Yesterday we cited the delinquency increasing
 29/ in Paris. Here is the figure for France in 2001: + 7.7%. Be careful. It's not an official
 30/ figure, but it is based on several pieces of information gathered and checked by the
 31/ French news release agency. Among the highest increases, picking pockets – mobile
 32/ phones in particular – and robberies with violence.

In this sequence, Mahout delivers the appropriate instruction in order to grasp the apposite point in the forthcoming newscast's excerpt by announcing it as in [B.21-22]. Then, the comment that introduces the latter excerpt explicitly emphasises the contrastive nature of the link with the former [B.27].

Thus, the broadcast's guests, just like the audience, are invited to make sense of each excerpt on the basis of the noticeable differences that are mentioned in Mahout's report, and nowhere else.

Only the evidences that, in the newscasts' excerpts, are related to the point highlighted by Mahout are taken into account for the description and assessment of the newscasts' way of reporting news items. Thus, each excerpt gains a clearly defined meaning only in relation with the specific feature upon which it is compared to the other. In the case in point, the relevant qualitative difference lies in the relative importance granted to the piece of information which expresses itself in a twofold way: Firstly, in the news items presentation's priority order which is explicitly mentioned by Candice Mahout

(title versus news in brief); secondly, in the obvious abundance of pictures with a spectacular and threatening tenor in one case (see Figure 1) versus the lack of pictures for illustrating that subject in the other (see Figure 2). We may mention in passing that the way in which the contents of the news is presented in each newscast is not considered at all by the ASI's enquiry. Only obvious and noticeable differences are those ones that might be seen as 'visibility criteria' (Baccus, 1986) for an underlying pattern ASI is looking for. Its disclosing is part of the setting up of its line of argument.



Figure 1: The Burning Car



Figure 2: The AFP's Figures of Delinquency

The following sequence [B.33-43] confronts the ways the two channels have

chosen to illustrate the official figures, either through a time or a space scale (with a graph or a map), the day they were made publicly available. Once more, it underlines the bipolarity in the two newscasts' viewpoints. It is such that F2 graph (see Figure 3) is described as putting in perspective the figures and playing down the increase [B.33-9], while TF1 is depicted as underlining the increase in delinquency, region by region, whatever extent it is [B.39-41] (see Figures 4a, 4b below).



Figure 3: F2' Graph of Increase in Delinquency

Example 3: Candice Mahout and Daniel Schneidermann; the graphic representation of the official figures

CM: 33/ Now, concerning the way of illustrating these figures, the day they are
 -> 34/ officially made available, on F2 they relativize them on a 10-year scale. Hence, here's a curb we
 -> 35/ can see which is a little [flat]
 DaS: 36/ [mmh]
 -> CM: 37/ well, that doesn't [really] show=
 DaS: 38/ [Yeah]
 -> CM: 39/ =this increase of 7.69%. On the other hand, on TF1 they chose to illustrate this
 -> 40/ figure with a map region per region. But, be it 15% or 1%, we see the same red spots [on
 -> 41/ the map of the same color]

After that, ASI's presentation compares F2 [B.47-51] and TF1 [B.52-5] excerpts the evening the official statistics have been made available. The selected excerpts show how descriptions of a 'same thing' may impart to it a different scope and meaning according to the agents on which the journalistic narrative relies, with a view to delivering an authorised assessment of the situation that ensues from their membership categories (i.e. 'Director of the French National Police' *versus* 'Opposition' and 'Trade Unions'). As a result, the opposition of the categories of agents that have been requested is consonant with their antagonistic positions on the subject. This is used to 'disclose' what Eglin & Hester have called the 'implicit commentary' (Eglin & Hester, 1999: 203) of each newscast on the topic they relate and which concerns the assessments on the scope and meaning of an event that are embedded in the way the journalist relates it in his/her narrative. It allows ASI to assign a reported stance to the newscast that relates it (Jalbert, 1984; 1999).

It is precisely what Candice Mahout does when she presents each excerpt by stressing a contrast between the two newscasts [B.47-8 ; B.52].

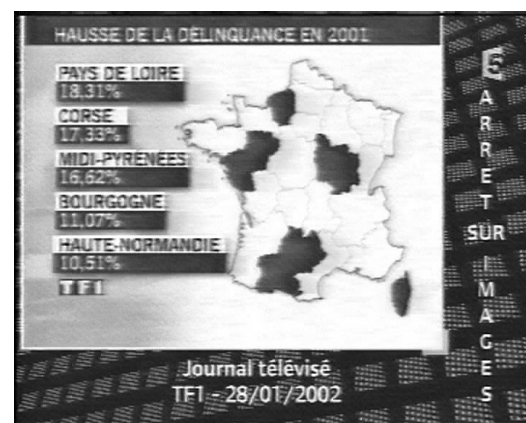


Figure 4a: The increase in delinquency in regions



Figure 4b: The increase in delinquency in regions

Example 4: CM and DaS; the newscasts' commentary on the official figures

DaS: 44/ [So the same night both newscasts relativize the figures

CM: 45/ [Yes]

DaS: 46/ [But not in the same way then, Candice

-> CM: 47/ No. Not in the same way, that is, on F2 you say that in France it's nonetheless

-> 48/ better than elsewhere. Let's have a look at it

49/ F2 evening news excerpt 280102 – DaP: To bring a nuance to this overall picture, it is 50/ the director of the national police who has indicated it: the delinquency rate related to 51/ the country's population remains much smaller in France than it is, for instance, in Germany or in Great Britain.

-> CM: 52/ While on TF1 you prefer laying stress on the fact that these figures are underestimates of the reality

53/ TF1 evening news excerpt 280102–PPDA: The Opposition has taken advantage of it

54/ for criticizing with virulence the security government policy and some trade unions have

55/ already contested the figures they consider to be underestimated

This assumed stance, examined through ASI's comparative approach, seems to reveal F2 inclination to diminish the seriousness of the increase in delinquency in France. The evidence for that is supplied by the TF1 report. It makes obvious that an alternative conclusion based on the same

evidence is quite possible. This legitimates ASI's contrastive operation and underlines its relevance for investigating the 'journalistic choices' and the 'differences in tone' the two newscasts exhibit, which is the broadcast's explicit goal. Furthermore, through those examples, it appears that these are not only the 'differences in tone' that are underlined, but are, for the most part differences that are definable in terms either of diminishing or moderating (for F2) or emphasizing or amplifying (concerning TF1) the scope and the implied or explicit meaning of the related facts, through pictures and journalistic narrative. Those mutually distinctive predicates are reflexively assigned to the two newscasts as category-based constituents for organising the presentation of ASI's preliminary enquiry upshots and as a finding of this very enquiry. That is, they are used on this occasion as a resource *and* topic for the broadcast's organisational ends.

Now, let us briefly come to the last sequence, about the event that happened in a Parisian middle school [B.56-78]. We have previously observed that ASI's investigation of TF1's and F2's respective reports about delinquency statistics has consisted in stressing the kind of significant contrast revealed by the comparison of F2 graph and TF1 map of France. A contrast of the same kind has been brought to the fore in the news item concerning the middle school. This time, it is formed by the juxtaposition of two opposite pictures: the middle schoolyard in daytime (see Figure 5).



Figure 5: The schoolyard in daytime

The same place at night is depicted in Figure 6.



Figure 6: The schoolyard at night

The strength of the contrast expressed in Mahout's narrative, where 'TF1 is on the scene' is set in opposition to 'On the other hand, F2 arrives at nightfall', rests on this sole detail. The TF1 report is used as a norm and thus an instruction from which F2 deviates. It is this contrast that raises Schneidermann critical question [B.79-80]. He asks F2 newscaster whether this was intended by F2 or a failure. Both attitudes are heard as faulted. This is precisely the issue: many of Mahout's and Schneidermann's utterances are heard for their implicitly critical 'intent'. In a critical programme, people (guests and overhearing audience) use those hearing rules, in order to grasp what is 'really'

intended in the questions asked to the guests.

Thus, the critical question has two aspects which are based on distinctive assumptions.

Example 5: Daniel Schneidermann and David Pujadas ; The critical question

DaS to DaP: 79/ So let's start with this latest news item, the throwing of this bottle in
-> 80/ Créteil. Is it a wish by you not to amplify those things or is it just a failure?

-> DaP: 81/ There's no wish not to amplify those things since it is a question, I think, of an 82/ important deed and an important signal as well. [and so a=]

DaS: 83/ [What is it then ?]

DaP: 84/ =failure, you're a bit hard

DaS: 85/ How would you term it ?

DaP: 86/ Well let's say that as a matter of fact if we could have covered this piece of news 87/ the same evening we would have done it. It's real news. It's something that seems 88/ important. Besides, we dealt with it the day after, with some reactions, we considered it 89/ once more two days later when the teachers went on strike, they demanded more 90/ supervisors, higher fences

DaS: 91/ Well but you did all that the day after and two days later, you've done day-to-day 92/ news and news means the very same day

DaP: 93/ The same day, if we could have covered the topic we would have done it.

94/ Sometimes we are very good on some topics, sometimes we are not so good on others.

-> 95/ Maybe we have had a small delay in reacting. Here it is. We fixed it the day after.

96/ It's not [the end of the world=]

DaS: 97/ [There it is]

DaP: 98/ =of covering it 24 hours later

DaP: 99/ Absolutely. It was just a matter of setting up the reason

DaP: 100/ That was the reason... let's be clear

Let us consider the 'failure' argument, first. It can immediately be understood through the contrast between the two pictures of the schoolyard and Candice Mahout's comparison as well. Those pictures successively appear on a

background screen when David Pujadas (F2) is answering Daniel Schneidermann's question. It is a journalistic criticism addressed to a journalist⁶. It is based on a conventional expectancy within the profession that holds that a reporter must go to the scene of an event the same day the event happened, in search for witnesses and anybody who may be charged with commenting or investigating it. In the present circumstances, the criticism does not look like a general or a theoretical statement that could be easily challenged by the interviewee for its 'lack of evidence', since that is what TF1 effectively did by sending reporters to the middle school and to the rectory. Thus, this particular feature from which the TF1 report departs from F2's provides the grounds for Daniel Schneidermann's criticism.

Now, the phrase about the 'wish not to amplify things' sounds like an overall picture of the core point to which ASI's preliminary enquiry has led. It is a phrase that recognizably elaborates what was intended in the previous 'differences in tone' by specifying one of its possible relevant features. Of course, this gloss works as a set of instructions regarding *how* to see those features, *how* to select and interpret them. Moreover, it effectively opens the entry into the broadcast's panel interview phase.

Through this question, the actuality of the two channels' contrastive stances is henceforth constituted as an 'objective fact'. F2 is seen as tending to play down the seriousness of the facts concerning insecurity.

Thus, it becomes possible to systematically 'see' in their own reports this propensity of its editorial staff at work in the way its reports are made (and reciprocally for TF1 staff to whom the reverse inclination is ascribed). Therefore a critical orientation can be assumed from this; one that will

take this stance as its target with a view to asking the guests to explain themselves on their assumed antagonistic stances and on what dubious things they may lead them to do. As such, their alternative way of dealing with the subject is referred to the inner logic of the distinctive stance that has been ascribed to each of them. This assumption of an antagonistic relation among the two newscasts, is the preliminary enquiry's major outcome and ASI's main line of argument it has to firmly set up throughout the broadcast. As such, it operates in the manner in which guests are interviewed.

David Pujadas answer is composed with two parts, each of them addressing the pertinent critical aspect included in Daniel Schneidermann's twofold question: '*Is it a wish by you not to amplify things or is it just a failure*'. First, he refutes the intentional character of the act when he replies '*it's not a wish not to amplify things*' [B.81]⁷. Then, he diminishes the perceived or, rather, imputed 'failure' by rephrasing it in more acceptable terms for his newscast.⁸ He then concedes: '*maybe we have had a small delay in reacting*' [B.95]. This answer instantiates the way the guests are going to shape their defence in the subsequent parts of the broadcast. Against what looks like ASI's certainties concerning the distinctive editorial lines of the two newscasts, revealed by its enquiry, the strategy of the newscasters will consist as much as possible in reinstating the contingent features of the journalist work, as well as the opportunities and the specific constraints of dealing with a particular subject. In this particular instance, the newscaster stresses this precisely there where ASI inclines to see in the way both newscasts deal so differently with the same subject, evidence for the claim they are following a rule. It reads as follow: TF1 amplifies the seriousness of the news about insecurity, whereas F2 tends to diminish it. This rule is precisely what ASI has to make explicit, while

soliciting the interviewees to resist it, as it might publicly convey a damaging and accordingly an unacceptable way of accounting for the way they do their job.

Conclusion

In searching for the accountable details of a broadcast approach critical of television programmes, and especially newscasts, this paper has examined the *in situ* organisational background of this concerted activity publicly made available in and through the sequential unfolding of a broadcast, as a phenomenon of order. These properties of order are displayed in the intertwining of the glosses through which the anchorman sums up the agenda of the broadcast and the task of his co-presenter. It is from the latter that the pertinent detailed features of the glosses are made accountable in relation with the evidence provided by the focal newscasts' excerpts and their commentary.

The provisional gloss does two things. Firstly, it makes of the search for differences a basic figure and a main theme for the enquiry on which the programme starts and upon which it relies throughout its development. These are commonsense devices for an instructed hearing.

Therefore, on the broadcast's set we not only have the two newscasters of the two main French newscasts, but also the newscasts' agents. It is these about whom it is said that they distinguish from each other through the different 'tone' they have regularly taken in their reporting on the topic of insecurity, the month before. This local knowledge is produced and made publicly available even before the guests have had the opportunity of saying anything. It exhibits the unifying effect ASI's own pattern of interpretation has had on the way of looking at the news reports

with a view to (in this case) pointing out noticeable absences and differences.

Accordingly, the kind of significant difference emphasized by ASI's enquiry is based on the disclosing of the assumed antagonistic stands that both newscasts have taken on this particular matter. This finding is reflexively linked to the contrast-enhancing method used by Candice Mahout over the course of her account. We can sum up its overall course in the following way: it is every time established through a contrast, set up from the confrontation with an excerpt of the other newscast on that topic - just like in example 1 and its day/night contrast. It is through this that, as Mahout points out in the specific excerpt she is in the course of mentioning, gets its inferentially rich meaning and scope. From there ensues, in particular, the dynamic of the questionable character of an excerpt that might subsequently fuel a question, a call for an explanation, require a justification, and so on.

In this framework, the locally achieved and reproduced discrepancy in the stances represented by Daniel Schneidermann on the one hand and his two guests on the other as an organisational phenomenon, is what provides the broadcast's dynamic throughout its course.

The latter relies on a set of procedures and a 'commonsense irony' ASI maintains throughout the broadcast toward its guests and the newscasts' excerpts as the naturally-occurring exhibitions of those features of their activities that are seen as vulnerable and open to criticism. On the other hand, the maintenance throughout the broadcast of a certain vagueness in the ASI's stance on this matter preserves a plausible deniability to its representative's, Schneidermann's, questions.

Appendix

Transcripts of the video recorded broadcast "Arrêt sur Images" (*Freeze Frames*)

Four sequences: 1/ the broadcast launching (0 mn 40 sec); 2/ the growth in the delinquency rate (3 mn.); 3/ the Creteil middle schoolyard report (2 mn 10 sec); the critical question and the interviewee's answer (2 mn 35 sec)

1/ Lancement / *the broadcast launching*

A.1/ Daniel Schneidermann (DaS): Bonjour. Les affaires politico-financières, la délinquance et l'insécurité:

2/ deux sujets dits sensibles en période pré-électorale; deux sujets sur lesquels le traitement

3/ des journaux télévisés de 20H est déjà et sera observé à la loupe. Avec nous aujourd'hui les

4/ deux présentateurs des deux principaux JT français. Alors, par ordre alphabétique,

5/ d'abord PPDA, présentateur du journal de TF1, et DaP, présentateur du journal de F2.

6/ Avec tous les deux, nous reviendrons sur ces deux sujets là, sur les choix journalistiques

7/ qui, parfois vous rapprochent et, parfois, on le verra, vous opposent. L'enquête a été conduite par Candice Mahout.

B.1/ Daniel Schneidermann (DaS): *Good afternoon. The financial and political affairs, delinquency and*

2/ insecurity: two issues that are said to be sensitive in a pre-electoral period; two issues the covering

3/ of which by the newscasts is already and will be examined in great detail. With us today the

4/ two newscasters of the two main newscasts. Now, in alphabetical order,

5/ first Patrick Poivre d'Arvor, TF1 newscaster, and David Pujadas, France2 newscaster.

6/ With both of them we will return to those two topics, to the journalistic choices

7/ which, sometimes bring you closer and, sometimes, as it we'll be shown, divide you. The investigation has been led by Candice Mahout.

2/ Les chiffres de l'insécurité/ *the growth in the delinquency rate*

A.8/ DaS: Alors précisément, on va en venir au cœur de cette émission. I.e. d'abord le

9/ traitement dans les deux journaux de F2 et de TF1 de l'insécurité et de la délinquance,

10/ des statistiques de la sécurité. De très nombreuses images depuis début janvier dans vos

11/ deux journaux. Avec une véritable, plusieurs véritables différences de ton que nous nous

12/ sommes attachés à recenser, Candice.

B.8/ DaS: *Now then, we are reaching the core of this broadcast. That is first the covering*

9/ of the issues of the insecurity and delinquency, the statistics of security by F2 and TF1

10/ news. Quite numerous pictures since the beginning of January in both of your newscasts.

11/ With a genuine many genuine differences in tone that we've made every effort to make an

12/ inventory of them, Candice.

A.13/ Candice Mahout (CM): Oui. Alors d'abord un petit point sur le nombre de reportages consacrés à

14/ l'insécurité dans vos deux journaux. On va voir une petite animation normalement. Sur

15/ le mois de janvier on compte 39 sujets sur TF1 et 27 sur F2 donc consacrés à

16/ l'insécurité. Mais, en même temps, la différence n'est pas vraiment si décisive puisque

17/ en temps F2 consacre 56 minutes dans le mois à ce sujet contre 1H13 à TF1. Donc, ce

18/ n'est pas non plus [très grand]

B.13/ Candice Mahout (CM): *Yes. So let's first make a short overview about the number of reports that have*

14/ been dedicated to the insecurity issue in both of your newscasts. We should watch a short

15/ animation now. Regarding the month of January, we have counted 39 topics on TF1 and

16/ 27 on F2 so dedicated to the insecurity issue. But at the same time the difference is not

17/ really con conclusive since, on the criterion of time, F2 has put in 56 minutes in the month

18/ at this issue whereas TF1 has devoted 1 hour 13 minutes. Hence, this is not [very imp] either

A.19/ DaS: [Voilà. Différence mais minime]
 B.19/ DaS: [*That's it. Difference but a tiny one*]

A.20/ CM: Voilà. Minime. En revanche, c'est plus au niveau des illustrations qu'on a noté
 21/ quelques différences. Par exemple, avant la sortie des chiffres officiels, l'augmentation
 22/ de la délinquance est dans les titres de TF1 et fait même l'ouverture du journal.
 23/ On regarde.

B.20/ CM: *That's it. Tiny. On the other hand, it's more at the level of the way news is*
 21/ *illustrated that differences have been noted. For instance, before the official figures came out, the increase in*
 22/ *delinquency figures in TF1 main titles and even more in the launching of the night news.*
 23/ *Let's watch it.*

A.24/ Extrait du JT de 20H TF1 17/01/02 – P. Poivre D'Arvor (PPDA): La délinquance a augmenté de 7,7%

25/ en 2001 selon les éléments recoupés par l'AFP. Pour la première fois, le chiffre de 4
 26/ millions de crimes et délits a été dépassé. L'année précédente, l'augmentation était de 5,7%

B.24/ *TF1 evening news excerpt 170102 – P. Poivre D'Arvor (PPDA): The rate of increase in delinquency*
 25/ *reached 7.7% in 2001 according to AFP, the French news release agency. For the first*
 26/ *time, this figure is over 4 million crimes and offences. The year before, the increase was 5.7%*

A.27/ CM: Voilà. En revanche, sur F2, c'est une brève qui vient 11 minutes après le début du journal.

B.27/ CM: *Here it is. In return, on F2, it's a short news item that comes 11 minutes after the beginning of the newscast.*

A.28/ Extrait F2 20H 17/01/02 – David Pujadas (DaP): On évoquait hier l'augmentation de la délinquance
 29/ à Paris. Voici le chiffre pour l'ensemble de la France en 2001 : + 7,7%. Attention il ne
 30/ s'agit pas d'une donnée officielle, mais d'éléments recueillis ou recoupés par l'AFP.
 31/ Parmi les plus fortes hausses, les vols à la tire – portables notamment – et les vols avec

32/ violence.

B.28/ *F2 evening news excerpt 170102 – David Pujadas (DaP): Yesterday we cited the delinquency increasing*
 29/ *in Paris. Here is the figure for France in 2001: + 7.7%. Be Careful It's not an official*
 30/ *figure, but it is based on several pieces of information gathered and checked by the*
 31/ *French news release agency. Among the highest increases, picking pockets – mobile*
 32/ *phones in particular – and robberies with violence.*

A.33/ CM: Alors, quant à la manière de mettre en images ces chiffres, le jour de leur
 34/ parution officielle, sur F2 on relativise sur 10 ans. Donc on a une courbe qu'on voit là,
 35/ qui est un peu [plate]

B.33/ CM: *Now, concerning the way of illustrating these figures, the day they are officially*
 34/ *made available, on F2 they relativize them on a 10-year scale. Hence, here's a curb we*
 35/ *can see which is a little [flat]*

A.36/ DaS: [hum]

B.36/ DaS: [*mmh*]

A.37/ CM: enfin, qui ne montre pas [vraiment]=

B.37/ CM: *well, that doesn't [really] show=*

A.38/ DaS: [ouais]

B.38/ DaS: [*Yeah*]

A.39/ CM: =cette augmentation de 7,69%. En revanche, sur TF1 on choisit de représenter ce
 40/ chiffre par une carte détaillée région par région. Mais, que ce soit 15% ou 1%, on a ces
 41/ mêmes taches rouges [sur la carte d'une même couleur]

B.39/ CM: *=this increase of 7.69%. On the other hand, on TF1 they chose to illustrate this*
 40/ *figure with a map region per region. But, be it 15% or 1%, we see the same red spots*
 [on

41/ *the map of the same color]*

A.42/ DaS: [qui apparaît sur la carte]

B.42/ DaS: [that appear on the map]

A.43/ CM: Bon voilà. Ça, ça change pas. En revanche, euh les les chiffres

B.43/ CM: *Well that's it. This, this doesn't change. On the other hand, uh the the figures*

A.44/ DaS: [Alors le même soir les deux journaux relativisent les chiffres

B.44/ DaS: *[So the same night both newscasts relativize the figures*

A.45/ CM: [Oui]

B.45/ CM: *[Yes]*

A.46/ DaS: [Mais alors pas de la même manière, Candice

B.46/ DaS: *[But not in the same way then, Candice*

A.47/ CM: Non. Pas de la même manière, i.e. sur F2 vous dites que en France, c'est quand 48/ même mieux qu'ailleurs. On regarde

B.47/ CM: *No. Not in the same way, that is, on F2 you say that in France it's nonetheless 48/ better than elsewhere. Let's have a look at it*

A.49/ Extrait JT F2 28/01/02 – DaP: Une nuance à apporter à ce tableau général, c'est le 50/ directeur de la police nationale qui l'a indiquée : le taux de délinquance rapporté à la 51/ population reste très inférieur en France à ce qu'il est p.e. en Allemagne ou en Grande-Bretagne.

B.49/ *F2 evening news excerpt 280102 – DaP: To bring a nuance to this overall picture, it is 50/ the director of the national police who has indicated it : the delinquency rate related to 51/ the country's population remains much smaller in France than it is, for instance, in Germany or in Great-Britain.*

A.52/ CM: Tandis que sur TF1 vous préférez insister sur le fait que ces chiffres sont en-dessous de la réalité.

B.52/ CM: *While on TF1 you prefer laying stress on the fact that these figures are underestimates of the reality*

A.53/ Extrait JT TF1 28/01/02 – PPDA: L'opposition en a profité pour critiquer avec 54/ virulence la politique du gouvernement en matière de sécurité et un certain nombre de 55/ syndicats contestent déjà les chiffres en estimant qu'ils sont inférieurs à la réalité.

B.53/ *TF1 evening news excerpt 280102 – PPDA: The Opposition has taken advantage of it*

54/ *for criticizing with virulence the security government policy and some trade unions have*

55/ *already contested the figures they consider to be underestimated*

3/ L'affaire du collège / the middle schoolyard report

A.56/ CM: Et puis lorsque surviennent certains faits divers, certains événements, comme p.e.

57/ le la mardi dernier la bouteille explosive qui a été jetée au beau milieu de cette cour

58/ d'école d'une [cour d'école]

B.56/ CM: *And then when some news items, some events happen, like for instance the the 57/ explosive bottle that last Tuesday was thrown right into the middle of that schoolyard of a*

58/ *[schoolyard]*

A.59/ DaS: [cour de collège oui]

B.59/ *Das: [a middle schoolyard yes]*

A.60/ CM: TF1 est sur place.

B.60/ CM: *TF1 is there*

A.61/ Extrait du journal de 20H TF1 29/01/02 - PPDA: Cet après-midi à Créteil au collège 62/ Pasteur 16 élèves ont été légèrement blessés après l'explosion d'une bouteille, contenant

63/ un produit chimique, jetée dans la cour. Une jeune fille de 14 ans aurait avoué. Sur place

64/ on retrouve X et Y.

65/ - reportage: Il y avait autant de monde dans la cour du collège Pasteur lorsqu'une

66/ explosion a retenti cet après-midi à 14H15 faisant 16 blessés légers dont 3 brûlés. Les

67/ élèves s'apprêtaient à rentrer en salle de cour quand une bouteille remplie d'acide

68/ chlorhydrique et d'aluminium a explosé.

69/ .Inspecteur d'académie adjoint: c'est un acte qui est surprenant, parce que c'est un

70/ acte qui est extrêmement rare. Et je n'ai pas eu jusqu'à présent beaucoup l'occasion de

71/ voir un acte d'une telle gravité dans un établissement scolaire.

B.61/ *TF1 evening news excerpt 290102 – PPDA: This afternoon in Créteil at Pasteur's*

62/ *middle school 16 pupils have been slightly wounded after a bottle had exploded, a bottle*

63/ *which contained a chemical product thrown in the schoolyard. A young 14 years old girl*

64/ *might have confessed. On the spot there are X and Y (two TF1 reporters)*

65/ - *report: The schoolyard was as crowded as it is on the pictures of the Créteil middle*

66/ *schoolyard when an explosion blasted this afternoon at 2:15 resulting in 16 slightly*

67/ *wounded persons including 3 scorched persons. Pupils were on the verge of coming back*

68/ *to their classrooms when a bottle filled up with hydrochloric acid and aluminium exploded.*

69/ *Departmental Education Inspector: It is a surprising deed, since it is an extremely rare one.*

70/ *Until now I haven't had so much the opportunity to see such a serious act in a school*

71/ *establishment.*

A.72/ CM: Et en revanche F2 arrive la nuit tombée. La cour d'école est déjà vide.

B.72/ CM: *And on the other hand F2 arrives at nightfall. The schoolyard is already empty.*

A.73/ Extrait F2 29/01/02 – DaP: Autre information contenue dans ces statistiques pour 74/ l'année 2001: l'augmentation de la délinquance chez les plus jeunes. Dans un collège de

75/ Créteil aujourd'hui, 16 élèves ont été légèrement blessés par l'explosion d'une bouteille

76/ contenant un liquide chimique et explosif et placé dans la cour. Une jeune fille de 14 ans a

77/ avoué avoir jeté cette bouteille. Il s'agissait de venger son frère aîné, exclu de

78/ l'établissement il y a quelques semaines.

B.73/ F2 evening news excerpt 290102 – DaP: *Another piece of information contained in the*

74/ *2001 statistics : the increase in juvenile delinquency. Today, in a middle school in*

75/ *Créteil, 16 pupils have been slightly wounded by the explosion of a bottle containing a*

76/ *chemical and explosive liquid that was put in the yard. A young 14 years old girl has*

77/ *confessed to having thrown this bottle. It was a question of avenging her elder brother,*

78/ *who was expelled from the school some weeks ago.*

4/ La question critique/ the critical question

A.79/ DaS à DaP: Alors d'abord sur ce dernier fait divers, le jet de cette bouteille à Créteil.

80/ C'est de votre part une volonté de ne pas dramatiser les choses ou, c'est un ratage pur et simple?

B.79/ DaS to DaP: *So let's start with this latest news item, the throwing of this bottle in*

80/ *Créteil. Is it a wish by you not to amplify those things or is it just a failure?*

A.81/ DaP: C'est pas une volonté de ne pas dramatiser les choses parce qu'il s'agit, je pense,

82/ d'un acte important et aussi d'un signal important. [Et donc un=]

B.81/ DaP: *There's no wish not to amplify those things since it is a question, I think, of an 82/ important deed and an important signal as well. [and so a=]*

A.83/ DaS: [alors c'est quoi ?]

B.83/ DaS: [What is it then ?]

A.84/ DaP: =ratage vous êtes un peu dur

B.84/ DaP: =failure, you're a bit hard

A.85/ DaS: Comment vous appelleriez ça ?

B.85/ DaS: *How would you term it ?*

A.86/ DaP: Disons qu'effectivement si on avait pu traiter le sujet le soir même on l'aurait

87/ traité le soir même. C'est un vrai sujet. C'est quelque chose qui paraît important.

88/ D'ailleurs on y est revenu le lendemain, avec des réactions, on y est même revenu le

89/ surlendemain puisque les enseignants se sont mis en grève, ils réclament plus de

90/ surveillants, des clôtures plus hautes

B.86/ DaP: *Well let's say that as a matter of fact if we could have covered this piece of news*

87/ *the same evening we would have done it. It's real news. It's something that seems*

88/ *important. Besides, we dealt with it the day after, with some reactions, we considered it*

89/ *once more two days later when the teachers went on strike, they demanded more*

90/ *supervisors, higher fences*

A.91/ DaS: Mais enfin ça, c'est le lendemain et le surlendemain, vous avez fait de

92/ l'information en continu et l'information, c'est le jour même.

B.91/ DaS: *Well but you did all that the day after and two days later, you've done day-to-day*
 92/ *news and news means the very same day*

A.93/ DaP: le jour même, si on avait pu traiter le sujet on aurait pu le traiter. Parfois, on est
 94/ très bons sur certains sujets, parfois on est moins bons sur d'autres. On a peut-être eu un
 95/ petit retard à l'allumage. Voilà. On a réparé ça le lendemain. Ce n'est pas non plus
 96/ [dramatique=]

B.93/ DaP: *The same day, if we could have covered the topic we would have done it.*
 94/ *Sometimes we are very good on some topics, sometimes we are not so good on others.*
 95/ *Maybe we have had a small delay in reacting. Here it is. We fixed it the day after.*
 96/ *It's not [the end of the world=]*

A.97/ DaS: [Voilà]

B.97/ DaS: [*There it is*]

A.98/ DaP: =de traiter ça 24H plus tard

B.98/ DaP: =*of covering it 24 hours later*

A.99/ DaS: Absolument. Il s'agissait seulement de savoir la raison.

B.99/ DaP: *Absolutely. It was just a matter of setting up the reason*

A.100/ DaP: La raison, c'est celle là.....soyons clair.

B.100/ DaP: *That was the reason... let's be clear*

A.101/ DaS: Mais la question n'est quand même pas gratuite. Car ce type de sujets sont
 102/ observés à la loupe par les hommes politiques. Et s'agissant notamment des violences

103/ scolaires Jack Lang a fait justement ce même jour une déclaration assez forte, Candice.

B.101/ DaS: *But nevertheless the question is not gratuitous. For those kind of issues are 102/ carefully considered by politicians. And regarding namely the issue of violence at school*

103/ *Jack Lang [the Education minister at that time] has precisely delivered a rather strong declaration this same day, Candice.*

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Endnotes

¹ An earlier version of this paper was presented at the International Institute for Ethnomethodology and Conversation Analysis conference 'Producing local order', Manchester Metropolitan University, July 2-4

2003. I am indebted to Bruno Bonu (Université de Montpellier) for discussing these issues with me. Jean Widmer (Université de Fribourg/Switzerland) gave valuable comments on the data.

² The programme presents itself in those terms on its website: 'Arrêt sur images' is the only television programme dedicated to an approach critical of television programmes. As such, it stands as a flagship broadcast in its sphere. This weekly news magazine focuses on the abundance and the influence of television pictures in our society. Around the topic and the guests of the week, columnists are interviewed by the anchorman and offer materials with a view to better grasping what is at stake in the pictures. The programme is composed of three parts: news items, the topic of the week and the deciphering of a family's reactions after they have watched TV programmes. The challenge faced by the broadcast is counterbalancing the all-might television through an approach critical of its pictures. A convenient method is furnished in order to better purportedly 'read' the television and 'stand back' from this medium.

³ The full text of transcripts – in French and English – is presented in the Appendix, at the end of the paper.

⁴ The figures between hyphens refer to the line numbers of sequences in the transcript. 'B' is for the English transcript, 'A' refers to the original one.

⁵ In so far as the newscasts' excerpts are used as evidence in a specific investigation in ASI's broadcast, these news items are decontextualised from their original use and meaning and recontextualised in a new setting. In the latter, the gloss operates as a kind of basic tool for an expert version (Cuff, 1993: 71-8) that reflexively respecifies the news report as evidence for the investigation of the ways, and specially controversial ways, in which those reports have been made. Controversial matters in the newscasts' excerpts, as such as the divergent views they exhibit between the two newscasts investigated, are through and through a local accomplishment of ASI's unfolding broadcast. Accordingly, what the gloss means refers to meaningful features that are supposed to be accountable in the news items treated as data for the sake of ASI's enquiry. This is accomplished through what Garfinkel termed

the ‘documentary method of interpretation’ where a feature of a setting is seen as relying on an imputed linguistic underlying pattern as well as revealing it. Once the link between pattern and instance has been set up, each subsequent instance is rendered meaningful according to its pattern (Garfinkel, 1967, chapters 2 and 3). In other words, the pattern of interpretation and its varied instantiations mutually elaborate each other.

⁶ The notion of ‘explicative device’ is borrowed from Paul ten Have (1999). It originates from Melvin Pollner’s notion, ‘explicative transactions’ (1979). The latter concerns the way in which members who are not acquainted with a peculiar setting in which they have to play a part as defendants – Pollner’s case study is a traffic court – are transforming it into a ‘tutorial setting’ through which they progressively learn how to behave according to its organisational properties by scrutinizing the way people who are on ‘stage’ before them deal with the situation and are treated by court officials.

⁷ I thank Jean Widmer for calling my attention on this point.

⁸ Concerning the significance of lexical repetition in the news interview, see Clayman and Heritage, 2002: 247.