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Comparative analysis of conversational strategy of interruption and disfluency in political interviews conducted in Croatian and English

The genre of political interview includes informational and communicative persuasive strategy, as each interlocutor wants to establish their dominance. The desire for dominance results in frequent interruptions and speech overlaps, which can also be associated with speech fluency. A comparative analysis was used to examine the discourse strategy of negative interruptions and overlaps in relation to other parameters of fluency in the television genre of political interview in the pre-election period, between Croatian and British journalists and politicians. In total, 24 speakers, evenly represented by language, occupation and gender, were analysed based on 12 news programmes for each language. The analysis revealed that journalists tend to interrupt and overlap politicians in a more conflicting way. Men tend to interrupt and overlap interlocutors more than women, and statistically, Croatian speakers do it more often. Moreover, Croatian journalists interrupt politicians more than their British peers. An interesting piece of research data reveals that women interrupt women and men to the same extent. Based on the overall data, it can be concluded that English speakers were more fluent, and that British journalists used fewer negative interruptions than Croatian.

1. Introduction

When it comes to the television speech within news programmes, the genre of political interview is fairly common and especially popular in the pre-election period, when politicians want to use interviews with journalists to convey their political programmes and goals for the future to the audience. Recent studies questioned whether and to what extent candidate appearances in the media influence the election outcomes (Baum 2005; Feldman 2016). Gornostayeva (2016) states that political interviews, along with commentaries, discussions, and interpretation, are included in the secondary genres of political discourse. These conversations differ from other interviews in that they do not only include informational

strategies; a communicative persuasive strategy prevails precisely because often both participants of the interview (host and politician) want to convince the audience of their reasoning's credibility. Journalists often question personal and social political goals, as well as the credibility of parties and party leaders, which can lead to conflicting (antagonistic) communication, which in addition to clashes of opinion can turn into a personal conflict. Walton (2006) states that the social goal of persuasive dialogue is to resolve or clarify controversy, while the goal of heuristic dialogue is to show or discover a more profound reason a conflict occurred. In the genre of political interview, each interlocutor wants to establish their dominance: both journalists (in order to maintain their assertiveness and persistence in seeking answers) and politicians (upholding their persuasive strategy). That desire for dominance results in frequent interruptions and speech overlaps, which can also be associated with speech (dis)fluency, because both speakers are trying to maintain their dominance. As politicians are frequent guests in TV studios, a somewhat dominant stance comes naturally to the hosts of political interviews. Highlighting the importance of the television interview in conveying political messages during the pre-election period, Beattie (1982: 95) humorously notes that the skill of dialogue is important to modern politicians, just as the art of oratory was important to earlier generations of politicians. Therefore, it seems interesting to quantitatively examine the discourse strategy of speech interruption and overlap in the genre of political interview according to the occupation and gender of the speaker, and to examine how they relate to other parameters of speech fluency.

Dominance in everyday conversations has been analysed in previous studies that focused on various parameters: topic monitoring, interruptions and overlaps, the amount of speech, etc. Chowdhury et al. (2018) defined an overlapping speech as a natural and frequently occurring phenomenon in conversations, but with an underlying purpose. Political interviews are expected to differ from ordinary daily conversations, because of the communicative goals of the interlocutors (Tymbay 2021).

In this study, the intention was to examine the relationship between the discourse strategy of negative, intrusive interruptions and overlaps, and disfluency in political interviews in the period leading up to the parliamentary elections in Croatia and the United Kingdom, and in the programmes dealing with parliamentary elections in 2019 and 2020. Our aim was to determine whether there are any differences based on the communicative role of the speaker (journalist / politician), as well as gender and language affiliation (English / Croatian). Gender-wise, the aim was to examine whether women generally interrupt and overlap less than men, and whether there is any difference between male and female interlocutors, and on the other hand, whether men interrupt men and women equally. Furthermore, the goal was to determine the correlation of interruptions and overlaps with other disfluencies, i.e., whether they affect greater disfluency – e.g., whether the speakers utter more fillers, repetitions, etc., and whether there is any difference between

Croatian and British journalists and politicians. Itakura (2001) views dominance as a multidimensional phenomenon determined by factors of order¹, participation, and quantity. Although everyday conversations are not determined by institutional constraints and should therefore be symmetrically distributed among participants, research reveals just the opposite. More specifically, everyday conversations are rarely symmetrical (Itakura 2001), and their asymmetry is mainly caused by social and contextual factors (Linell and Luckmann 1991). Itakura (2001) states that quantitative dominance is an independent measure of dominance expressed by the distribution of the total number of words among interlocutors. On the other hand, Linell (1990) notes that dominance does not have to be expressed through a large quantity of words, but can be achieved by using a few strategically very important words.

Beattie (1981) investigated interruptions in relation to gender and speaker status during communication, between students and tutors in university tutorial groups. The research revealed that tutors tend to use significantly more interruptions than students, which can be associated with dominance. Speaker inequalities have been extensively examined by van Dijk (1989), who explains that various social inequalities arise from everyday conversations. He points out that inequalities among speakers of different socio-economic traits (gender, age, and social status differences) are a part of everyday conversations and contribute to asymmetry through assuming control over the conversation, taking on the role of speaker, speech acts, as well as choice of speech style and conversation topic (van Dijk 1989).

The changing of communication roles has gained a special perspective within the framework of sociolinguistics, by examining correlations of different parameters (gender, age, language, culture, etc.) and the ways in which speakers and interlocutors alternate in a conversation. When discussing conversational behaviour, interruptions are traditionally evaluated as reliable and objective parameters of interlocutory power, control, and dominance (Goldberg 1990). Communication strategies of interruption and overlap as a complex and ambiguous phenomenon can be influenced by different variables: social variables of occupation, status, role in dialogue, gender and psychological – personality characteristics, intelligence. Rim (1977, as cited in Beattie 1982: 96) conducted an interesting study which revealed a difference in the frequency of interruptions related to the intelligence and psychological status of subjects, i.e., that more intelligent people interrupt less, while the less intelligent, neurotic subjects, and extroverts interrupt and overlap more. On the other hand, some studies have shown that the frequency of interruptions is positively correlated with the self-confidence of the subject (Nataly et al. 1979; cited in Beattie 1982: 96). Chowdhury (2018) categorize speech overlap as competitive and non-competitive speech behaviour, which could be motivated by taking the role of speaker (transition from the audience role) or by assisting

1 In his paper, Itakura (2001) points out that the order factor is the most prominent feature of conversational dominance.

the speaker to continue his speaking role. In their study, authors have designed, researched, and evaluated different (non-)linear models for the classification of overlaps. Results of their study suggested that “the lexical content of the overlapping, with appropriate feature representation, is a powerful tool for classifying the intent behind the overlap events” (Chowdhury et al. 2018: 24).

In the context of interruptions, Tannen (1994) mentions a special style of strong conversational involvement that she calls collaborative overlap. This type of interruption happens when the listener does not begin to speak in order to interrupt the speaker, but to show that he or she is interested in the topic and would like to participate in the conversation. This style of conversation is described by Tannen (1994) as a high involvement style. On the other hand, the opposite style, one that is characterized by listening to the speaker without any interruptions and overlaps, is described as a high considerateness style.² We did not analyse this type of interruption in this study, assuming that intrusive interruptions prevail in the genre of political interview, primarily due to the establishment of the control over the topic (in both directions, journalists and politicians), but also due to conflicting context of confrontations with political disagreement. Thus, political interviews differ from ordinary casual conversations with symmetrically established communicative relations, and they contain less signals of maintaining communication with a phatic language function, and a priori agreement among equal interlocutors.

Given the above, the goal, among other things, was to explore the relationship between female and male journalists and politicians, and to quantitatively determine whether women interrupt and overlap female or male speakers more frequently in the genre of political interview, whether journalists achieve more interruptions and overlaps compared to politicians, and whether this influences the greater production of fillers and other speech fluency parameters. Apart from the mentioned, the significance of the differences among speakers has been inspected by statistical analysis.

2. Interruption and overlap strategy, and types of disfluency

Various authors have written about the nature of interruption, but there are basically two main perspectives on it. The first perspective views interruptions as marked interferences and violations of the rights of the current speaker, or serious disturbances in the flow of communication (Sacks et al. 1978), closely related to power (Ferguson 1977; Kollock Blumstein and Schwartz 1985; Hawkins 1991; Robinson and Reis 1989; Zimmerman and West 1975; according to Li et al. 2005). The second perspective interprets interruptions as a form of conversational engagement, a way of showing support and solidarity, and creating a connection with

2 The terminology presented by Tannen (1994) is based on the research that explored spontaneous colloquial speech in two speakers from California, three New York Jews, and one native speaker from the UK. At that time, the Jewish style of speech was described as aggressive and strenuous.

the speaker (Hayashi 1988; Mizutani 1988; Moerman 1988; Roger and Nesshoever 1987; Tannen 1981; 1994; according to Li et al. 2005). Tymbay (2021) questions the role of interruption in the 2020 US presidential debates, as a key communicative strategy. The analysis included the typology of turns and the character of interruptions (smooth transitions, interruptions, backchannels, crosstalk). The results indicated that the role that the interruptions have as an instrument (of dominance) in rhetorical and political genre should not be underestimated.

As for terminology, individual authors have used different terms to denote these two modes of interruption. Murata (1994), Li (2001), Li, Krysko, Desroches and Deagle (2004) use the terms ‘intrusive’ and ‘co-operative interruption’, while Goldberg (1990) distinguishes interruptions between speakers with greater and lesser interlocutor’s power. According to Li et al. (2005), Kennedy and Camden (1983) differentiate positive interruptions from the negative ones, Bennett (1981) groups them as conflicting or less conflicting, and some see them as either disruptive or supportive (Ng, Brook and Dunne 1995).

Intrusive interruptions enter the *speech territory* of the current speaker, disrupting the content or flow of communication (Goldberg 1990: 886). According to Li et al. (2005), the aforementioned interruptions can be divided into four subcategories: *disagreement* (interruption that occurs as the interlocutor’s reaction to what has been said, where he or she does not agree with what he or she hears and wants to express personal opinion), *floor-taking* (interruption that does not arise from desiring change, but by developing the topic of the current speaker, and by taking on the role of speaker), *topic change* (interrupting a speaker with the intention of changing the conversation topic) (Murata 1994), and *tangentialization* (interruption by which the interlocutor interrupts the current speaker believing that he or she knows all the information he or she is listening to, so he or she interrupts the speaker so as not to listen to it again) (Kennedy and Camden 1983).

In the analysis of interruptions and overlaps, authors apply different methodological approaches. For example, Esposito (1979; according to Tannen 1994) defines interruptions as all speech situations in which speaker A interrupts speaker B using one or multiple words. Leffler, Gillespie and Conaty (1982; according to Tannen 1994) do not distinguish between overlaps and interruptions, and accordingly offer different methodological guidelines in the analysis of the aforementioned. They define interruptions as all vocalizations of the interlocutor during the speaker’s speech, which include at least two identifiable words or at least three syllables of one word. Bennett (1981), on the other hand, notes that overlaps and interruptions belong to different types, based on their origination. Relying on the structural-syntactic approach, Schegloff (1973; according to Schegloff 1987) elaborates a more precise definition of the terms ‘interruption’ and ‘overlap’. He defines overlaps as every beginning of person A’s speech, while person B is speaking, in a conversational place that could be the end of a sentence (the place at the end of the sentence where a full stop is used in writing, and thus the possible starting point of

the second sentence). On the other hand, he sees interruption as any beginning of person A's speech while person B is speaking, in a conversational place that in no way could represent the end of a sentence (Schegloff 1987: 76).

Numerous examples of interruptions and overlaps have been identified in the corpora used in this study, and two of them ((1) and (2)) are listed below:

An example of interruption (D. O. and M. B.) – Croatian

(1) D. O.: „Ajmo ovako, potpuno ste krivo postavili tezu.“ (“Let’s put it this way, your hypothesis is completely wrong.” The host interrupts at a syntactic position that could mark the end of the sentence uttered by politician D. O. However, it does not mark it, as indicated by her sentence intonation, semantic structure of the statement and, finally, the non-verbal communication of the politician.)

M. B. „Ne, ja vas pitam, ja vam postavljam pitanje ...“ (“No, I’m asking you, this question is for you...”)

D. O. „Krenuli smo od, od pitanja ...“ (“We started with, with the question...”)

M. B. „Ja vas pitam ...“ (“I’m asking you...”)

An example of interruption (A. M. and A. P.) – English

(2) A. P.: “Well look, we’ve been neglected by Labour and Conservative governments, I mean, over generations. I mean, Wales has been at the wrong end of a long queue as far as investment. We’ve seen the concentration of...”

A. M.: “If you had to choose, you’d want a Labour – you’d want Jeremy Corbyn there so that you could get the investment that you want?”

2.1. The relation between interruption and types of disfluencies

In a preliminary test (auditive observation of speech disfluencies) carried out by the authors of this paper, on a small sample of Croatian journalists and politicians, it was noticed that intrusive interruptions and overlaps were more frequent in political interviews in which interlocutors were often positioned as rivals rather than collaborators, and this was less evident among English-speaking professionals. Since a larger number of interruptions and overlaps was expected to affect other disfluencies among interlocutors, other parameters of speech fluency were quantitatively analysed in line with the Shriberg classification system (2001). The mentioned parameters also proved to be interesting in the forensic comparison of speakers – fillers, repetitions, word omissions, word substitutions, insertions, and articulation errors (Varošanec-Škarić 2019). When it comes to the status of fillers, there are certain opposing views among linguists. While some define them as words or marginal words (Du Bois et al.; according to Tottie 2011: 175), others do not think they have the word status (Kjellmer 2003).

3. Previous research

When discussing the relation between interruptions, language and gender, authors often cite the information that men interrupt women more often than women interrupt men (Zimmerman and West 1975; Bohn and Stutman 1983; Eakins and Eakins 1976; Esposito 1979, etc.; according to Tannen 1994). These studies found that as many as 75% of total interruptions come from male speakers, when compared to women (West and Zimmerman 1983, Eakins and Eakins 1983). The results of previous research on the speech of preschool children, and between parents of both genders and children, also showed that boys interrupt girls in the ratio of 2: 1 (Esposito 1979), that fathers interrupt children more often than mothers, and that both parents interrupt female more often than male children (Gleason and Greif 1983). In the context of political interviews, Beattie's research (1982: 104) showed that one journalist interrupted the then opposition leader Margaret Thatcher almost twice as much as she interrupted him, and that James Callaghan, the then Prime Minister, interrupted the journalist more than he interrupted him. Interestingly, the mentioned politicians did not differ significantly in the frequency of interruptions of their interviewers.

In more recent study, Jacobsen (2019) examined interruptions and co-construction in the US presidential debate (Trump and Clinton debate). The results showed that interruptions (or as author calls them, *clashes*) involve uncooperative or incoherent actions. Also, the author points out, that interruptions are identified based on the mutual orientations of the participants.

In previous research, the non-verbal communication of speakers during interruptions has also been analysed. The results of a study conducted on 150 speakers (Farley, Ashcraft, Stasson and Nusbaum 2010) showed that they responded to interruptions with reciprocal interruptions that included increased nodding of the head. The results also indicated that women nodded, agreed with the interlocutor, and were smiling more often during interruptions than male speakers, which the authors interpreted as a greater intention of female speakers to maintain the conversation flow.

Among the parameters of speech fluency, fillers have been researched mostly as additions to speech performance, which Clark and Fox (2002) interpret as a direct influence of Chomsky (1965) and his linguistic theory which views fillers as random errors or special parts in the linguistic application of current speech.

4. Research objectives

Given the results of the aforementioned studies, the aim of this study is to examine whether there are any differences among speakers when it comes to interruptions, overlaps and other disfluencies, with regard to gender, language and occupation. This suggests several research objectives:

- to examine which factor (gender, occupation or language) has the greatest influence on the degree of interruptions;
- to define the discourse strategies used by interlocutors;
- to examine the number and type of speech (dis)fluencies used by interlocutors.

5. Methodology

5.1. Corpus

Recordings from a total of 24 native speakers of Croatian and English were collected and analysed. The total duration of the analysed recordings for the Croatian language was 179 minutes and 15 seconds, and for the English language 121 minutes and 44 seconds. Although the total duration of recordings is different for Croatian and English, the values of all parameters have been averaged per minute, thus neutralizing the time difference between the analysed corpora. The analysed programmes in Croatian language were broadcast in the period from 13 May to 19 September 2020 (programmes *Otvoreno* and *Nedjeljom u 2* (HRT) and *Dnevnik Nove TV* (guest in *Dnevnik*): a total of 12 shows³), and programs in English were broadcast from 24 March to 11 December 2019 (*The Andrew Marr Show* (BBC One), *The Andrew Neil Show* (BBC Two), *Politics Live* (BBC Two), *Peston* (ITV), *Sky News*, *Sophy Ridge on Sunday* (Sky News) and *ITV News – Election Interviews* (ITV): a total of 12 shows)⁴.

In political campaigns in Croatia and the United Kingdom, TV interviews are very important, because politicians know they can help them reach a wide audience of different ages, as younger generations in these countries follow digital technology more, and both Croatian and the UK politicians, when compared to their US peers, adapt rather slowly to newer technologies (Cardo 2021). Among the Croatian speakers, all journalists hold a university degree (6/6), as well as almost all politicians, more precisely 11 out of 12 of them (92%). When it comes to English speakers, among the politicians, 10 of them hold a university degree, while the remaining two have a high school diploma. Among the journalists, all speakers hold university degrees⁵.

3 The programs were chosen to meet several criteria: they had to be a part of the informative television program, their discourse had to be political, and the topic had to be connected to the pre-election campaign. Given that the criteria for the formation of the corpus made the analysis even more difficult (according to the factors of gender, language, and occupation), it was expected that the format of the show would not be identical within the same language and between these two languages. The mentioned differences were mitigated by adapting the methodology. Namely, only speech materials between journalists and politicians were included in the analysis, while quantitative calculations of disfluencies were implemented per minute. In this manner, the differences in the duration of the spoken material were also neutralized.

4 More detailed information on the programmes can be found at the end of the paper, in the appendices.

5 Although the levels of education in Croatia and the United Kingdom differ, they are reduced to Croatian terminology, for the purposes of the work: secondary education, tertiary education and higher education. The level of higher education included undergraduate and graduate education, master's and doctoral degrees.

Speakers of each language were equally represented by gender and occupation: three male journalists talking to a male politician and a female politician, and three female journalists talking to a male politician and a female politician. Therefore, the paper analyses the speeches of six female journalists (three native speakers of Croatian and three speakers of English) and six male journalists (three native speakers of Croatian and three speakers of English). In a conversation with journalists, six politicians in each language were analysed. All interviews were held during the pre-election period and are thematically related to it, so that the communication situation between Croatian and British political interviews would be comparable. All shows were part of the news programmes of public and private commercial television networks.

5.2. Analysis of interruptions, overlaps, and other types of disfluencies

Clear criteria have been established for each parameter, i.e., for discourse strategies, interruptions and overlaps, according to Tannen (1994), for types of disfluencies according to the Shriberg's division (2001), which have proven useful in the context of forensic speaker recognition (Varošanec-Škarić 2019). So, the frequency of the following parameters was quantified: interruptions, overlaps, and fillers (filled pauses: /ʌ:/, /ə:/ /uh/, /u(h)m/ or /er/, /em/). In addition to these, /e/, /a/, /ea/ also appear as filler in Croatian. Other disfluencies are repetitions, omissions, substitutions of words ("have" instead of "has", "following" instead of "followed", "is" instead of "are"), insertions (editing phase) and articulation errors. All interruptions uttered by speakers, during which the listener and the speaker switch communication roles, were marked as interruptions. Only the ones that are not really interruptions, in the phatic sense, were omitted – e.g., agreeing with the interlocutor (e.g., those that appeared in the Croatian corpus: "Yes, yes.", "Of course.", "That's right.", "I agree.", "Mhə.", and the ones that appeared in the English corpus: „I understand.“, „Right.“, „Ok.“, „Correct.“).

The authors listened all the recordings several times in order to determine, as accurately as possible, all occurrences of these types of disfluencies and to check the consistency of the analysis criteria. In order to reduce the possible subjectivity in quantifying the parameters, the first author and co-authors evaluated two examples separately for each language. Further, all authors randomly selected half of the corpus of analysed recordings for each language and then assessed and standardized the criteria by listening to the samples in Croatian and English⁶.

6 Auditive analysis was carried out by all authors, who are native speakers of Croatian language. The assessor in charge of quantifying recordings in English is a bilingual speaker of Croatian and English (C2 level) and works as an interpreter.

5.3. Statistical analysis

Descriptive and inferential analyses were applied in the SPSS programme for statistical data processing (2020, version 26). Total average values of interruption and overlap frequency of occurrence per minute were calculated separately for men and women, and separately, by gender, for journalists and politicians. Total differences in interruption and overlap and speech fluency parameters between groups were examined using a *t*-test: in relation to language, occupation, and gender. Furthermore, Pearson correlation analysis was performed for all variables in total, regardless of language and with respect to sub-samples by language (Croatian / English). Using the χ^2 test, the differences between the groups with respect to gender and language variables were examined. All figures (1–4) in this paper have been created in Excel programme.

6. Results of statistical analysis

The average frequency of occurrence (per minute) of the analysed speech fluency parameters in individual Croatian and British politicians and journalists is shown in Tables 1a, b, c and 2a, b and c.

Female journalist and politicians	Interruption / min	Overlap	Male journalists and politicians	Interruption	Overlap
FP1	0.17	0.17	MP1	0.00	0.00
FJ1	0.33	0.33	MP2	1.23	0.96
FJ1	0.48	0.48	MP3	0.71	0.54
FJ2	0.68	0.55	MJ1	1.25	1.25
FP2	0.87	0.72	MJ1	0.87	0.70
FJ2	1.30	0.87	MJ2	6.44	6.17
FP3	0.52	0.87	MJ3	0.83	0.75
FP4	2.55	2.42	MP4	0.21	0.07
FP5	0.30	0.26	MP5	0.11	0.08
FJ3	1.61	1.40	MJ3	1.85	1.11
FP6	0.79	0.79	MP6	0.00	0.00
FJ3	2.52	2.52	MJ2	2.06	0.90
Average	1.01	0.95	Average	1.30	1.04

Table 1a. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) among male and female Croatian language speakers.

Female journalists	Interruption	Overlap	Female politicians	Interruption	Overlap
FJ1	0.33	0.33	FP1	0.17	0.17
FJ1	0.48	0.48	FP2	0.87	0.72
FJ2	0.68	0.55	FP3	0.52	0.87
FJ2	1.30	0.87	FP4	2.55	2.42
FJ3	1.61	1.40	FP5	0.30	0.26
FJ3	2.52	2.52	FP6	0.79	0.79
Average	1.15	1.02	Average	0.87	0.87

Table 1b. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) between female journalists and female politicians in Croatian.

Journalists	Interruption	Overlap	Politicians	Interruption	Overlap
MJ1	1.25	1.25	MP1	0.00	0.00
MJ1	0.87	0.70	MP2	1.23	0.96
MJ2	6.44	6.17	MP3	0.71	0.54
MJ3	0.83	0.75	MP4	0.21	0.07
MJ3	1.85	1.11	MP5	0.11	0.08
MJ2	2.06	0.90	MP6	0.00	0.00
Average	2.22	1.81	Average	0.38	0.27

Table 1c. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) between male journalists and male politicians in Croatian.

Individual and total values of the frequency of interruptions and overlaps in political interviews in Croatian and English are higher in male than female speakers (journalists and politicians) (Table 1a, Table 2a). It can be concluded that men interrupt their interlocutors more often and that their speech overlaps more often, especially in Croatian, which is also highlighted in the maximum average values of interruptions and overlaps for men and women (6.44; 6.17 the same male journalist, compared to: 2.55 female politician and 2.52 female journalist, Table 1a). On average, male journalists interrupt and overlap politicians to a significantly greater extent, (2.22, 1.81: 0.38, 0.27; Table 1c), while female journalists also interrupt and overlap female politicians more, albeit less than men. The difference among female journalists and politicians is clearly not as big as among men (Table 1b), and the maximum individual average values are also significantly higher in male journalists than in female journalists. This tendency is also noticeable among both male and female British journalists, compared to politicians (Table 2b, 2c), although they interrupt and overlap much less than Croatian journalists. It is interesting to note

that British male politicians never interrupted journalists, and overlapped them, on average, as much (0.32; Table 2c) as female politicians (0.33; Table 2b).

These results can be interpreted in terms of the communicative role of journalists, by which journalists moderate the conversation and their guest politician.

Female journalist and politicians	Interruption / min	Overlap	Male journalists and politicians	Interruption	Overlap
FP1	0.50	1.50	MP1	0.32	1.45
FJ1	0.20	1.61	MP2	0.73	0.18
FJ1	0.00	0.49	MP3	0.91	0.82
FJ2	0.39	0.52	MJ1	0.14	0.97
FP2	0.00	0.16	MJ1	0.68	1.36
FJ2	0.17	0.17	MJ2	1.09	1.77
FP3	0.16	0.96	MJ3	0.00	0.18
FP4	0.00	0.10	MP4	0.00	0.30
FP5	0.00	0.39	MP5	0.00	0.20
FJ3	0.08	0.08	MJ3	0.00	0.35
FP6	0.00	0.16	MP6	0.00	0.21
FJ3	0.00	0.27	MJ2	0.00	0.68
Average	0.125	0.534	Average	0.323	0.706

Table 2a. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) between male and female English language speakers.

Female journalists	Interruption	Overlap	Female politicians	Interruption	Overlap
FJ1	0.50	1.50	FP1	0.16	0.96
FJ1	0.20	1.61	FP2	0.00	0.10
FJ2	0.00	0.49	FP3	0.00	0.39
FJ2	0.39	0.52	FP4	0.08	0.08
FJ3	0.00	0.16	FP5	0.00	0.16
FJ3	0.17	0.17	FP6	0.00	0.27
Average	0.21	0.74	Average	0.04	0.33

Table 2b. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) between female journalists and female politicians in English.

Journalists	Interruption	Overlap	Politicians	Interruption	Overlap
MJ1	0.32	1.45	MP1	0.00	0.18
MJ1	0.73	0.18	MP2	0.00	0.30
MJ2	0.91	0.82	MP3	0.00	0.20
MJ2	0.14	0.97	MP4	0.00	0.35
MJ3	0.68	1.36	MP5	0.00	0.21
MJ3	1.09	1.77	MP6	0.00	0.68
Average	0.65	1.09	Average	0.00	0.32

Table 2c. Frequency of interruptions and overlaps (per minute) between male journalists and male politicians in English.

6.1. Significant differences checks

6.1.1. T-test

The total difference that the t-test showed between Croatian and English speakers, regardless of gender and occupation, confirms that Croatian speakers interrupt and overlap interlocutors statistically much more (<0.05) and consequently have more articulation errors (Table 3). This is informative, given that Croatian speakers produce other parameters of speech fluency (fillers, omissions, insertions) more frequently, although without statistical significance. Overall, the only statistically insignificant number of repetitions can be found in English speakers, which is not a consequence of the interruption. In regard to profession, journalists overlap and interrupt politicians statistically significantly more (<0.05), while politicians produce significantly more (<0.05) word substitutions than journalists. Statistically, politicians produce insignificantly more fillers, repetitions, omissions, word insertions, and articulation errors (Table 4).

Fluency parameters	Language	N	Med	Sd	T	p
Interrupting	Croatian	44	21.18	24.87	2.4	<0.05
	English	12	3.83	3.04		
Overlapping	Croatian	43	18.26	20.50	2.9	<0.05
	English	24	5.88	4.91		
Filled pauses	Croatian	45	20.38	28.04	1.82	>0.05
	English	23	9.43	8.43		

Repetitions	Croatian	35	10.11	13.54	-1.13	>0.05
	English	24	13.83	10.49		
Omission	Croatian	16	3.63	3.34	1.54	>0.05
	English	4	1.00	0.00		
Replacements	Croatian	22	3.27	2.86	2.02	>0.05
	English	10	1.40	0.70		
Editing	Croatian	12	3.83	6.29	1.29	>0.05
	English	9	1.11	0.33		
Articulation errors	Croatian	37	7.16	6.15	3.52	<0,05
	English	16	1.69	1.14		

Table 3. T-test results of differences in interrupting, overlapping and other speech fluency parameters between speakers of Croatian and English.

Fluency parameters	Occupation	N	Med	Sd	T	p
Interrupting	Politician	23	9.04	9.56	-2.36	<0,05
	Journalist	33	23.33	27.81		
Overlapping	Politician	32	6.56	7.17	-3.48	<0,05
	Journalist	35	20.46	21.52		
Filled pauses	Politician	35	19.66	16.81	1.06	>0.05
	Journalist	33	13.52	29.44		
Repetitions	Politician	35	13.31	13.47	1.27	>0.05
	Journalist	24	9.17	10.53		
Omission	Politician	12	3.50	3.78	0.68	>0.05
	Journalist	8	2.50	2.00		
Replacements	Politician	21	3.48	2.82	2.65	<0,05
	Journalist	11	1.18	0.60		
Editing	Politician	14	2.93	5.84	0.34	>0.05
	Journalist	7	2.14	2.19		
Articulation errors	Politician	31	6.58	6.25	1.64	>0.05
	Journalist	22	4.00	4.66		

Table 4. T-test results of differences in interrupting, overlapping and other speech fluency parameters between politicians and journalists.

This might be the case because the speech of politicians is relatively unrestricted, closer to spontaneous speech because they answer questions, but also because of journalists' conflicting interruptions and overlaps, which results in a lower overall speech fluency of politicians. Fillers are interpreted as planned and produced parts of patterns, as well as other linguistic words (Clark and Fox Tree 2002: 75), so they are also called planners (Tottie 2011: 193), which has no negative meaning, unlike the term hesitation. Such vocalizations have been shown to facilitate discourse communication because they participate in reflection and planning (e.g., Kjellmer 2003).

Gender-wise, the results of the t-test also confirm that, statistically, men interrupt and overlap significantly more ($p < 0.05$) than women, though women omit words significantly more often ($t = 2.81, p < 0.05$; Table 5).

Fluency parameters	Gender	N	Med	Sd	T	p
Interrupting	Female	27	10.22	9.72	-2.35	<0,05
	Male	29	24.21	29.48		
Overlapping	Female	33	9.09	8.22	-2.22	<0,05
	Male	34	18.41	22.67		
Filled pauses	Female	32	13.41	15.31	-1.07	>0.05
	Male	36	19.58	29.31		
Repetitions	Female	24	9.17	10.94	-1.27	>0.05
	Male	35	13.31	13.24		
Omission	Female	4	6.50	5.26	2.81	<0,05
	Male	16	2.25	1.81		
Replacements	Female	11	3.18	3.25	0.79	>0.05
	Male	21	2.43	2.13		
Editing	Female	7	1.29	0.49	-0.92	>0.05
	Male	14	3.36	5.90		
Articulation errors	Female	22	4.45	5.31	-1.13	>0.05
	Male	31	6.26	6.01		

Table 5. T-test results of differences in interrupting, overlapping and other speech fluency parameters between female and male speakers.

6.1.2. χ^2 test

The χ^2 test was used to determine that there are no statistically significant differences in interruptions in regard to the gender of the interlocutor, separately in the male and female groups, in the Croatian corpus. In other words, there is no statistically significant difference between women when it comes to the interruptions of male and female interlocutors ($p = 0.81$). Also, a statistically significant difference was not confirmed in men either ($p = 0.58$). However, the results indicate a tendency that in the analysed sample, Croatian male speakers on average produce more interruptions than women, and interrupt female more often than male interlocutors. Women also interrupt female interlocutors more frequently, compared to male interlocutors.

In the English corpus, as well as in Croatian, there are no significant differences in interruptions in regard to the gender of the interlocutor. In other words, there is no statistically significant difference among women when it comes to their interruptions of male and female interlocutors ($p = 0.79$). Also, a statistically significant difference was not confirmed in men either ($p = 0.97$). However, the results indicate a tendency that in the analysed sample, men on average produce more interruptions than women, and equally interrupt female and male interlocutors. Women also interrupt male and female interlocutors equally; in fact, they interrupt male interlocutors slightly more than female interlocutors.

No statistically significant difference was found between women (interrupting male and female interlocutors) ($p = 0.87$) and men (interrupting male and female interlocutors) ($p = 0.60$) in the overall corpora that encompasses speakers of both languages. However, the results indicate a tendency that in the analysed sample, male speakers on average produce more interruptions than women, and interrupt female more often than male interlocutors. Women also interrupt female interlocutors more frequently, compared to male interlocutors.

It is interesting to see that British journalists interrupt politicians insignificantly more, which is also quantitatively much less than Croatian journalists. The latter data can be explained by cultural differences, i.e., that Croatian journalists often replace assertiveness with heuristic dialogue, which is also evident in the example of an interview in the news programme *Dnevnik Nove TV*, when the leader of a right-wing party often warned the journalist not to interrupt him in the middle of a sentence, finally exclaiming, at the end of the interview, that he will complain to the management (*Dnevnik Nova TV*, 15 June 2020).

After another overlap, the politician (M. Š.) starts speaking at a faster pace (as a defence mechanism against possible interruptions and overlaps) (example (3)):

- (3) M. Š.: “*Ja ću stvar postaviti tako da se prije svega i najprije uvede odgovornost u politiku i da se ljudima omogući da rade svoj posao*” (“*I will organize things in a way that, first and foremost, introduces responsibility into politics, and allows people to do their job.*”)

Journalist (M. B.): “Što to znači?” (“What does that mean?”) / the journalist overlaps him again /

M. Š.: “To znači, recimo, da ćemo naći načina kako da izaberemo državnoga odvjetnika ili da pustimo državnog odvjetnika da radi svoj posao.” (“Let’s put it this way. That means that we will find ways to elect the attorney general or let the attorney general do his or her job.”). “Jedan, dva, pa u gospodarstvu” (“One, two, and then in the economy)

The journalist overlaps him again:

M.B.: “Dā:, dā: državne tvrtke imamo, 24 strateške, da li će te ljude tamo” (“Wā:, Wā:, We have state-owned companies, 24 strategic ones, and whether the people there will”)

M.Š.: “Ne mogu tako razgovarati, pa stalno me prekidate” (“I can’t talk like that, you keep interrupting me”).

M.B.: “Zaš..?, Hoćete li” (“Wh...? Will you”) /the politician overlaps him./

M.Š.: “Ja ću se žaliti upravi” (“I’ll talk to the management”)

M.B.: “Možete, /ə:/ 24 su strateške tvrtke /ə:/ Hrvatska tamo preko natječaja bira te ljude.” (“Yes, you can /ə:/, there are 24 strategic companies /ə:/ Croatia elects these people through a tender.”) /the politician overlaps him again./

Due to frequent interruptions and overlaps in the second show of *Dnevnik* (22 June 2020), a female politician (D. O.) utters modal requests to that same journalist: “Dopustite da dovršim!” (“Let me finish!”)

Due to frequent interruptions, the female politician often produces fillers and omits words in the already started sentences, leaving them truncated (e.g.: “Kao što sam ja”, (“Just as I...”).

Similar examples have been found in the English–language corpus, in which a female politician complains about the host’s frequent interruptions (examples (4) and (5)):

(4) *N. S.: “Free personal care. Our health service for the vast majority of people delivers top quality services day in and day out. What is unique about Scotland” /the politician overlaps him/*

A. M.: “There’s a new report out about child mental health” /the journalist overlaps him/

N. S.: “Can I finish the point about the health service? Because what’s unique about Scotland is not the challenges, what’s unique is that we were addressing those challenges. So, Audit Scotland last year, this year rather, said that last year more people were treated within the waiting times targets than in the year before ‘cause we’re facing up to those challenges.”

(5) *N.S.: “I do have a great deal of respect for the IFS. I think on that, in particular, what they are missing here is actually one of the key objectives and points of independence in an economic sense. It’s about getting your economy growing faster so that Scotland would be able to emulate the economic performance of*

similarly sized countries that actually don't have the assets we've got. But on the deficit" /the politician overlaps him/

A.M.: "So, let's look at that." /the journalist overlaps him/

M.S.: "Let me complete the point on the deficit, because Scotland's deficit is reducing. We did a piece of work as the SNP that projected what the deficit might be in 2021 ..."

6.1.3. Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis of the overall results for both languages (Table 6) revealed, as expected, the highest positive correlation between interruptions and overlaps ($r = 0.965$, $p < 0.01$), then respectively ($p < 0.01$) between insertions and word substitutions ($r = 0.774$), insertions and articulation errors ($r = 0.722$), between fillers and word substitutions ($r = 0.677$), between repetitions and insertions ($r = 0.616$), word substitutions and articulation errors ($r = 0.539$), fillers and repetitions, occupations and overlaps ($r = 0.396$). Less positive correlations ($p < 0.05$) were found between articulation errors and word omissions ($r = 0.557$), occupations and interruptions ($r = 0.306$), and genders and interruptions ($r = 0.304$). A greater correlation between the use of fillers and word substitutions (Figure 1), as well as insertions and articulation errors (Figure 2), was expected regarding speech–language processing.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Language	1	0.000	-0.041	-0.310	-0.339	-0.219	0.148	-0.341	-0.346	-0.283	-0.442
Occupation	2	1	-0.143	0.306	0.396	-0.130	-0.165	-0.159	-0.435	-0.078	-0.224
Gender	3		1	0.304	0.266	0.130	0.165	-0.552	-0.143	0.205	0.156
Interrupting	4			1	0.965	0.152	0.163	0.198	-0.271	0.236	0.220
Overlapping	5				1	0.123	0.024	0.168	-0.228	0.186	0.253
Filled pauses	6					1	0.396	0.243	0.677	0.148	0.130
Repetitions	7						1	0.408	0.209	0.616	0.065
Omissions	8							1	0.274	-0.081	0.557
Replacements	9								1	0.774	0.539
Editing	10									1	0.722
Articulation errors	11										1

Table 6. Correlation matrix for overall corpora (Croatian and English).

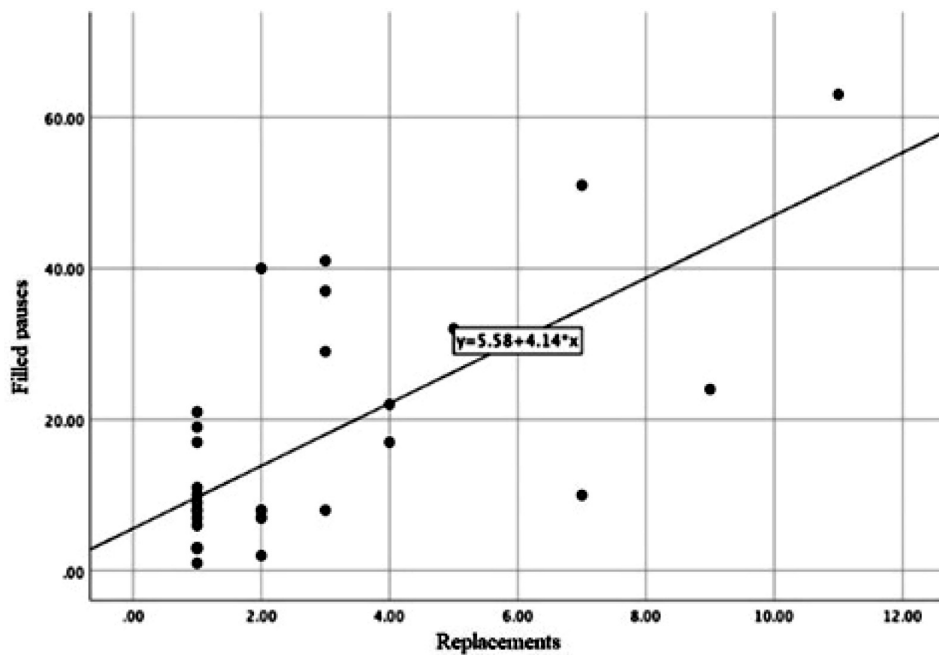


Figure 1. Scatter plot of overall corpora: correlation of filled pauses and replacement.

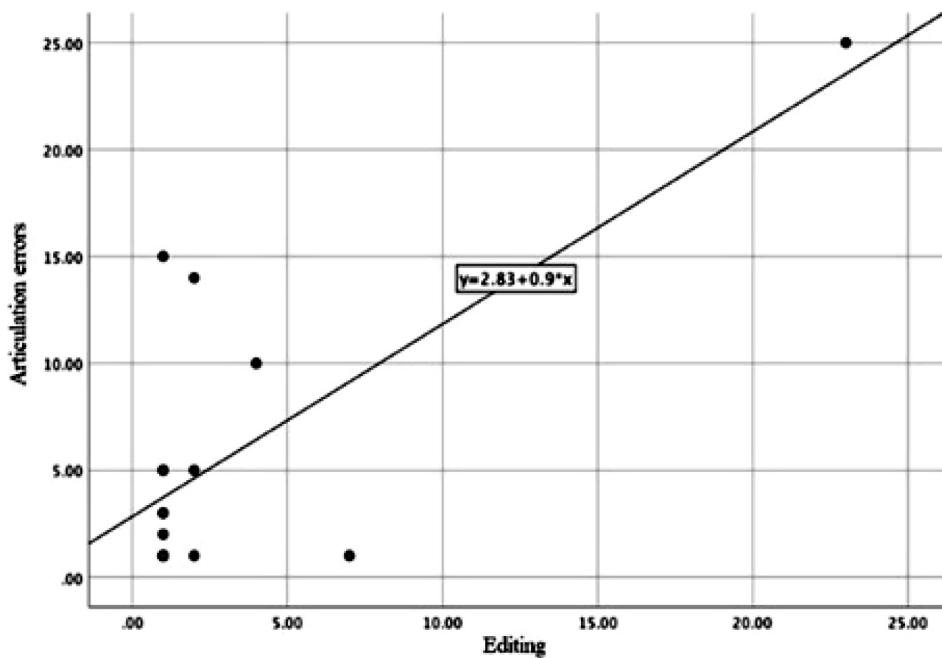


Figure 2. Scatter plot of overall corpora: correlation of articulation errors and editing.

Mean negative correlations ($p < 0.01$) were observed between languages and articulation errors ($r = -0.442$), between occupations and word substitutions (-0.435), between languages and overlaps ($r = -0.339$; $p < 0.05$), and less (< 0.05) between languages and interruptions ($r = -0.310$).

The correlation matrix of all sub-sample variables (Table 7) for Croatian speakers also shows the highest positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) between interruptions and overlaps ($r = 0.977$; Figure 3), then between word repetitions and word insertions ($r = 0.867$), between fillers and word substitutions ($r = 0.643$), fillers and repetitions ($r = 0.52$), between occupations and interruptions ($r = 0.442$) and overlaps ($r = 0.437$), with less positive correlations ($p < 0.05$) found between word substitution and word insertions ($r = 0.768$), insertions and articulation errors ($r = 0.698$), repetitions and omissions ($r = 0.527$), and equally between genders and interruptions, and genders and overlaps ($r = 0.338$). A negative correlation was revealed between genders and word omissions ($r = -0.699$, $p < 0.01$), and occupations and word substitutions ($r = -0.0485$, $p < 0.05$). When the aforementioned results are compared with the results of the t-test, it is clear that word omission was significant only for female speakers, and word substitutions were more common among male politicians (e.g.: *Free... The right of choice / (Velibor Sinčić), / in front – between us /, / there should be – where I should be / (Miroslav Škoro), / with someone – with something / (Andrej Plenković) etc. (/slo...pravo izbora/ (Velibor Sinčić), /ispred – između nas/, /treba biti – gdje trebam biti/ (Miroslav Škoro), /s nekim – s nečim/ (Andrej Plenković) itd.).*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Occupation	1	-0.218	0.442	0.437	-0.126	-0.002	-0.047	-0.485	-0.098	-0.285
Gender	2	1	0.338	0.338	0.114	0.191	-0.699	-0.412	0.240	0.131
Interrupting	3		1	0.977	0.095	0.158	0.101	-0.363	0.153	0.129
Overlapping	4			1	0.057	0.125	0.117	-0.382	0.076	0.131
Filled pauses	5				1	0.502	0.205	0.643	0.079	0.041
Repetitions	6					1	0.527	0.321	0.867	0.177
Omissions	7						1	0.282	-0.240	0.488
Replacements	8							1	0.768	0.450
Editing	9								1	0.698
Articulation errors	10									1

Table 7. Correlation matrix for Croatian sub-sample.

The correlation matrix of the English speaker sub-sample (Table 8) shows a positive correlation ($p < 0.01$) between repetitions and word substitutions ($r = 0.865$), occupations and interruptions ($r = 0.615$), and a negative correlation between occupations and repetitions ($r = -0.544$). There is a smaller positive correlation ($p < 0.05$) between word substitutions of articulation errors ($r = 0.806$), fillers and word substitutions ($r = 0.655$), as well as fillers and word repetitions ($r = 0.491$). In the English sub-sample, there was no statistically significant correlation between interruptions and overlaps ($r = 0.308$; Figure 4). Thus, the English sub-sample showed that, statistically, there were less significant differences in total between the examined variables, and that some speech fluency parameters, such as word omission, were irrelevant. It all goes to show that in the genre of political interview, English speakers were more fluent overall, and that British journalists interrupted politicians less than their Croatian peers using the so-called negative interruption, although, statistically, they interrupted them significantly more than politicians interrupted hosts.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Occupation	1	0.000	0.435	0.615	-0.293	-0.544	.c	-0.492	-0.250	0.021
Gender	2	1	0.515	0.113	0.224	0.203	.c	0.123	-0.395	0.170
Interrupting	3		1	0.308	-0.475	0.090	.c	-0.575	.c	0.378
Overlapping	4			1	-0.058	-0.204	.c	-0.240	-0.252	0.198
Filled pauses	5				1	0.491	.c	0.655	-0.261	0.186
Repetitions	6					1	.c	0.865	0.008	0.488
Omissions	7						.c	.c	.c	.c
Replacements	8							1	.c	0.806
Editing	9								1	.c
Articulation errors	10									1

Table 8. Correlation matrix for the English sub-sample.

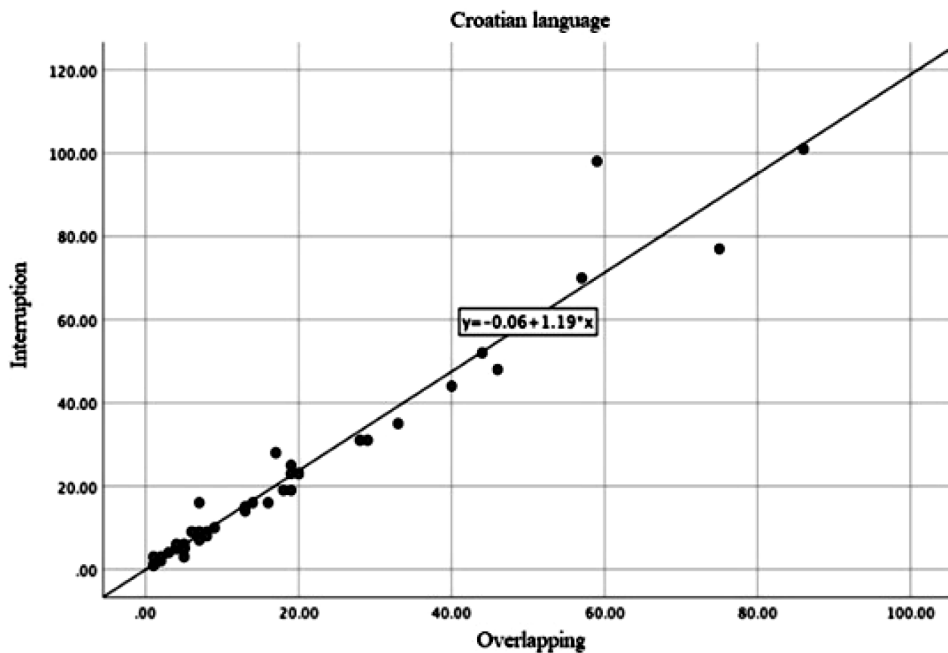


Figure 3. Scatter plot for the Croatian corpus: correlation of interruption and overlapping.

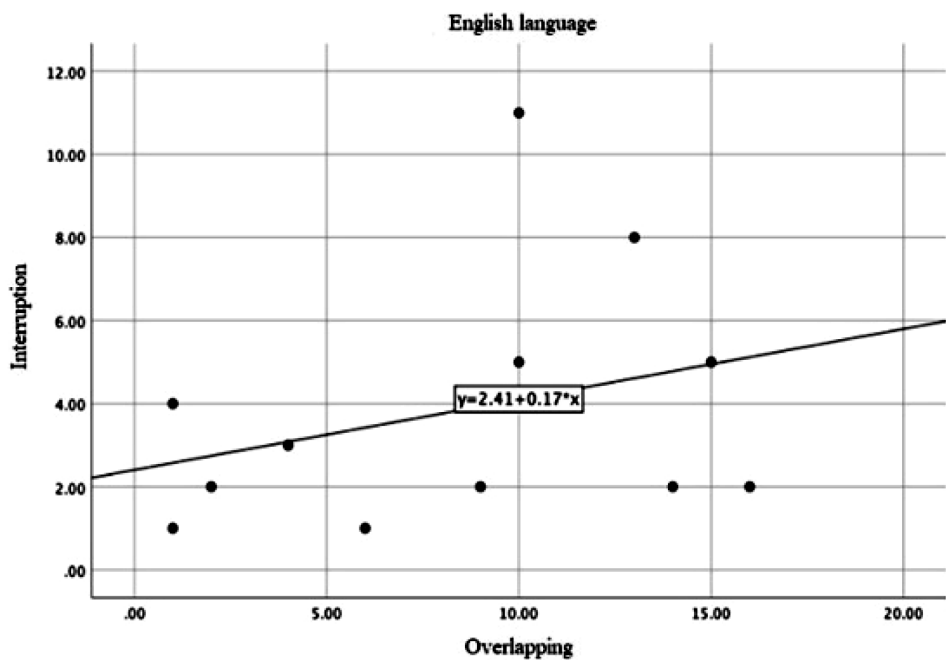


Figure 4. Scatter plot for the English corpus: correlation of interruption and overlapping.

Conclusion

Discourse dominance, interlocutory power and control are interesting characteristics of a language activity in which speakers of different language competencies try to successfully establish (superior) power in relation to their interlocutors. Conversational asymmetry is more or less pronounced, depending on contextual and social factors. This study focused on discourse dominance with respect to the gender, language, and occupation of speakers. Besides the strategies of interruption and overlap, interdependent parameters of speech fluency were also examined.

The results of descriptive and inferential statistics revealed that in the total sample, men interrupted their interlocutors insignificantly more frequently than women. The Croatian and English sub-samples showed a tendency for men to interrupt more often than women. However, in Croatian, both men and women interrupted their female interlocutors more often, while in English there were no differences in interruptions connected to the interlocutor's gender. Men's speech in the overall corpora and at the level of sub-samples for Croatian and English was statistically insignificantly determined as less fluent compared to women's speech, which is reflected in more frequent fillers, repetitions, insertions, and articulation errors. Women, on the other hand, omit words more often, i.e., they leave more syntactic-logical units unfinished. Both male and female journalists showed the same tendencies in interrupting and overlapping their interlocutors, i.e., statistically, they interrupted politicians significantly more often than politicians interrupted them ($p < 0.05$), which is expected considering their (moderating) role in the show. When comparing speakers with regard to the occupation factor, it turned out that the speech of politicians is insignificantly less fluent, which was already assumed given the communicative roles of speakers and previous preparation, i.e., spontaneity of speech-language production. When comparing speakers with regard to the language factor, it was found that, statistically, Croatian speakers are significantly more likely to interrupt their interlocutors ($p < 0.05$) and that their speech is more disfluent, compared to English speakers. As expected, fillers, repetitions, and articulation errors proved to be the most frequent among the analysed speech fluency parameters (except in the English sub-sample, in which speakers replaced words more often than they made articulation errors).

Given that both the professions of journalists and politicians are of extroverted and public nature, a possible reason for more frequent journalistic interruptions and overlaps is the time constraint posed by the television interview formats, i.e., the effort to strategically use time. However, the negative interruptions of Croatian politicians are more aggressive. Politicians, on the other hand, thanks to their persuasive strategy, try to explain as lengthy as possible, so frequent interruptions and overlaps cause them greater disfluency. Reflecting on the data regarding the frequency of interruptions and overlaps, it can be concluded that women got rather close to men through a conversational strategy, resulting from the equal status of public occupations.

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Komparativna analiza diskursnih strategija prekidanja i preklapanja u političkim intervjuima na hrvatskom i engleskom

Komparativnom analizom ispitana je diskursna strategija negativnih prekidanja i preklapanja u odnosu prema ostalim parametrima fluentnosti u televizijskom žanru političkoga intervjua u predizborno vrijeme između hrvatskih i engleskih novinara i političara. Analizirana su 24 govornika, ravnomjerno zastupljena prema jeziku, zanimanju i spolu na temelju po 12 emisija informativnoga programa za svaki jezik imitiranih u razdoblju od 13. svibnja 2019. do 19. rujna 2020. Ukupno trajanje snimki za hrvatski jezik iznosilo je 179 minuta, a za engleski jezik 121 minuta. Kvantificirana je čestotnost prekidanja, preklapanja, punjača, ponavljanja, izostavljanja, zamjena riječi, umetanja, i artikulacijskih pogriješki. Vrijednosti svih parametara uprosječene su po minuti da bi se neutralizirala vremenska razlika između analiziranih korpusa. Razlike su statistički ispitane primjenom deskriptivne i inferencijalne analize. Ukupno, hrvatski govornici značajno više prekidaju i preklapaju sugovornike nego engleski govornici ($p < 0,05$) pa sljedno hrvatski govornici imaju i više artikulacijskih pogriješki. Pokazalo se da novinari ukupno više konfliktno prekidaju i preklapaju političare ($p < 0,05$), pa je očekivano da su političari disfluentniji, tj. da proizvode više zamjena riječi, punjača (filled pauses), ponavljanja. Muškarci češće prekidaju i preklapaju sugovornike nego žene ($p < 0,05$), a hrvatski govornici statistički značajno više prekidaju i preklapaju. Također, hrvatski novinari više prekidaju političare nego engleski, što se može interpretirati kulturološkom razlikom, jer hrvatski novinari persuazivnu asertivnost često zamjenjuju s erističkim dijalogom. Zanimljiv je podatak da žene podjednako prekidaju žene i muškarce. Na temelju ukupnih podataka može se zaključiti da su engleski govornici u političkom intervjuu bili ukupno fluentniji te da engleski novinari manje prekidaju političare negativnim prekidanjem nego hrvatski.

Keywords: interruption, overlapping, disfluency, political interview, comparative analysis, Croatian, English

Ključne riječi: prekidanja, preklapanja, disfluentnost, politički intervjui, komparativna analiza diskursa, hrvatski jezik, engleski jezik