"The left is hurting terribly": Neutrality in broadcast news

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Data collection

Table 1: NOS-journaal (date: 14-01-2011; duration: 26 min 35 s): global structure and content, types of interviews (numbers per item) and coverage time (in seconds or minutes and seconds per item)

Global Structure and content	affiliated interviews	expert interviews	experiential interviews	accountability interviews	coverage time
Opening with clip from characteristic visuals and sounds					2 s
Headline 1: *President of Tunisia flees from country*					3 s
Headline 2: *Wiki-Leaks documents about the Netherlands published*					3 s
Headline 3: *And cycle legend Peter Post has died*					3 s
Characteristic visuals and sounds					13 s
Greeting					1 s
Item 1: President of Tunisia flees from country	1		4		4 min 53 s
Item 2: Wiki-Leaks documents about the Netherlands published	2	1		1	7 min 34 s
Item 3: Cycle legend Peter Post deceased		1			1 min 40 s
Item 4: Somalis who were arrested on suspicion of terrorism released and compensated		1			34 s
Item 5: Mayor of Moerdijk resigns on 1 February					19 s
Item 6: Number of casualties of flood in Brazil increasing					30 s
Item 7: Thousands of people in Arizona paid final tribute to Christine Taylor Green, the nine-year old girl who died in a shooting in Tucson last Saturday					35 s
Item 8: The most famous Dutch grocer Albert Heijn has died		3			43 s
Item 9: The use of mobile internet is massively increasing		3			20 s
Item 10: Screen version of Sonny Boy, the famous book by Annejet van der Zijl, receives premiere		½	1	½	25 s
Weather forecast					1 min 46 s
Closing and greeting					14 s
Clip from characteristic visuals and sounds					4 s

Table 2: PowNews (date: 17-01-2011; duration: 14 min 48 s): global structure and content, types of interviews (numbers per item) and coverage time (in seconds or minutes and seconds per item)

Global Structure and content	affiliated interviews	expert interviews	experiential interviews	accountability interviews	coverage time
Opening with characteristic visuals and sounds			2		16 s
Bird's eye view of studio					2 s
Headline 1: *Arabist-in-hiding Hans Jansen in the news again*					3 s
Trailer from news item 3		1			8 s
Headline 2: *Left-wing resurrection becomes puppet show*		1			3 s
Trailer from news item 4					7 s
Headline 3: *And be careful with illegal shitty Chinese man*					3 s
Trailer from news item 2				1	10 s
Greeting and opening					4 s
Item 1: Steve Jobs resigns because of health problems		5			3 min 11 s
Headline 4: *Coalition sleeps like a log after left-wing hippie party*					3 s
Headline 5: *And again great blunder in court case concerning Wilders*					3 s
Trailer from news item 3		1			7 s
Item 2: Not toxic clouds, but a take-away meal from the local Chinese is thought to be the cause of the physical complaints of the aid workers in Moerdijk				3	1 min 52 s
Item 3: Great blunder Dutch state in court case against Geert Wilders	1	1	2		5 min 2 s
Item 4: Left-wing party became left-wing puppet show		3	8		3 min 3 s
Closing and greeting					3 s
Bird's eye view of studio					3 s

Examples from the analysis

Example 1:   *Question design - Initiative*

Colleague journalist Jeroen Wollaars from NOS is interviewed about his reading of the 8000 pages with diplomatic messages that he received this afternoon from WikiLeaks.

(1)   Introduction to the question (PR=Rik van de Westelaken, IE=colleague Jeroen Wollaars in NOS office)

PR $\longrightarrow$ *Yes, Jeroen, you have been busy all day digging in these documents. Erm, what else is remarkable?*

Example 2   *Question design – Assertiveness*

Bram Moszkowicz, the lawyer of right-wing party leader Geert Wilders – who had been charged with offending Muslims, fear mongering and discrimination – is interviewed about an error of the criminal investigation department. Employees of this department travelled abroad to interview a witness in the court case, but left the tape on the plane.

(2)   Prefacing the question with statements or arguments in favour of one of the answering alternatives (IR=PowNews reporter Rutger Castricum, IE= lawyer Bram Moszkowicz)

IR $\longrightarrow$ *Mister Moszkowicz, we erm have seen a number of slips in erm the Wilders court case. Erm yes, now it is the criminal investigation department that has gone off track again. Is this erm is that serious?*

Example 3   Q*uestion design - Assertiveness*

NOS-reporter in The Hague Dominique van der Heyde is interviewed about the receipt of the publication of the WikiLeaks documents in political circles of The Hague.

(3)   Suggestive sentence mode (PR=Rik van de Westelaken, IE=NOS-reporter in The Hague Dominique van der Heyde)

PR	$\rightarrow$	*Yes, Dominique, erm, as yet no big revelations, are there?*

Example 4   *Question design - Assertiveness*

PowNews interviewer Jojanneke van den Berge addresses left-wing party leader Job Cohen.

(4)   'Tilted' question with a preference for an answer that is damaging to the interviewee (IR=Jojanneke van den Berge, IE=left-wing party leader Job Cohen)

IR	$\rightarrow$	*Isn't the left wing just a bit out of date?*

Example 5   *Question design - Opposition*

PowNews interviewer Daan Nieber inspects the kitchen of a Chinese restaurant in Moerdijk and interviews an employee on the spot, because the restaurant might be responsible for delivering poisoned food to aid workers of the fire.

(5)   Oppositional introduction is the focus of the question (IR=Daan Nieber, IE=employee or owner of a Chinese restaurant in Moerdijk)

IR	$\rightarrow$ $\rightarrow$	*Let's have a look. Yes, no, the rubber strips. Yes, the rubber strips have to be cleaned. Here are some sauces in a dish and some eh some meat. Yes, it does not seem to be very clean. Can you- Can you just explain what it is like with respect to hygiene?*

Example 6   Q*uestion design - Opposition*

PowNews interviewer Jojanneke van den Berge addresses left-wing Member of Parliament Ronald Plasterk at a party that aims to tighten the bonds in Dutch left-wing politics. The theme of the party - 'The Seventies' – is apparent from the clothes that many people - apart from the interviewee - are wearing.

(6)   Oppositional or critical posture runs through the question in its entirety (IR=Jojanneke van den Berge, IE=left-wing Member of Parliament Ronald Plasterk)

IR	$\rightarrow$	*You are wearing the wrong outfit today.*

Example 7:   *Evaluation*

The president of Tunisia Ben Ali fled from his country because of the popular fury over several weeks.

(7)   A news interview with characteristics of 'evaluation' (PR=Rik van de Westelaken, IE = NOS correspondent in Tunis Nicole le Fever)

PR:	*Erm Nicole, do you know where the president has fled to?*
IE:	*Yes, first <u>the story was</u> 'he has been spotted at the airport', next <u>it was said</u> 'he has been arrested', and the la- <u>according to the latest information</u> he is on Malta and has received help from his friend, the leader of Libya Gaddafi in getting there.*
PR:	*And who is this premier who is functioning as interim president now, Al Ghannouchi?*
IE:	*Well, Mohammed Ghannouchi, <u>he enjoys higher esteem</u> than erm the president <u>anyhow</u>. He is not <u>a beloved people's politician or anything like that, but he is respected</u>. It is also in oppositional circles that he is <u>respected</u> and <u>particularly</u> because he is <u>clean</u>, he is not corrupt. Moreover erm international circles <u>like the look of him</u>. Yes and that is different, erm such a <u>clean</u> reputation, than erm the president who has left now.*
PR:	*Yes, and the people, are they getting a- erm what they want? Something like a <u>real democracy,</u> in your view?*
IE:	*Well, <u>it is</u> of course <u>difficult to predict</u> how things will go from now on, but <u>it is</u> of course <u>incredible</u> that erm what starts as an action by one boy who burns himself out of frustration, is taken over by the people and that people <u>overcome</u> their fear, erm the fear that has protected the <u>regime</u> until now. Many people are <u>worried</u> about the wording of erm who is the president now, Ghannouchi, because he said 'temporarily' the president is not able to rule, so there is <u>fear</u> that he will come back after all. Well, <u>I do not see that as likely</u>. The country is moving towards erm elections and, erm, yes, <u>it is wait and see until tomorrow</u> how the street will react to this.*

A selection of the instances of evaluation is underlined.

Results Table 3: Frequently occurring aspects of evaluation and examples

Indicator	NOS-journaal	PowNews
1 Metaphors	*He is also well respected in circles of the opposition, because he is* <u>clean</u>. *You just saw it in the report, that* <u>Bos is taking quite a kicking</u> *in this dossier.* *It is such a beautiful book and* <u>it hits a nerve</u>.	<u>It is like Murphy's law</u>: *(...) "If anything goes wrong, everything goes wrong".* *The left* <u>is hurting</u> *terribly.* *Yes, what a* <u>farce</u>, *isn't it?* *Someone who* <u>plays the piano convulsively, hits the wrong notes.</u>
2 Basic intensifiers	*very* simple *extremely* interesting	*very* stupid *very* confused
3 Semantic itensifiers[1]	*explosive* growth *to waver*	*clumsy* (default: awkward) *to destroy Wilders* (default: to defeat Wilders) *piddling detail* (default: smallest) *the cranker of the process* (default: public prosecutor)
4 Dysphemisms[2]	No instance found	*shitty* *farce* *blunder* *to leave lying around*
5 Marker of obviousness	Dutch *natuurlijk* (translated as *of course* or *for sure*) is frequent in both programmes	
6 Nouns and verbs that are clearly evaluative	*to learn* *Moving from a* <u>dictatorship</u> *to a* <u>democracy</u> *is difficult. It costs* <u>blood</u>. *There are tens of* <u>deaths</u> *and more than a thousand* <u>casualties</u>.	*to forget* *to wrench* *to understand* *fuss*
7 Clearly evaluative adjectives	*That is good* *Pleasant to the PvdA* *Important* Dutch *onhandig* (translated as *tactless*)	*nice* *clean* (literally) *terrific* *wrong*
8 Modality	<u>*Maybe*</u> *some details will appear.* <u>*At any rate, as yet*</u> *no great scandals, which some journalists might have hoped for.*	<u>*It looks as if*</u> *he is playing the wrong match.* *And for sure, with a kind of hat trick from iPod, iPhone and iPad last year,* <u>*I would almost say*</u> *that he finished his job.*

[1] An intensifier is defined as a formulation that can be substituted by a weaker variant (Bolinger, 1972). A distinction is made between lexical intensifiers such as *very*, stylistic intensifiers such as metaphors and semantic intensifiers (Renkema, 1997). Semantic intensifiers are words that can be replaced by a word with a less specific meaning without a significant change of meaning.

[2] Dysphemisms are a subcategory of semantic intensifiers. Dysphemisms are formulations that are more unpleasant or coarse than is strictly necessary (Renkema, 2002). They can be replaced by a more neutral formulation (called the default) without a significant change of meaning.

Table 3 continued

Indicator	NOS-journaal	PowNews
9 Marker of personal point of view	*We hope that this is the start of a democracy.* *Well, that does not seem probable to me.* *Look, on all matters on which I erm have opinions, I have expressed these openly. I have er- With respect to the position of the Dutch government, I have said in the conversations with erm ambassadors in the past exactly the same as what I said in Parliament and to journalists. So I do not expect much with respect to this.* *We have opted to stay close to the book.*	*I don't really care about being right, you know, I just care about ((,)) success.* *I mean erm erm that is not done.* *Yes, I do not know which norms are valid in the Amsterdam judiciary.* *Erm, actually I cannot review the whole issue, because I do not know whether it fell into the hands of third parties, which would be particularly annoying to mister Jansen.* *I see it as simply naive.* *He hasn't found his feet, as far as I see it.*
10 Attribution of statement to others	*Yes, it is also in the cables that the queen had abdicated at this moment. They thought that it was important that Willem-Alexander and Maxima would be able to visit president Obama, because according to them at the beginning of 2009 "within a year he is the king".* *It is literally in the Ministry report.*	*Well, he says that he prefers sitting under the palm trees over sitting behind the geraniums.(Sitting behind the geraniums is a Dutch phrase about 'being jobless'.)*
11 Shifts between intensifiers and hedges	*A huge amount of these messages is rather general.* *Well, that erm is erm good erm for sure for a politician who has been accused of changing views in the past, of wavering; it is good that it is public now.*	*He saved the business firm from the abyss and brought it to this height.* *Erm so from the great idea of an iPhone, to the tiniest piddling detail of a button, he is involved.*
12 Hypothetical constructions; suggesting possibilities	See example 7, first turn of IE. *Well, erm, if they are afraid of that, erm they do not say that for sure.*	No instance found
13 Shift to future or normative framework	*It's up to us to make a prognosis and to see that we are one step ahead of that wave of data that is coming* *Erm that people have to be more tolerant with other people. Erm that you do not inflict upon others what you don't want to happen to yourself. As it is in the Bible, from which I quote.*	*And erm yes, if someone like him ceases, it will have an impact on the products that Apple is going to make now.* *Interviewing Jansen about that is of course what you expect, but you should take it when you are in the air plane.* *You should be aware of that.* *It has got to be there soon*

Example 8:   *Evaluation in the trailor, immediately after the headline – PowNews*

Contextual information to the trailor: Bram Moszkowicz, the lawyer of the right-wing party leader Geert Wilders – who had been charged with offending Muslims, fear mongering and discrimination – is being interviewed about an error of the criminal investigation department. Employees of this department travelled abroad to interview Arabist Hans Jansen, who is a witness in the court case, but left the tape on the plane.

(8)   Evaluation in the trailor, immediately after the headline and before the news kernel, voiced by an expert IE (PR= Dominique Weesie; IE= lawyer Bram Moszkowicz)

Headline, spoken by PR:		*Arabist-in-hiding Hans Jansen in the news again.*
IE:	$\longrightarrow$	*It is clumsy, isn't it, in such a case – travelling in order to interview mister Jansen – : to leave such a thing on the plane.*

Example 9:   *Evaluation in relation to structure and voice – NOS-journaal*

NOS-reporter in The Hague Dominique van der Heyde is interviewed about the receipt of the publication of the WikiLeaks documents in political circles of The Hague.

(9)   Evaluation, embedded at the end of a news item and voiced by IE (PR=Rik van de Westelaken, IE=NOS-reporter in The Hague Dominique van der Heyde)

PR:		*Dominique, well, not everything is known yet now, is it? People are still reading. Are the politicians still afraid that exciting revelations will follow?*
IE:		*Well, erm, if they are afraid of that, erm they are not saying that for sure. They'll just wait. But there definitely are politicians who might profit from this information being public now. Erm and we just said: "Bos was taking quite a kicking (i.e. the left-wing party leader)", erm, but Wouter Bos – it is apparent from these documents – always and right from the start had the same position with respect to lengthening the Afghanistan mission, namely that that could not happen as far as the PvdA (i.e. the Dutch labour party) was concerned. Maybe some people from his party had slightly different opinions, but he has said right from the beginning: "No, we*
	$\longrightarrow$	*are not going to do that". Well, that erm is erm good erm for sure for a politician who has been*
	$\longrightarrow$	*accused of changing views in the past, of wavering; it is good that it is public now. It is pleasant for the PvdA, because it is relevant again now with the new discussion about a new*
	$\longrightarrow$	*mission to Afghanistan, which the PvdA again rejects.*
PR:		*Dominique van der Heyde.*

Example 10:   *Evaluation in relation to structure and voice – PowNews*

NOS-reporter Rutger Castricum interviews Bram Moszkowicz, the lawyer of right-wing party leader Geert Wilders – who had been charged with offending Muslims, fear mongering and discrimination –about an error of the criminal investigation department. Employees of this department travelled abroad to interview a witness in the court case, but left the tape on the plane.

(10)   Evaluation at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of an interview and voiced by IR and IE (IR=PowNews reporter Rutger Castricum, IE=lawyer Bram Moszkowicz)

IR:	$\longrightarrow$	*Mister Moszkowicz, we erm have seen a number of slips in erm the Wilders court case. Erm yes, now it is the criminal investigation department that has gone off track again. Is this erm is that serious?*
IE:		*Erm, actually I cannot review the whole issue, because I do not know whether it fell into the hands of third parties, which would be particularly annoying to mister Jansen if [that-*
IR:		* [Y-, you you mean the recording?*

IE:		Yes.
IR:		Yes.
IE:	→	Exactly, the recording. And yes, it is clumsy, isn't it, in such a case - travelling in order to interview mister Jansen –: to leave such a thing on the plane.
IR:	→	Because actually, if you look at it, erm, they are people who have to fetch just one simple message in the context of their job, yes, and they come back and forget the message.
IE:	→	Yes, well, I do not know whether the message is as simple as that, because Jansen is being - at least that is what I have understood - interviewed as a witness in the criminal complaint that Wilders and I submitted against mister Schalken. So, interviewing Jansen about that is of course what you expect, but you should take it when you are in the air plane.
IR:		Erm, have you already discussed this with Geert Wilders by the way?
IE:		Very briefly, just a moment, yes.
IR:		What is his opinion about it?
IE:	→	Erm, he is 'not amused', let's put it like that.

Example 11:   *Political position in relation to structure and voice – NOS-journaal*

The screen version of Sonny Boy, the famous book by Annejet van der Zijl, receives its premiere. The topic of this non-fictional book is the discrimination that the young, black Surinamese protagonist Waldemar – played by Sergio Hasselbaink - encountered in the Netherlands during the first part of the previous century.

(11)   Political position, voiced by IE at the end of a news item (IR=identity unkown, IE=Sergio Hasselbaink)

IR:		Can we still learn something from it, from the story?
IE:		Yes, of course, definitely.
IR:		And what would that be?
IE:	→	Erm that people have to be more tolerant with other people. Erm that you do not inflict upon others what you don't want to happen to yourself. As it is in the Bible, from which I quote.

((End of the news item, which is the last item before the weather forecast))

Example 12:   *Political position in relation to structure and voice – PowNews*

Reporter Jojanneke van den Berge is interviewing a whole range of participants at a left-wing party that aims to improve political connections. The theme of the party - 'The Seventies' – is apparent from the clothes that many people - the interviewee included – are wearing.

(12)   Political position, initiated by IR, popping up in the middle of a news item and continued by IE (IR=Jojanneke van den Berge, IE=unknown person with remarkable shoes)

IR:		What terrific erm shoes you have.
IE:		I just hit my left little toe yesterday, so it [hurts.
IR:	→	[That is of course very exemplary, because the left is also hurting a little bit now, doesn't it?
IE:	→	The left is hurting terribly.

Transcription conventions

(<)	pause of a second or less
(only partly intelligible)	uncertain transcription
((clarification))	clarification, usually contextual information
[	beginning of overlapping stretch of speech
=	introduces latched turn
→	indicates line which is the focus of comment or discussion
-	indicates the sharp cut-off of the prior word or sound