BUILDING *DISCURSIVE IDENTITY*: THE CASE OF QUESTION-ANSWER-FOLLOW UP SYSTEM IN TWO INTERVIEWS

CATERINA MANES GALLO, CATHERINE MATHON[1]

Abstract. The paper focuses on how partners construct their *discursive identity* (Charaudeau 2002, 2009) within the question/answering/follow up system in interviews. The excerpts of two video interviews are analyzed. Three hypotheses about the verbal and prosodic anchoring of interactional strategies underlying the partners' speech acts are defined. The paper claims that, beyond the differences between the two interviews' social situations, the same interactional challenge is a stake as far as the partners' *discursive identity* construction is concerned. The interviewer and the interviewee need to balance two contradictory stakes. They have to simultaneously: (a) share the same interlocutory space and contribute to its construction (e.g. maintaining their interactional roles, keeping thematic continuity throughout question/answering sequencing) and (b) differentiate their own *discursive identity* from the one presupposed or projected in the partner's speeches.

Keywords: interview, discursive identity, interactional strategies, verbal cue, prosodic cue.

1. INTRODUCTION

This work explores the construction of individuals' *discursive identity* in interactions aiming to obtain specific information (e.g. confessions, admissions), such as interviews. We try to determine the power issues at play in this kind of structured discourse situation (Question, Answer, Follow-up system), and how the *discursive identity* of the various participants (questioner and respondent) is constructed. We are interested in particular in the evolution of the *discursive identity* of questioners and responders during the interaction.

Our study is based on two video interviews. The first excerpt comes from a TV interview of François Mitterrand (the then President of France) in 1992, who is giving his first press conference after his cancer surgery. The first part of the

[1] Université Bordeaux-Montaigne, France, Maria-Caterina.Manes-Gallo@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr, catherine.mathon@u-bordeaux-montaigne.fr.

RRL, LXI, *3*, p. 265–284, Bucureşti, 2016

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

interview relates to the health status of the President of the Republic. The interviewers are two journalists: Arlette Chabot and Ruth Elkrief (henceforth corpus MEC).

The second excerpt comes from the Raudin-Gradignan corpus (henceforth corpus RG) compiled within a case study about computer use in a legally restricted environment. We focus on the interview of a cyber-base learner at the Gradignan prison centre in France. This is an educational program in which inmates completing their sentences can develop digital competences. The researcher is interviewing him to obtain information on the difficulties he has encountered as a learner during his training. The head of the Cyber base®justice program is overseeing the interview.

Through the analysis of these two excerpts, we aim to highlight two types of strategies which contribute to the construction of the *discursive identity* of each partner, according to their respective roles. In particular, the respondent may avoid answering the question and the interviewer may have to reframe the subject.

2. DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES BETWEEN THE TWO SEQUENCES

2.1. Differences

The two excerpts we chose to analyze relate to two interview situations, where the goal is to request and obtain information, through a question- answer-follow-up system (Q/A/F). Despite these similarities, these two excerpts present some differences.

The first one relates to the social identity and the hierarchical relationships between the participants in the interviews. In the MEC corpus, the respondent (the President of the Republic) seems socially in stronger position compared to the two interviewers (two journalists). However, the two interviewers both the Press in France (a centre of countervailing power) and are the representatives of the French population, who wonder about the health status of their President (the interviewers recalled this status several times during the interview). This serves to rebalance the power game between the two parties in this interview. Regarding the RG corpus, the interviewer is in a higher social status than the respondent (an academic researcher without legal background versus a prisoner). At the same time the prisoner is removed from any direct relationship of social hierarchy, since the interviewer does not belong to the social world in which the prisoner usually interacts. The interviewer therefore loses his social superiority. Nevertheless, the interviewer is presented to the prisoner via the penitentiary authority, represented by the third agent, the manager of the Cyber base®justice, who attends the

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

interview. The interviewer is thus placed, under these circumstances, in a hierarchical relationship with the respondent, who can amalgamate the interviewer with the penitentiary authority.

The power games are also played according to the stakes of these interviews for both the interviewers and the respondents. From Mitterrand's point of view, the stakes of the first interview after his surgery are clearly high, inasmuch as the executive power is weakened and that his capacity to lead is questioned. On the other hand, the prisoner's stakes, regarding the viewers of the recording are less obvious. For the interviewer of the RG corpus, however, the stakes are higher: the researcher only has thirty minutes to obtain the necessary information for his field research, and it is a one-shot interview. If this one does not prove satisfactory, there is no possibility to perform another one. In the same way, the interview of the President of the Republic represents a great challenge for the journalists, not only in terms of credibility in their professional sphere and career advancement, but also in terms of opportunity to obtain answers which interest the French population. There too, the live broadcasted interview is an event limited in time: there is no possibility of returning afterward to obtain extra information.

The two interviews also differ from the distribution of the roles between the participants. Thus for the MEC corpus, the journalists obviously seem to share the roles before the interview. By analyzing a complete sequence (QAF), we can see that Arlette Chabot asks the first question generating a complete QAF period, while Ruth Elkrief is in charge of the question realignments. This operation seems to be a conscious strategy on the part of the two journalists. For RG corpus, on the other hand, the manager of the Cyber base®justice does not have, a priori, the role of an interviewer. Also, when she takes part in the interview, by reinitializing the question, at the invitation of the responder, her intervention is completely impromptu.

The two interviews are also different by the way in which they are filmed. The RG interview is filmed with a camera, with fixed angle, which focuses on the responder. The interviewer, as well as the manager of the Cyber base®justice, is out of field (even if they can appear partially at certain times in the recording). On the other hand, the MEC interview is filmed using several cameras, which allows viewers to focus on the facial expressions and the gestural postures of each speaker, but which can also present broader angles including all of the participants.

2.2. Similarities

The two interviews, as planned events of communication in which speakers alternate, present interactional similarities. From the point of view of the goal of the interaction, the two extracts share this double objective: (i) to elicit speech on specific topics which were defined in advance (in order to obtain information);

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

(ii) to show and give information to a third agent (television viewer/corpus user/researcher) who does not participate in the interaction, even if all the actors are aware of this third agent.

Regarding the structure, the two extracts are organized around a QAF system. This is a risky situation for the actors of the interview, in particular with regard to their *discursive identity*, as it places them in a rapport of ambivalent power:

(i) Questioners, because they initiate the set of themes of the interview, seem to be in a dominating position, and for as much, the necessary adaptation of their follow-up to the answer of the responder, puts them in the position of being dominated. Indeed, they undergo the transformation of their question by the responder.

(ii) Respondents, because the structure of the questioning is imposed on them, seem to be in position of being dominated. However, responders have the power to transform the question through their answers and in fact can take thus the dominating role.

3. AN INTERACTIONAL APPROACH TO INTERVIEW SITUATIONS

The purpose of our study is to give account of a non-spontaneous inter-actional situation, like interviews, in which the interlocutory space is organized around information requests about themes previously known by both partners. We consider interviews as communication events, structured around alternating and ritualized partners' speeches. Generally, the answerer is not allowed to question the interviewer and interviewers cannot answer their own questions. Interviews may therefore be considered as a kind of *consultation* in which the answerer is temporarily upgraded to the rank of expert: he is designated by the questioner as the only one that *hic et nunc* can provide for the information requested (Vion 2007: 131–139). In fact, the aim underlying the interaction partly transcends the oral discursive activity, i.e. to question in order to give rise to partner's speeches about previously planned themes. What is at stake is also to produce some new information for members of social environment who are not directly involved in the exchanges, or who participate in them only as spectators. As the interaction unfolds, the content of the interlocutory space constructed depends on how partners manage their asymmetrical roles. An interview does not imply a situation of joint attention between partners, like for instance in a working meeting (Mondada 2005: 86–91) or a therapeutic session (Danon-Boileau 2010: 85–113). It implies rather a situation of confrontation in which partners try to establish their own *discursive identity* beyond the constraints underlying their role. For instance, the answerer may respond partially, eluding the content of the question, and the questioner may follow up on the same theme but including in his question some elements of the answer.

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

From a pragmatic point of view, the asymmetrical roles of interview partners, put both the questioner and the answerer at risk: their rapport is ambivalent, both partners being simultaneously dominant and dominated (Kerbrat-Orecchioni 2007: 147–150). On one hand, the questioner, demonstrating his lack of knowledge, gives the imperative of an answer (dominant) which places the answerer in a high interactional position. But the questioner risks simultaneously that his lack of knowledge or his request for information not to be satisfied properly (dominated). The reply of the answerer may either fall short on partner's expectations or shift the emphasis of his question. The questioner recovers a dominant position through follow-up question which helps him to focus again on the theme of the current interview. On the other hand, the answerer seems at first glance dominated because of the necessity to provide the information requested, to prove his expertise and to conserve his upgraded position. Nevertheless, the answerer always retrospectively transforms the question's content: either he gives the relevant information requested or he shifts the emphasis of the question. But in both cases, the reply implies cognitive work to reconstruct the implicit meaning of the question. In other words, what is communicated by a question is beyond its explicit content and it depends partly on the answerer's interpretation of it (dominant). In this sense, we claim that the interviewee's answer transforms retrospectively (and systematically) the questioner's speech. An example is given by another interactional situation of *consultation*, i.e. the communication of walking directions. The relevant answer produced by the respondent (*Pour à X il faut…* [In order to go to X you have to …]) depends on his non-literal interpretation of the question (*savez-vous où se trouve X?* [do you know where X is?]), (Manes Gallo 2007: 211–220).

4. HOW TO CONCEPTUALIZE THE NOTION OF "*DISCURSIVE IDENTITY*"?

Patrick Charaudeau (2002, 2009) distinguishes two kind of identities: the *social identity*, which is external to the interlocutory space, and the *discursive identity* which is constructed within the interlocutory space. The first legitimizes the right of each partner to speak according to his social status and his function within the interactional situation. For instance, in the two excerpts we analyzed, interviewees' speeches are subject to two different kind of legitimization. The President of the Republic must provide information about his illness (see corpus MEC ANNEX 1 (4)), whereas the detained learner may ask the cyber-base manager to fill in his memory lapses about some details of his learning activity (see corpus RG ANNEX 2(12)). On the other hand, *discursive identity* is constructed by the way each partner takes the floor as the interaction progresses. It depends on the enunciation strategies and attitudes adopted by the speaker. For instance, the

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

questioner may follow up with the interviewee on a theme previously introduced, phrasing his question as an alternative between two possible answers (see corpus MEC (7)). For each partner, the way he speaks must respond to two challenges: to lend credibility to what is said and to capture the partner's attention about unanticipated or unexpected information. To lend credibility to what is said contributes to building a shared interlocutory space, whereas to capture the attention on unexpected information contributes to constructing his own *discursive identity*, beyond the one implicitly projected by the partner. For instance, the interviewee may temporary reject the rank of expert to which the interviewer has upgraded him (see corpus RG (17)) and corpus MEC (3)).

In our study, we aim to highlight that, as far as *discursive identity* is concerned, interviews bring about the same interactional challenges for the partners. Beyond their social differences (or *social identity*), interviewers and interviewees are both confronted with the problem of building their *discursive identity* regardless of the one implicitly projected either in the questions or in the answers. However, as the interaction progresses, partners must also share and take into account the content of the partner's interlocutory acts, in order to cooperate in the production of some new information for a social environment that is not directly involved in the exchanges (i.e. the third agent mentioned in paragraphs 1–2).

5. THE QUESTION-ANSWER-FOLLOW UP SYSTEM

We consider that prosodic and verbal cues characterize discursive strategies adopted by each partner to reach his position with regard to the partner's speech content. In other worlds, verbal and prosodic cues help to configure partner's *discursive identity* and to delimit the content of the interlocutory space constructed as the interaction unfolds. As far as the *discursive identity* is concerned, we claim that the questioner and the answerer share a double interactional stake: to be trusted by the partner and to get his attention on what one says, according to how he says it. This double interactional stake is played through the question/answer/follow up system.

According to Rémy Giraud (1991: 45–46), a question corresponds to an assertion which is called into question through the juxtaposition of morpho-syntactic marks. Those marks point out what, according to the questioner, has to be completed by the respondent, with regard to the extra- linguistic situation the assertion uttered refers to. Therefore the referential correlates the respondent must provide for in his answer, must be appropriate with regard to the referents implied in the assertion's content, underlying the question (Rémy Giraud 1991: 51–57). The kind of referential correlates vary according to the morphosyntactic structure of the question. In French, two broad categories of questions are identified:

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

"Yes/NO questions" (YN questions) and "Why/Where/How/What questions" (wh-questions). The first one[2] shows the lack of a true value the respondent has to assign to the assertion about a state of the world. Their implicit enunciation meaning corresponds to a request to take a position either to validate or to refute the underlying assertion (Haillet 2007: 121–160). Nevertheless, as we will see in the following, prosodic cues may partially contradict this implicit alternative (see corpus RG (15)).

The second category of questions[3] shows that some elements, belonging to the state of the world represented in the assertion, are lacking. What is called into question is the further information that the respondent is supposed to be able to provide (Rémy Giraud 1991: 51–57), as in corpus MEC (1) and (22) in corpus RG:

From an interactional point of view, the question's morphosyntactic form ascertains the kind of comprehensiveness expected in the answer. Nevertheless, what remains very often unexplained is why the questioner has chosen one form or the other to call into question the assertion underlying his question. The notion of *discursive identity* may help to put forward a hypothesis in order to partially explain this point. For this, one has to assume that enunciative strategies, used by each of the partners within the interview, help them both to shape their own *discursive identity* and to assign a *discursive identity* to the interlocutor. This projection is evident for the questioner's dominant position. The implicit respondent's *discursive identity* projected is something like: *I ask you to fulfill X because I assume that you are able to, you have the information for.* As previously said, interviews may be viewed as a kind of *consultation* situation in which the answerer is temporarily upgraded to the rank of expert by the questioner.

The questioner may consult the interviewee's expertise either to evaluate the information gathered (YN question) or to gather some new information (wh-question).

The following three hypotheses are defined in order to give an account of the relationship between the interactional dynamics underlying partners' *discursive identity management,* within the question/answer/follow up system. Our first hypothesis concerns questions and follow up questions. In both cases, the morphosyntactic structure denotes the information implicitly. Prosodic focus helps by stressing relevant key words which frame (or reframe) the theme questioned.

The second hypothesis concerns the respondent's speech reaction, about his *discursive identity* and the information he can provide. What is at stake in the first point is the acceptation or the rejection of the role of "expert" awarded by the

[2] Prosodic and verbal cues are for instance: prosodic focus, subject/verb inversion, apposition of *est-ce que* particle to an assertive statement.

[3] Prosodic and verbal cues are for instance : prosodic focus, apposition of *qu'est-ce que, qui est ce qui* particles or apposition of *comment, pourquoi, où* plus the subject/verb inversion of the assertive statement.

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

questioner. Acceptation and/or rejection are linked to the way the respondent replies to the partner. For several reasons we claim that any answer transforms retrospectively partly or totally the structure (Y/N or wh-questions) and/or the theme of the question. First, as seen before, the meaning of a question is partly implicit. Therefore the gap between the explicit meaning of a question and the answer always produces some new information. Second, the content of the answer may either match or not match with the assertion called into question. In the last case, the information provided is different from the one anticipated by the question. But in both cases, the answer corresponds to an expected event through which the respondent succeeds at: a) drawing the partner's attention and b) constructing his own *discursive identity.*

The last hypothesis concerns follow up questions. A follow up question aims either to obtain more information about some elements of the respondent's answer or to reframe the question's theme, which may be shifted by the answer. In both cases, part of the respondent's answer would be included in the follow up question. Within the scope of interviews, it gives the questioner a way to consolidate his *discursive identity* as the one who is in charge of choosing the themes at stake, in order to provide new information to the members of the social environment (TV viewers/corpus users/researchers) who do not participate in the interaction.

6. TWO JOURNALISTS AND THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF FRANCE

As an example of the QAF system, we selected the first extract of the MEC corpus, permitting to clearly distinguish the distribution of roles between the two journalists. We can see that Arlette Chabot is the one who initiates the question, while Ruth Elkrief is in charge of the follow-up. This extract also illustrates the transformations of the *discursive identity* of the respondent. The question asked by Arlette Chabot takes a very simple form. It is quite a short partial interrogative:

(1) *quand sera publié le prochain bulletin de santé* [when will the next health report be published]

This seemingly very alleviating question, expects, according to its structure, a factual answer, undoubtedly short. In spite of its simplicity, in the structure and the contents (Arlette Chabot already knows the answer), this question carries many implications. One of these implications holds in the *discursive identity* projected on the responder. Indeed, while asking the French President when his next health report will be published, Arlette Chabot suggests that the President himself makes

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

decisions regarding the publication date of the health report, and also regarding its content. It projects the identity of the responder as being the one controlling the publication of his own health report.

The President answers in two stages:

– a first purely informational part, which answers the literal meaning of the question;

– a second part, more narrative, which answers the *discursive identity* of the responder projected by the journalist and refutes it. Concerning the first part of the answer:

(2) *oh bé en dé- en décembre* **{0,540 s}** *comme chaque fois* **{1,055 s}** *c'est tous les six mois* **{1,625s}**
[oh well in De- in December {0.540 S} as usual {1.055 S} it is every six months {1,625s}]

This first part of the answer provides the requested information, i.e. the literal meaning of the question, by giving a temporal indication *in December*. We can note that this answer is produced with an obvious intonation, conveying that the respondent has well understood the double meaning of the question. However, the first strategy of the responder is to give the opportunity to the two journalists to interrupt, just after the informational part of his answer. He indicates it by leaving long quiet pauses, which are not actually filled by the journalists. This puts the respondent in a difficult situation since he must fill the silence and answer the second meaning of the question, i.e. the projected *discursive identity*.

The second part of the answer is given in a narrative way, including a temporal phrase:

(3) *donc euh* ***vers la mi-décembre*** *à peu près {0,446 s} il faudra que les {0,422 s} médecins {0,314 s} et les professeurs qui se sont occupés de moi {0,564 s} je se {0,319 s} s'arrangent {0,761 s} pour publier à temps le bulletin de santé que je dois aux français comme je leur ai promis en 1981*
[So uh about mid-December the doctors and professors who took care of me will have to ensure that the health report I owe to French, as I promised in 1981, is published on time.]

It is interesting to note that the content of the answer changes from the "when", *in mid-December,* to the "how". By producing this change, the respondent also changes the *discursive identity* that was projected: these are the doctors who are in charge of the health report publication and not the President himself. The last part of the answer, *the health report I owe to French, as I promised in 1981*, responds to the implicit in the question, and recalls the tacit agreement the President has concluded with the French.

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

The follow-up produced by Ruth Elkrief is just about this last part of Mitterrand's answer:

(4) *euh **justement** à propos du bulletin de santé vous vous avez opté pour la **transparence** depuis le début et et et cela a été apprécié alors si vous voulez bien on va continuer un peu dans cet esprit*
[uh precisely about the health report you chose to be transparent since the beginning and and and it was appreciated so if you do not mind we will continue a bit in this spirit]

The follow-up is introduced by the discourse marker *justement* ("precisely"), which is used repeatedly by Ruth Elkrief for the introductions of the follow-up. The apparent theme of the follow-up, the health report, appears next, highlighted by the preposition *à propos de* ("about"). Ruth Elkrief thus reintroduces the theme of the original question from Chabot. However, the real follow-up is based on the last part of the President's reply, summed up by the term of "transparency" (*transparence*). This preamble, strictly reframing the theme of the follow-up, leads to the actual question. It is introduced in a narrative way by a whole series of temporal phrases

(5) *au mois de juillet le vingt-deux juillet précisément vingt-deux juillet dernier*
[in July the 22nd July precisely the last 22nd July]

and further,

(6) *le onze septembre*
[the 11th of September]

that allows the journalist to trace the chronology of events that led to the President's surgery and highlight the inconsistencies. This long preamble finally leads to a question, which is expressed as an alternative:

(7) *est-ce que cela veut dire qu'à /à ce moment-là c'est-à-dire en juillet vous ne connaissiez pas votre mal **ou alors** est-ce que vous n'en étiez pas assez sûr pour l'en informer les Français*
[does that mean that at / at this point i.e. in July you do not know about your illness or is it then that you were not sure enough to inform French people]

It is constituted actually by two negative interrogative forms introduced by "est-ce que" and built around the conjunction "or then". The way the question is worded seems to trap the responder, since none of the two responses that are proposed are acceptable options. The first alternative:

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

(8) *est-ce que cela veut dire qu'à /à ce moment-là c'est-à-dire en juillet vous ne connaissiez pas votre mal*
[does that mean that at / at this point i.e. in July you do not know about your illness?]

clears the President from all responsibility, but projects a negative image of the doctors, who were not able to detect the illness striking the President. The second alternative:

est-ce que vous n'en étiez pas assez sûr pour l'en informer les Français
[is it then that you were not sure enough to inform French People?]

raises the transparency issue concerning the pact concluded between the French people and their President. This second alternative is a follow-up to the *discursive identity* of the responder, already projected in the original question, as the one who controls the information given to the French.

The second extract we chose as an illustration of QAF system closes this first part of the interview concerning François Mitterrand's health. The President explained that he is perfectly healed and physically able to lead France. Ruth Elkrieff follows up with a question about psychological issues. She, first, sums up the previous exchange of QAF by acknowledging, barely, the physical capacity of the President to be the political leader of France.

(9) *alors donc a a priori votre état physique vous permet vous venez de nous l'expliquer*
[so therefore a priori your physical state allows you to, as you just explained to us]

The question begins with a coordinating conjunction expressing opposition, *mais (but),* which serves to oppose the physical state of the President with his psychological one. The opposition is prosodically enhanced by the pitch focus on *psychologiquement (psychologically)*.

(10) *euh est est-ce que / mais est-ce que psychologiquement vous avez le désir d'aller jusqu'au bout est-ce que par moments vous n'a(vez) vous ne vous dites pas après tout y'a bien d'autres d'autres choses dans la vie*
[um do you / do you psychologically want to go through don't you at times think for yourself that after all there are other things in life?]

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

With this question, the journalist projects a *discursive identity* of the President, weakened by illness, maybe morally tired, who would not have the motivation necessary to conduct the politics of France.

The President seems to acknowledge the *discursive identity* projected by the journalist:

(11) *si ça m'arrive*
[yes I sometimes do]

but it is to best refute that the illness is the cause of this psychological weariness:

(12) *mais ça m'arrivait avant déjà {RIRE}*
[but I already did before {LAUGH}]

This banter is introduced by the conjunction expressing opposition *mais (but)*, and the temporal adverb *avant (before)* is emphasized with a pitch focus. The rest of the answer is a casual but firm assertion of his desire to complete his second mandate.

(13) *donc euh ce que je veux dire c'est que / j'ai euh sollicité un mandat / il m'a été accordé à deux reprises / aucune raison de ne pas / accomplir euh / le devoir qui m'a été confié*
[so what I mean is that / I umm requested a mandate / I have been granted by it twice / no reason not to / accomplish the duty given to me]

The President thus literally answers the question he was asked, but also responds to the *discursive identity* projected on him. He is not more psychologically than physically weakened by the illness, and the occasional moral uncertainty is normal in his position.

It is Arlette Chabot who, this time, produces the follow-up. It comes in the form of a negative interrogative that summarizes the whole issue surrounding the President's health; i.e. does he intend to continue to govern?

(14) *on y reviendra sûrement sous une autre forme mais ce qu'on voudrait {+BackChannel} savoir c'est vous n'avez pas envie de décrocher quoi*
[surely we shall go back to it in another form but what we would want *{+BackChannel}* to know is you don't want to take off right]

We can note the presence of the discourse marker *quoi* (literally "what", translated "right?"), which means that the speaker wants to summarize everything

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

that has been said in the interaction. We can also observe the shift from a quite formal register to a more familiar one, with the choice of the verb *décrocher (take off)* and the use of an oral interrogative form without any inversion or interrogative markers like *est-ce que*. This follow- up is more direct and intends to close quite sharply the subject of the President's health, and thus finish playing the game of cat and mouse.

The answer of the President is direct as well and very firm, *pas du tout (not at all)*; he does not want to resign from his position.

7. THE DETAINED LEARNER, THE RESEARCHER AND THE CYBER-BASE MANAGER

The second extract analyzed concerns a video interview belonging to the corpus (RG), recorded in the Cyber base®justice of Gradignan. The manager of this educational program was invited by the researcher as a witness, i.e. she is not supposed to take a role within the (QAF) system, during the interview. But, as we will see, firstly, her participation is explicitly requested by the learner and secondly, she will take the role of questioner further in the interaction.

The first question addressed by the researcher to the learner it is a (Y/N) question preceded by a short preamble, focusing on his experience of computer use.

(15) *(h) dans ces diffÈrentes utilisations que vous avez dont vous avez eu expÈRIENCE(+) (-) (_) par rapport à (_) l'ordinaTEUR(+) (h) aeuh (--) est ce qu'il y a une situation(+) (.) spÈciFIQUE dans laquelle vous avez eu euh une difficultÈ (_) que vous avez ensuite(_) surmontÈe(+) (_) sûrement(_) mais euh est ce qu'il y a une difficulT…(+) dans une situation spÈcifique que vous avez rencontrÈe(+) dans (---) l'utilisation de l'ordinateur(_)*
[in the different computer uses you have experienced hum is there a specific situation in which you have encountered a difficulty that you have overcome afterwards sure but hum is there a difficulty you have faced in a specific situation in computer use]

The prosodic focus on several words (computer, experience, specific, difficulty) frames the information requested. Moreover, their repetition within the same turn taking gives the question a didactic tone which tends to remove the possibility for the interviewee either to validate or to falsify the underlying assertion. The question seems to take for granted that in the experience of the interviewee "there is a specific situation in which he has encountered a difficulty in

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

the use of the computer". This implicit assumption contributes to define the *discursive identity* of the interviewee. As he has accepted to be interviewed on his learning difficulties and success, within the Cyber base®justice program, the interviewer considers that he wants and he can speak about them.

The interviewee answers in two parts.

(16) *aeuh moi (h.) tout e::st (eh eh) (rire) je suis (inaudible) de pas vous le dire pace que pour moi (aeuh) tout e::st tout est difficile (rire)*
[aeuh me all is (eheh) (laughing) I am (inaudible) not to tell you because for me (aeuh) all is all is difficult (laughing)]

Firstly, he claims that he cannot say anything about a "specific situation of difficulty" because (*parce que*) "all" it is difficult for him. The short laughing and hesitations which accompany his justification show how uncomfortable he feels not to answer the question positively.

Secondly, the interviewee gives the reasons that make him to find all difficult in the use of a computer.

(17) *je ne manipule pas assez pour que:: (-) pour que je trouve quelque chose plus facile que d'autre c'est vrai que :: (-) que comme j'ai pas tout tout rentrÈ dans ma tête (euh) et que j'ai tendance à oublier (_)tout e::st(_) (-) (_)tout est difficile pour moi(_)*
[I don't handle enough to(-) to find one thing easier than something else the truth is that (-) as I didn't include everything everything in my head (euh) and that I have some tendency to forget everything is (-) everything is difficult for me]

The answer transforms retrospectively the Y/N question into a Why-question, as if the interviewer has asked him: "why everything is so difficult for you in the use of a computer?". This transformation of the biased Y/N question enables the interviewee "to take a position" on the *discursive identity* attributed by the questioner (and implicitly to deny it). The slow speech rate of the end of the answer *(_)tout e::st(_) (-) (_)tout est difficile pour moi(_)* [everything is (-) everything is difficult for me] shows an admission of powerlessness to himself that justifies his impossibility to describe a specific situation of difficulty and therefore to play the role of "expert".

In the third round, the interviewer follows up twice on the same theme. Firstly, he integrates part of the interviewee's answer (i.e. the use of a computer it is complicated for memory retention above all if we do not practice) and he rephrases [15] as a negative Y/N question, beginning with the discursive connector *mais* (but). This last introduces the content of the question as an objection to the interviewee's answer.

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

(18) *mais ?est ce qu'il n'y a PA:S quelque chose? qui est (-) PLUS (-) (euheuh) difficile (.) qu'autre chose (---) pace que quand on A:: (euh) moi je je partage avec vous le fait que l'utilisation d'un ordinateur c'est compliquÈ c'est trËs compliquÈ (h) pace qu'il faut retenir ÈnormÈment d'in d'informatio::n et surtout si on le fait pa::s (geste) on oublie(_) (-)*
[but is there not something which is more (euheuh) difficult than something else (-----) because when we ha (euh) I share your view that the use of a computer it is very complicated it is very complicated because we need to hold a large amount of information and above all if someone doesn't do it (gesture) all is forgotten (-)
[…]

(19) *(h)mais est ce qu'il n'y a PA::S(+) (eeh) dans une situation spÈcifique une difficulT…(+) (-) (ee) prÈCISE qui est particuliËreme::nt (-) qui vous a particuliËrement affectÈ (-) (_) dans l'utilisation(_) (-)dans l'apprentissage*
[but is there not something (eeh) in a specific situation a precise difficulty that is particularly (-) that particularly affected you (-) in the use (-) in learning]

Secondly the questioner just repeats the negative Y/N question, beginning with *mais*, with a prosodic focus on negation marks and words that corresponds to the theme of [: *situation spÈcifique une difficulT…(+) (-) (ee) prÈCISE*. According to Borillo (1979: 32-40) the use of a negation mark within an interrogative form allows to control the following exchanges. The negation mark concerns above all the implicit statement underlying the question. In the présent case, the statement underlying is something like: *there is something that is more difficult than other.* The negative Y/N-question functions as a discursive integrator to elicit a reply which will confirm the positive statement underlying the question. On the contrary, Y/N question without a negation mark saves the alternative : e.g. *est ce qu'il y a quelque chose qui est plus difficile ?* [is there something that is more difficult?]. Therefore, negative Y/N question allows the questionner to anticipate the interviewee's negative answer, pointing out that the respondent has to show arguments for its justification.

The interviewee's negative answer in [see corpus RG ANNEX 2 (6) and (8)] leads the interaction to an impasse that the interviewer's theme shift allows to overcome in [20].

The second example concerns the What-question in [20]. The interviewer changes his strategy and suggests a specific learning activity.

(20) *(--) (h) par exemple da:ns cette (euh) prÈparation du passeport inFORmatique et multimÉDIA(+) qu?est ce qui vous crÈe? plus de:: (-) problËme (-) dans l'apprentiSSA:GE (ein?) pour passÈ (inaudible)*

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

[for instance for the computer driving and multi-media certification what creates to you more trouble in learning]

Instead of focusing on a problem or on trouble with one or several tasks, the interviewee gives an evaluation about his performance on the various phases of e-mail learning.

(21) *(aein) pour (euh) c'est (-) pour l'instant c'est pas bien bien compliquÈ(+) pace que c'est comment recevoir un mail(+)(_) par exemple(_) comment envoyer un mail(+) (euh) au dÈbut je chavais pas trop FAIre mais là je pense que j'ai à peu prËs saisi (+) (euh) (h) aprËs (euheuh) enfin tous le::s fin (.) j'ai rfait plein d'exercices(+) (_)là(_) (h) (euh) c'est vrai que bein ça l'ai:: je pense que:: ça devrait le faire quoi mais aprËs (euh) (h)*
[for (euh) it is (-) at the moment it is not so hard because that is how to receive an e-mail for instance how to send an e-mail (euh) at the beginning I did not know how to do it but at present I think I understood nearly everything I redo lots of exercise at the moment (euh) it is true that I think that it should be enough but then (euh)].

The interviewer's What-question about problems encountered in computer driving and multi-media certification is retrospectively transformed by the respondent. He answers in order to determine if yes or no he faced some problem, as if what was at stake was an alternative underlying a Y/N question like: "did you find any problem in preparing the computer driving and multi-media certification?" This transformation seems coherent with the *discursive identity* claimed previously by the interviewee. Because of his tendency to forget he cannot play the role of "expert" on learning problems, in particular he is not able to provide for specific examples to illustrate his learning difficulties.

The interviewer's follow up is a What-question which integrates part of the interviewee's answer (i.e. he has done lots of exercise). The questioner asks for more details on the new point introduced by the respondent.

(22) *et en QUOI? ils consistent (_)ces exercices(_)*
[and what types of exercises]

The prosodic focus on *quoi* (what) allows the interviewer both to reframe on the theme of the computer driven certification and to reassert his *discursive identity*, i.e. his leading position to decide what is at stake during the interview with respect to the thematic progression of the interaction.

In his answer to the What-question, the respondent requests explicitly the help of the manager of the Cyber base®justice to provide for information about the

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

software for e-mail learning (i.e. art-mapping software). As the manager belongs to the teaching team of the computer driving certification he will take further the role of questioner because of his knowledge on learning tasks proposed.

8. CONCLUSION

In this paper, we analyzed the QAF system in two interviews, which present many differences, from the point of view of social status of the actors, the impact on the general public as well as the issues addressed in the interview. Independently of structural similarities both interviews present the same issues on who dominates the interaction and the shift from dominated position to dominant role.

For the Question part of the system, in both interviews, we can find a focus on the key words, independently of the specific structure of the question (Y/N-question, W/H/W-question). We also found, in both interviews, that the question projects a *discursive identity* of the responder (e.g. the identity of an expert, the leadership of the power game).

For the Answer part, we showed that by transforming the question, the responder positions himself regarding the discursive identity projected in the question.

For the Follow-up part, we showed it integrates some parts of the answer. By doing so, the follow-up is often structured in two parts: the first one summarizes some parts of the answer, while the second part constitutes a reformulation of the question. The follow-up contributes to the construction of a shared interlocutory using this double strategy: i.e. partly integrating the answer and reframing the theme of the question.

Overall, the two excerpts analyzed seem to validate the hypothesis on interactional strategies underlying QAF system in interviews. Nevertheless, more evidence is required in order to generalize these hypotheses.

REFERENCES

Anscombre, J-C., O. Ducrot, 1981, "Interrogation et argumentation", *Langue française*, 52, 1, 5–22.

Borillo, A., 1979, "La négation et l'orientation de la demande de confirmation", *Langue française*, 44, 1, 27–41.

Charaudeau, P., 2002, "Identité", in: P. Charaudeau, D. Maingueneau (eds), *Dictionnaire d'analyse du discours*, Paris, Seuil, 299–300.

Charaudeau, P., 2009, "Identité sociale et identité discursive. Un jeu de miroir fondateur de l'activité langagière", in: P. Charaudeau (ed), *Identités sociales et discursives du sujet parlant*, Paris, L'Haramattan, 10–19.

Danon-Boileau, L., 2010, *L'enfant qui ne disait rien*, Paris, Odile Jacob.

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C., V. Traverso, 2004, "Types d'interactions et genres de l'oral", *Langages*, 38, 153, 41–51.

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

Kerbrat-Orecchioni, C., 2007, “La rhétorique interpersonnelle : coopération et politesse dans la communication d’itinéraire”, in: J.-M. Barbéris, M.C. Manes Gallo (eds), *Parcours dans la ville*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 147–166.
Haillet, P-P., 2007, *Pour une linguistique des représentations discursives,* Louvain-la-Neuve, De Boeck.
Manes Gallo, M.C., 2007, “La prédication verbale : Entre progression du discours et progression dans l’espace”, in: J.-M. Barbéris, M.C. Manes Gallo (eds), *Parcours dans la ville*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 211–230.
Martin, P., 2009, *Intonation du français*, Paris, Armand Collin.
Mondada, L., 2005, “La constitution de l’origo déictique comme travail interactionnel des participants : une approche praxéologique de la spatialité”, *Intellectica*, 2–3, 75–100.
Remy-Giraud, S., 1991, “Question et assertion : De la morpho-syntaxe à la pragmatique”, in: C. Kerbrat-Orecchioni (ed), *La question*, Lyon, Presses Universitaires de Lyon, 39–62.
Vion, R., 2007, “La mise en scène interlocutive de la description d’itinéraire piéton”, in: J.-M. Barbéris, M.C. Manes Gallo (eds), *Parcours dans la ville*, Paris, L’Harmattan, 129–146.

ANNEX 1 : Corpus MEC

1. AC: quand sera publié le prochain bulletin de santé
2. FM: oh bé en dé- en décembre / comme chaque fois / c'est tous les six mois / donc euh vers la mi-décembre à peu près / il faudra que les / médecins /et les professeurs qui se sont occupés de moi / je se /s'arrangent / pour publier à temps le bulletin de santé que je dois aux français comme je leur ai promis en 1981
3. RE: euh **justement** à propos du bulletin de santé vous / vous avez opté pour la **transparence** depuis le début et et et cela a été apprécié alors si vous voulez bien on va continuer un peu dans cet esprit / au mois de juillet, le vingt-deux juillet précisément, vingt-deux juillet dernier, le onze septembre/ **est-ce que** cela veut dire qu'à/à ce moment-là c'est-à-dire en juillet vous ne connaissiez pas votre mal **ou alors est-ce que** vous n'en étiez pas assez sûr pour l'in en informer les Français
4. FM: je crois que c'est cela / euh / il y a je ne sais combien de temps/un an peut-être un an et demi / euh / certains signaux étaient apparus qui avaient été indiqués dans le communiqué et qui avaient / alerté un certain nombre de spécialistes et puis qui s'étaient dit tiens qu'est-ce qui se passe /donc y'avait quelque chose d'anormal /qui s'était produit /mais c'est au mois d'août alors y'a une / accélération / euh j'étais soit à Paris / puisque les vacances ne sont pas très longues quand on/ fait ce que je fais soit dans les Landes / et je peux dire les choses comme elles sont quoi j'ai beaucoup / beaucoup souffert euh je voulais attendre la le référendum du vingt septembre et ben j'ai pas tenu le coup quoi / ça n'a pas été possible/mais enfin j'ai tenu tenu au moins jusqu'au trois septembre euh date de l'émission que je faisais euh avec Guillaume Durand/et euh/à partir de là ce processus s'est accéléré à euh à une telle allure/que les médecins ont estimé nécessaire d'intervenir
5. RE: en mille neuf cent quatre-vingt vous aviez déclaré euh dans dans la fonction que j'occupe les ennuis de santé ne doivent pas nuire à à l'exercice de la fonction c'est une question de morale politique
6. FM: ben oui c'est si ça se gâte
7. RE: alors **justement** euh si les médecins vous indiquaient des une évolution euh euh difficile euh qu'est qu'est-ce que vous feriez
8. FM: ben je pense que je ne pourrais pas continuer d'assumer mes fonctions euh / en en raison de / euh d'une évolution / euh plus rapide plus brutale / euh d'une maladie qui n'a pas bonne réputation / euh je pense que j'aurais quelques difficultés à exercer euh / mon mandat et puis faut que j'aie la tête libre / bon si je suis là ce soir et si je suis Président de la République en exercice c'est qu'on en est pas là

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

9. RE: alors donc a a priori votre état physique vous permet vous venez de nous l'expliquer euh est est-ce que / mais est-ce que **psychologiquement** vous avez le désir d'aller jusqu'au bout est-ce que par moments vous n'a(vez) vous ne vous dites pas après tout y'a bien d'autres d'autres choses dans la vie
10. FM: si ça m'arrive / mais ça m'arrivait avant déjà {RIRE}donc euh ce que je veux dire c'est que / j'ai euh sollicité un mandat / il m'a été accordé à deux reprises / aucune raison de ne pas / accomplir euh / le devoir qui m'a été confié
11. AC: on y reviendra sûrement sous une autre forme mais ce qu'on voudrait +BC savoir c'est vous n'avez pas envie de décrocher quoi
12. FM: pas du tout

ANNEX 2 : Corpus RG

1. INT: (h) dans ces diffÈrentes utilisations que vous avez dont vous avez eu expÈRIENCE(+) (-) (_) par rapport à (_) l'ordinaTEUR(+) (h) aeuh (--) est ce qu'il y a une situation(+) (.) spÈciFIQUE dans laquelle vous avez eu euh une difficultÈ (_)que vous avez ensuite(_) surmontÈe(+) (_)sûrement(_) mais euh est ce qu'il y a une difficulT…(+) dans une situation spÈcifique que vous avez rencontrÈe(+) dans (---) l'utilisation de l'ordinateur(_)
2. APP: aeuh moi (h.)tout e::st (eheh) (rire) je suis (inaudible) de pas vous le dire pace que pour moi (aeuh) tout e::st tout est difficile (rire) chai chai je ne manipule pas assez pour que:: (-) pour que je trouve quelque chose plus facile que d?autre c'est vrai que :: (-) que comme j'ai pas tout tout rentrÈ dans ma tête (euh) et que j'ai tendance à oublier (_)tout e::st(_) (-) (_)tout est difficile pour moi(_)
3. INT: mais ?est ce qu'il n'y a PA:S quelque chose? qui est (-) PLUS (-) (euheuh) difficile (.) qu'autre chose (---) pace que quand on A:: (euh) moi je je partage avec vous le fait que l'utilisation d'un ordinateur c'est compliquÈ c'est trËs compliquÈ (h) pace qu'il faut retenir ÈnormÈment d'in d'informatio::n et surtout si on le fait pa::s (geste) on oublie(_) (-)
4. APP: (uhm)
5. INT: (h) mais est ce qu'il n'y a PA::S(+) (eeh) dans une situation spÈcifique une difficulT…(+) (-) (ee) prÈCISE qui est particuliËreme::nt (-) qui vous a particuliËrement affectÈ (-) (_) dans l'utilisation(_) (-)dans l'apprentissage
6. APP: (euh) (inaudible) (geste auto contact et mouvement de la tête) (_)non non je ne vois pas(_)
7. INT: no
8. APP: no
9. INT: (--) (h) par exemple da:ns cette (euh) prÈparation du passeport inFORmatique et multimÈDIA(+) qu?est ce qui vous crÈe? plus de:: (-) problËme (-) dans l'apprentiSSA:GE (ein?) pour passÈ (inaudible)
10. APP: (aein) pour (euh) c'est (-) pour l'instant c'est pas bien bien compliquÈ(+) pace que c'est comment recevoir un mail(+)(_) par exemple(_) comment envoyer un mail(+) (euh) au dÈbut je chavais pas trop FAIre mais là je pense que j'ai à peu prËs saisi (+) (euh) (h) aprËs (euheuh) enfin tous le::s fin (.) j'ai rfait plein d'exercices(+) (_)là(_) (h) (euh) c'est vrai que bein ça l'ai:: je pense que:: ça devrait le faire quoi mais aprËs (euh) (h)
11. 11. INT: et en QUOI? ils consistent (_)ces exercices(_)
12. 12. APP: alors (euheuh) (geste autocontact) y avait (euheuh) sur (euh) (bruit Èlocution) sur (euh) sur (euh) sur l'Ècran(+) (-) au dÈ (regard vers responsable cyber base) ?c'Ètait ça? c'est l'Ècran au dÈbut? non?
13. RESP: ?sur l'art mapping (inaudible) ?
14. APP: sur l'art mapping ouais c'est cela tout le::s (euh)
15. RESP: oui sur l'art mapping y avait (euh) c'est des Ècrans les >uns derriËres les autres< il fallait cliQUER (-) (_)les bonnes rÈponses(_)

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)

16. APP: et puis ouais il y avait (euh) y avait diffÈrents diffÈrents trucs quoi mai::s (euh) mais bon (euh) j? saurais pas trop pas trop (_)pas trop vous dire(_) (-) (croise les bras, tousse, regard vers responsable cyber base)
17. INT: (uhm uhm)
18. RESP: si je peux me permettre (.) qu'est ce que vous avez le le (inaudible) apprendre (umh) (-) (h) les MELLES (-) avec l'art mapping? (.) ou apprendre les melles (euh) (-) en vrai? (-) c'est à dire l'utilisation de::
19. APP: ah EN vrai (-) EN vrai (.) en vrai je:: en vrai je::
20. RESP: l'utilisation de l'outlook

Transcript conventions

: ::	phonemes stretching
MAJ	prosodic focus
> ... <	fast speech rate
(_)...(_)	slow speech rate
(+) (-)	high/ low pitch
(h)(.h)	inspiration/ expiration
aeuh/eh/	hesitations
(.) (-) (--)	pause(s)

BDD-A24885 © 2016 Editura Academiei
Provided by Diacronia.ro for IP 216.73.216.25 (2026-11-07 16:08:30 UTC)