

Building up Expectations: Audience Involvement through Lithuanian News Interview Openings

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Abstract. News interview openings prove to be governed by a distinctive set of social conventions. According to Clayman and Heritage (2002) this pre-questioning space of time performs a variety of important journalistic functions: it sets an agenda for the interview and it projects the form which the discussion will take, regulating interviewees' access to the interaction and establishing the identities that will inform their participation. This study analyzes one more function of news interview openings. In all three parts – headline, background and lead-in - journalists have developed a number of ways to capture the audience's attention. The study is based on a sample of openings from unedited "live" broadcast. In all, 20 panel interviews and discussion shows were recorded during the last presidential election campaign. The programmes were extensively transcribed and analyzed for both verbal and non-verbal behaviour. The study reveals different verbal and non-verbal descriptive and dramatic techniques. The headlines exhibit dramatic terms in formulating the topic or posing a puzzle. The background segments are abundant in descriptive adjectives and comment adverbs as well as action verbs. The lead-ins show different descriptive items to present interviewees' credentials. Certain patterns in using pauses, the rate and volume of speech as well as posture, facial expressions and gaze-direction accompany verbal behaviour.