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# Analyzing the Linguistic Dimension of Globalization in the Media: the Case of Insults and Violence in Talk Shows and Debates

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Cet article porte sur quelques aspects du phénomène de globalisation qui affecte les médias contemporains, plus précisément les pratiques du débat et des talk shows télévisés. Situé dans une perspective interactionniste de l'analyse des discours et de la communication (§1), le propos porte sur le rôle des unités langagières dans la construction des cultures médiatiques états-unienne et européennes (§2). Après avoir défini les propriétés discursives de trois genres de débats et talk shows (§3), je propose une analyse qualitative et comparative détaillée de deux émissions à succès relevant de l'un de ces genres: "The Jerry Springer Show" états-unien, et l'un de ses pendants européens: "ça va se savoir", diffusé en langue française (§4). En conclusion, je reviens sur les enjeux des performances langagières des animateurs de ces émissions (§5).

**Mots-clé:**

Culture médiatique, talk show télévisé, globalisation, performance langagière

## 1. Introduction: issue, data and theoretical perspective

This article is part of a broader research program on the issue of debates in the media, especially the French-speaking media (Burger, 2008a,b; 2006; 2005; 2004)<sup>1</sup>. In the field of discourse analysis (see Burger, 2008b; Perrin, 2006; Charaudeau, 2005) as well as in the field of communication and media studies (see Tolson, 2006; Maigret & Macé, 2005; Neveu, 2001) a trend can be observed of the media mixing up the construction of the public and the private spheres in the practice of media information. More generally, this state of affairs – especially manifest in media debates and talk shows – seems to be a typical property of globalization affecting the media. In this paper, I will deal with this issue and concentrate on the linguistic dimension of the discourse of globalization in debates and talk shows. More precisely, I will analyze what is culturally at stake with two very similar broadcasts that constitute my data: the famous American "Jerry Springer Show" and one of it'-s European copies, "Ça

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<sup>1</sup> I use the general term "media debates" to refer to a broadcast media event dominated by verbal confrontation, including the "confrontainment" dimension (i.e. a mix between "argumentative" confrontation aimed at convincing and confrontation as pure entertainment aimed at contributing to a show) manifested by talk shows. The general category of "media debates" will be detailed in section 3.3.

va se savoir", broadcast by the French private channel RTL9 for the past couple of years.

First, after discussing the current American and European media culture as a result of globalization (section 2), I propose defining the communicative and discursive properties of three major genres of debates and talk shows (section 3). The data under analysis is taken from one of these: the statement talk-show debate that best manifests a major effect of globalization, that is, the shift from public information to pure spectacle leading to the prominence of verbal and physical violence to the detriment of argumentation and opinion (see section 3.2). Last, I compare four excerpts taken from each broadcast and discuss the role of the linguistic dimension of discourse in the framing of globalization in media communication.

I adopt the theoretical framework of social interactionism in the field of discourse analysis (see Perrin, 2006; Burger, 2005; Filliettaz, 2002, for a global presentation). In a very broad sense, a social interactionist perspective assumes the dialogical nature of human practices as introduced by Bakhtin and Foucault and concentrates on the link between texts and discourse and particular social practices, in this case the practice of the media. Therefore, a social interactionist perspective focuses on the role of discourse as a leading resource in the negotiation of meaning and the construction of social realities. One can briefly characterize such a perspective by taking into account three important dimensions.

a) *The cognitive dimension of discourse and communication*

The historical background of social practices constitutes the first important dimension of communication and discourse. More precisely, social practices, being constantly repeated by the participants, can be assumed to manifest typical properties that lead to social expectations located in the mind of social actors (see for example Harre & Gillett, 1994; Charaudeau, 2005). These social expectations at the same time frame social realities and are constantly revised and updated due to the particular course of activities performed in day-to-day practices. In other words, "expectations" represent a kind of social and ideal "guide" for the interpretation of the activity in which participants engage: they explain part of the performance, including the discourse (see in particular Levinson, 1992; Filliettaz, 2002; Clayman, 2008).

On the basis of their exposure to a particular event or activity type, it can be hypothesized that the participants have access to their "expertise", that is, an organized net of mental representations of the key features of the activity types in which they engage. Thus, the participants construct and exploit inferential schemata and context models while communicating, that include relevant information about, notably, the aim of the activity, the identities of legitimate participants and the expected communicative resources that are

used, including language and discourse. On such an "ideal" basis, communicators then inter-act to achieve particular goals by means of particular strategies.

*b) The interactional dimension of communication and discourse*

In addition to the cognitive dimension, communication and discourse also have an interactional dimension. Following Goffman (1981) and more recently Scollon (1998) and Burger (2006), it is assumed that activities are joint constructions. In other words, they are collectively managed, negotiated, and even performed. In this view, communication and discourse are not simply semantically constrained, but also pragmatically negotiated by the participants. Any kind of social practice manifests traces of communicative strategies and the confrontation of opinions and points of view. As a matter of fact, in the framework of an interactionist approach to communication and discourse, social realities do not exist objectively independently from the way they are thought and individually experienced and performed in particular activities. More precisely, the interactive "struggle" and negotiation by the communicators play a key role in the construction of social reality, as we will see in section 4. From this standpoint, social realities emerge from communication and discourse.

*c) Discourse as a resource for communication*

This leads to the third important dimension of communication and discourse. Language and discourse represent decisive resources of negotiation used by the participants engaged in an activity. For instance, as pointed out by Filliettaz (2002), meta-communication is only possible through language and discourse. From a social interactionist perspective, discourse contributes decisively to the construction of shared social knowledge. For example, intentions and strategies can be discussed any time during an activity, which represent the one and only way to make agency explicit, as well as to organize and resolve co-operation (Perrin, 2006; Burger, 2005). Identities are not only introduced into communication and activity, but are constantly (re)defined discursively during the communicative event (see Burger, 2002, for a discussion). In this sense, the linguistic expression and discursive choices are an essential dimension of the framing of an activity and/or communication. In the case I am concerned with, the discursive dimension of debates and talk shows is quite fundamental as the expression of opinions that characterize the genre would not otherwise be possible. More generally, media practices of the media are widely constituted by and through discourse.

## 2. Media Culture

Following Maigret and Macé (2005), as well as the claims of Carey (1989), culture can be considered a symbolic reality performed daily by social actors<sup>2</sup>. The role of the media in this process is complex. Indeed, the media report the cultural complexity of a society but at the same time they are involved in the construction of it. Thus, media are part of a culture, and at the same time they exhibit a "media culture" of their own, which they perform. In broad outline, a particular media culture is the result of what has been imagined as a temporary conformity of the moment. In other words a media culture manifests the kind of media events that seem to be appreciated by various audiences. One can argue that dominant media cultures at present (at least in western societies) favor four dimensions, detailed briefly below.

### 2.1 *Public discussion*

First, the current media cultures seem to manifest a redefining of public discussion, in the sense of Livingstone and Lunt (1994) that is a reflection of the ongoing of events happening in the public sphere and what is at stake with it. Media establish the crucial importance of popular-hosts as managers of public discussion instead of legitimate experts in a certain social domain. With respect to the genres of debate and talk show, the focus is then on the media itself rather than on external participants, politicians or experts, professionals themselves, in the public affairs. The opinions and arguments of these external participants are less worthy than the playful event of the debate or talk show orchestrated by the media hosts.

### 2.2 *Problem-solution*

According to Nel (1991), Livingstone and Lunt (1994) and Charaudeau (2005), the function of the media has shifted from reporting to possibly solving social problems. In the current western media cultures, the media tend to propose a pure "media" entertainment to their audience rather than a pedagogical point of reference for reflection. In the genre of debates and talk shows, the hosts minimize or even systematically avoid the "moments" (or "phases" as termed by Hutchy, 1999, 2001) where the expression of rational opinions is expected. On the contrary, the "moments" where polemic is expected and naturally develops are emphasized and maximized. Logically, polemicizing constitutes a potentially entertaining activity that promotes increases in audience share.

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<sup>2</sup> See the interesting hypothesis of Pasquier (2005).

### 2.3 *Self-exhibition*

Self-exhibition constitutes a third major property of current western media cultures. As a matter of fact, the participants of any kind of media event seem to be less and less spokespersons for a community and increasingly often individuals performing self-exhibition. Every broadcast then not only has the pretext of entertainment, but also the means for single individuals to "appear" in the media. The media thus manifest a shift from the importance of collective, social and publicly relevant identities to that of single and intimate identities a priori relevant only in the private sphere. Thus, the current media cultures globally favor "intimacy" as an element of the public sphere.

### 2.4 *Globalization*

Eventually, the media are "symbolic creators" considering the complexity and diversity of their audiences. Aim at gaining audiences here; the media ideally do business on transgeographical and transcultural markets, that is, possibly unlimited markets. Bourdieu (1996) shows how a medium (a particular TV or radio channel or press) tends to copy other media (e.g. another TV or radio channel or press) in order to do business. The media themselves therefore constitute their most effective competitors<sup>3</sup>. As an example, in the genre of debates and talk shows, the "success" of a broadcast becomes a means to inspire and more generally to sell the concept to other media: this can be considered the globalization of a media culture.

## 3. **Debate and talk show as media genres**

As they naturally involve an entertaining dimension, debates and talk shows as a media arguably best represent contemporary western media culture. A better understanding of debates and talk shows requires a definition as a particular communication event realized by three major genres. I propose to consider these two aspects in turn.

### 3.1 *Debates and talk shows as communication*

According to Burger (2006), Tolson (2001), Hutchby (1999), Charaudeau & Ghiglione (1997) as well as Livingstone & Lunt (1994), debates and talk shows can be schematically represented as communication events by considering the participants, their expected actions and goals, and the discursive genres that they use.

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<sup>3</sup> Bourdieu (1996) terms this particular state of affairs: "la circularité circulaire des médias".

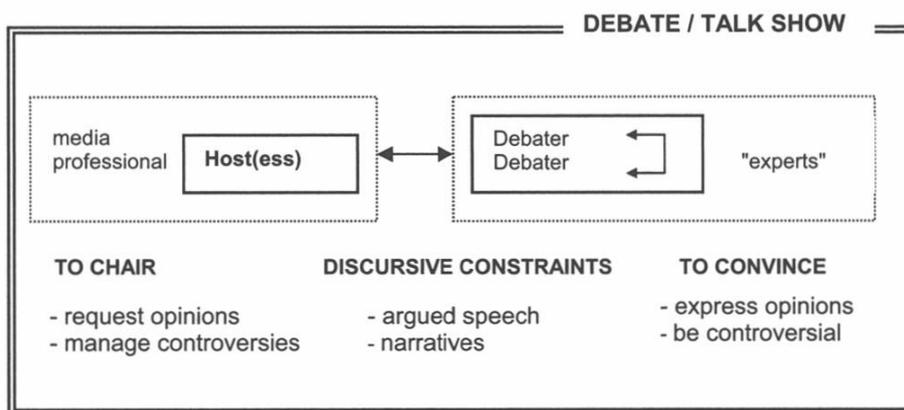


Fig. 1: Debates and talk shows as communication

A debate or a talk show consists fundamentally of the juxtaposition and confrontation confronting of opinions provided by at least debaters to convince an audience. Therefore, the communication implies a multiplicity of voices arguing against each other, which is why a debate or a talk show requires a host(ess) (or a chairperson). The host plays a key role in framing the event. He or she allocates turns and manages time, re-orientates talk, changes topics and even forces speaker shift. Therefore, host(ess) has power to act in order to manage any controversies, stop them to favor the expression of opinions, or, on the contrary, exploit the polemic to benefit the show. The debaters, who are "experts" in a social domain (for example, politics), are in a position where confrontation is the expected performance. This state of affairs includes typical discursive resources such as argumentation and narration. The communicative strategies are aimed at displaying heterogeneous discursive identities: negative other- and positive self-images in order to make the audience react.

In this view, debating symbolizes the negotiation of opinions that constitutes the very core of citizenship (see Nel, 1991; Trognon & Larrue, 1994; Livingstone & Lunt, 1994). Therefore, a debate or a talk show achieves a civic function of the media. It consists of leading a public discussion with the help of the medium as a simple mediator reporting opinions to the audience with little interference. But at the same time, the properties of debating also serve a commercial function of the media. Indeed, as a debate or a talk show necessarily represents a verbal confrontation, it often leads to entertaining polemic that constitutes a good means to attract audience.

Thus the media responds to an economic concern and takes an active role: that of being the creator of an entertaining show aimed at gaining customers loyalty (see Burger, 2006; Allard, 2005; Haarman, 2001; Charaudeau & Ghiglione, 1997).

### 3.2 The categories of debates and talk shows in the media

Media debates and talk shows can be considered in terms of whether they reveal a rather serious and pedagogical concern linked with a civic function, or manifest an aspect of entertainment linked with a commercial function. Three different categories of debates and talk shows can be described<sup>4</sup>:

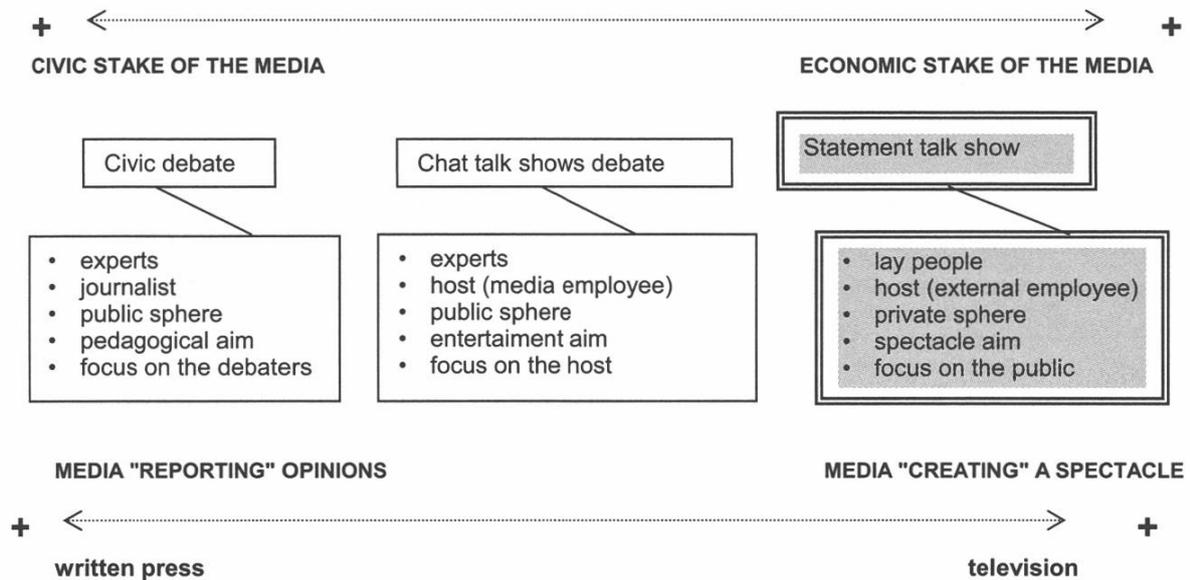


Fig. 2: Categories of debates and talk shows

#### a) The civic debate

Following Nel (1991), Livingstone & Lunt (1994), Bourdieu (1996), Tolson (2001), I propose to refer to "civic-debate" as a process of a host – who is also a journalist – moving aside from the communicative scene to leave space to the debaters who are experts in a specific social domain. In this sense, the debate is focused on the debaters. These participants do not primarily act as individuals but as representatives of a group (for example a political party). Therefore, the debaters are confronting opinions that are supposed to be shared and relevant for an audience addressed as citizens who have some interest in events in the public sphere. Thus, the debaters try to provide persuasive arguments in order to convince the audience. In turn, the audience should compare and then validate one of the expressed opinions to form their own. Considering the foregoing, a "civic-debate" is explicitly anchored in the public sphere and fundamentally resorts to discourse and argumentation. As a matter of fact, "rational" discourse anchored in the public sphere of citizenship is dominant, even if there are also some moments of pure emotional polemic and "ad personam" confrontation.

<sup>4</sup> See Burger (2008b, 2006) for more details.

b) *The chat talk-show debate*

I term "chat talk-show debate" the second type of media debate (see Hutchby, 1999; Haarman, 2001; Burger, 2004, 2006). A chat talk show is a process of a host – who is usually a popular media professional (and therefore not necessarily a journalist) – interfering systematically with the debaters who are experts in a social domain: politics, education, science etc. The popularity of the host overshadows the debaters. More precisely, the debaters are at the disposal of the host(ess) who acts as a the leader. In this sense, the debate is clearly focused on the host. The issue of the debate is explicitly anchored in the public sphere and therefore presented as relevant for an audience addressed as citizens and not as "private" individuals (exactly like the civic debate). Nevertheless, the aim of the "chat talk-show debate" genre is obviously to gain customers, loyalty by means of entertainment. In this view, the host allows or even systematically provokes the expression of personal opinions, especially from the audience. That is, lay people intervene on the basis of their own opinions, discursively constructed as individuals' opinions, yet representative of a group. Their talk is dominated by argumentation, and they struggle to impose their opinion on a topic that is clearly presented as a public issue (and not a private affair).

c) *The statement talk-show debate*

Last, I use the term "statement talk-show debate" the process of a host letting the audience participate in large numbers and provoke the debaters systematically (see Shattuc, 1997; Hutchby, 2001; Allard, 2005; Flichy, 2005; Vincent & Turbide, 2004; Vincent, Turbide & Laforest, 2008). These are not experts, but lay people telling their life's experience on a media stage. In this case, the real actor in the debate is the audience. In fact, people from the audience systematically go on stage, become then legitimate "debaters" (although the media staff is triggers and controls their performance). As for the host or hostess, he or she is often located in the audience, apparently delegating the floor to the non-expert debaters (of course, the host(ess) and the media staff remain the legitimate agents who orchestrate the event). As a matter of fact, this genre of media debate systematically offers very general and "catchy" issues to discuss. The focus is usually on individual opinions and no particular expertise is required to get into the debate. Proposed (or imposed) issues are for example: "I am 30 years old and I have never made love. But I am happy", "I am a fat woman/man... so what!", or "I do not allow my daughter/son to bring her/his boyfriend/girlfriend at home for the night".

As for the discursive construction of identities, one observes that linguistic markers of the individual (i.e. "I", "me" etc.) are clearly dominant. They are systematically used to represent 'private' agents to the detriment of group members or social actors considered as citizens. More globally, the requested discourse (as well as the provided discourse) is anchored in the private

sphere. Indeed, the debaters express the singularities of individuals' life experiences, most of the time through narratives.

Considering the foregoing, a "statement talk-show debate" is also expected to be focused on emotions and inter-individual polemic to the detriment of rational argumentation, which constitutes the dominant discursive anchorage of the "civic debate" and the "chat talk-show" genres. This state of affairs implies that no reasoning is provided or requested. The possibility for an individual to act on stage seems to represent the one and only condition to become a debater shown on television. Then, appearing and performing in the media is the end, and no longer the means, to put forward a case clearly and ultimately resolve a problematic public state of affairs.

In addition the audience itself systematically participates in endorsing the identity of a legitimate debater. Thus, it can be concluded that there is finally no need (or not even a possibility) to convince the whole audience even if the participants struggle to defend and justify their own views. As for the host(ess), he or she is normally an external professional whose skills in leading debates have been established. That is, the "statement talk-show debates" are often produced by non-media enterprises and sold to particular media.

As a somewhat strange result of "statement talk-show debates", the lack of synthesis and more globally the apparently passive role of the host(ess) increase the importance of audience participation in the construction of public opinion. As it is focused on non-expert opinions, the "statement talk-show debate" seems to some people to offer a way to regenerate the public sphere (see Livingstone & Lunt, 1994; Bourdieu, 1996, for a discussion).

More precisely, according to Louann (Trudy) Haarman this kind of media debate supports a particular emergent media culture as the participants "are often rather crudely displayed as emblematic of deviant classes or categories of society". They "belong in large part to the culturally underprivileged" (Haarman, 2001: 54). Thus, the "statement talk-show debate" becomes the means to teach the audience and lay participants "how to monitor their behavior within (...) prescribed (cultural) norms" (Shattuc, 1997: 10). In this sense, "private" agents, in telling their particular life experiences, provide "public" information. Thus, "private" (i.e. self-centered) discourse is relevant in the public sphere though it is not relevant for understanding public affairs. In other words, ordinary emotional talks (and not only rational and argumentative discourses) therefore contribute to achieving the pedagogical aim of a media debate.

Concurrently, the "statement talk-show debate" as a genre leads to a redefinition of the role of the media themselves (and not only of the audience). Thus, the written press, which cannot exploit the spectacle dimension of

debates, prefers a "civic debate" (see the left side of fig. 2). The written press needs therefore to emphasize the pedagogical dimension of argumentation and functions traditionally, that is, in "reporting" opinions through debates.

Located in the middle of the global opposition of "rational argumentation" versus "emotion and narrative", the "chat talk-show debate" is dominant on radio and television. As a matter of fact, these media can offer two fundamental dimensions of a debate: the phenomenon of a living text (radio) and that of visual emotions (television). One can claim that "chat talk-show debates" hesitate to engage in serious argumentation (which is the main property of a "civic debate"), or to exploit the entertainment dimension of a show (which is the main property of a "statement talk-show debate").

As for the "statement talk-show debates", they are located on the right of the vector in fig. 2. They support a medium that is explicitly "creating" a spectacle, through debates, to the detriment of the expression and reporting of opinions. Ultimately, there are no experts on stage, and there is no audience to convince as everyone virtually represents a potential legitimate debater (i.e. an agent expressing his life's experience). The host of a "statement talk-show" stands aside and acts more as an "exciter" provoking polemic than as a mediator chairing the debate.

It must be borne in mind that every media debate (i.e. the three categories of "civic debate", "chat talk-show debate" and "statement talk-show debate") necessarily manifests both the spectacle and emotional dimension and the rational and argumentative dimension. Depending on the role identities endorsed by the participants, the debate can then be identified as dominated by argumentation or by emotion and located in one of the three categories of fig. 2 (considering the two arrowed lines as continua, that is, indicating uncertain contours of each category). In this sense, we hold a view of media debate genres that is not rigid. Indeed, a media debate (whether anchored in the category of "civic", "chat talk-show" or "statement talk-show" debate) is always a permeable, flexible, dynamic and emergent event.

#### **4. The data under analysis**

I concentrate on the "statement talk-show" category as the two broadcasts I am concerned with clearly manifest such typical properties. I have analyzed in detail 30 programs of "Jerry Springer Show" (broadcast in Europe by the private channel AB1, France), from 03.2002 to 03.2006 and I have compared the results with the analysis of 30 programs of "Ça va se savoir" (broadcast in Europe by the private channel RTL9, France) broadcast during the same period of time.

### 4.1 Position of the programs in the AB Groupe

Both programs are at present broadcast by the French "AB Groupe", which offers six different broadcast categories to more than 24 million subscribers: sport, music, movies, adult, entertainment and general programs<sup>5</sup>. It is interesting that the "Jerry Springer Show" is available on a thematic channel and "Ça va se savoir" on a general channel. Despite this difference, their inclusion in the global structure of the media is similar, as shown by fig. 3:

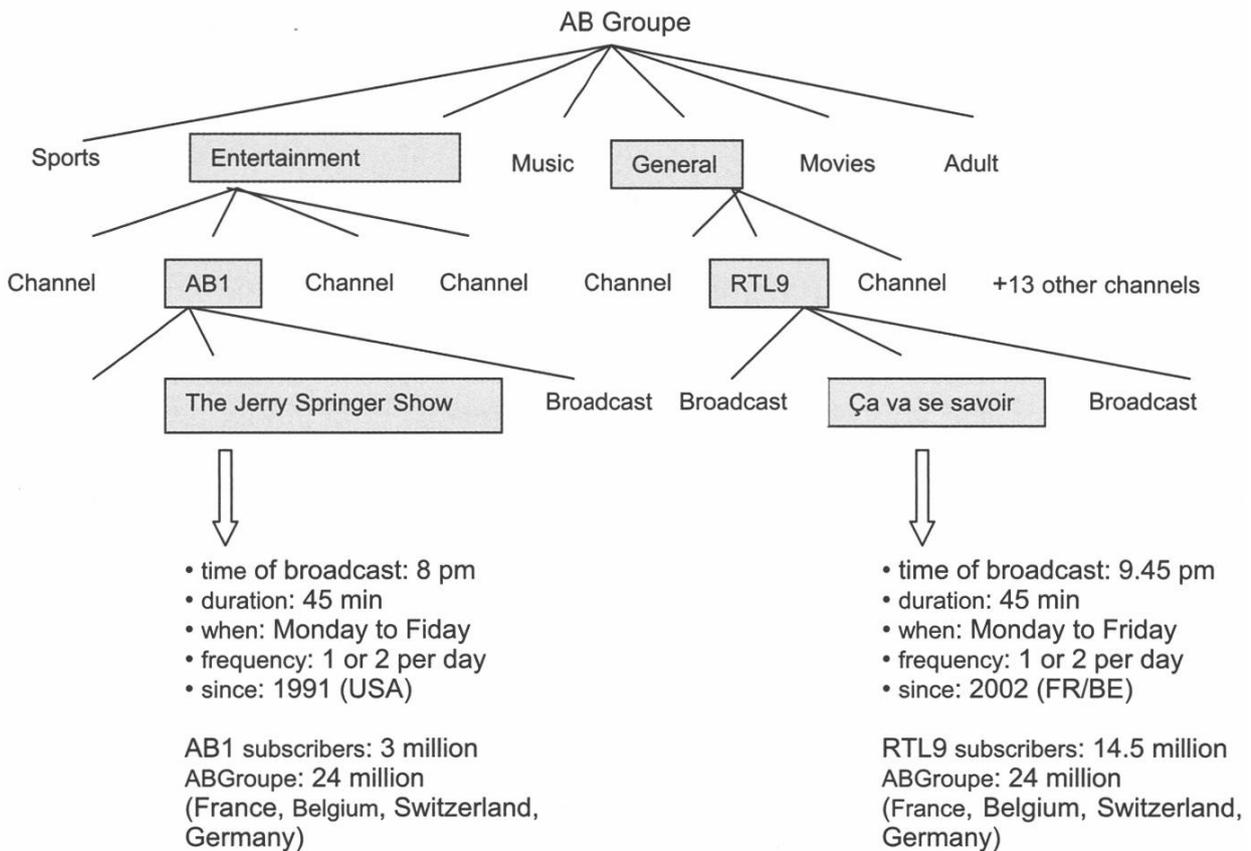


Fig. 3: The structure and organization of the AB Groupe

Both "Jerry Springer Show" and "Ça va se savoir" are broadcast five times a week, once or twice a day. Each program lasts 45 minutes, and the main episode is available to a maximum audience (8 pm and 9.45 pm). Broadcast since 1991, the successful American show offers an original American English program with French subtitles and addresses at least 3 million subscribers. "Ça va se savoir" is the exact copy of the US show but plays typical French (or at least European) "characters". It has been broadcast since 2002 to more than 14.5 million subscribers.

<sup>5</sup> See [www.abgroupe.fr](http://www.abgroupe.fr) for details.

#### 4.2 *Global and local structures of the broadcasts*

As for their "internal" properties, both broadcasts exhibit the same global as well as local structures. Indeed, they both have a similar opening and closing jingle and titles for credits. They both have an identical core organization comprising two (or three) sequences of direct confrontation of the participants followed by an end sequence managed by the host(ess). More precisely, in the local structure of both the programs a participant is requested to come on stage and to talk about himself; then the polemic increases immediately while the host(ess) progressively steps aside; and eventually the host closes the sequence and initiates a new one.

#### 4.3 *Genre properties of the broadcasts*

The broadcasts are aimed at an identical global performance. Indeed, the participants onstage have to make an important revelation related to their private life, especially the highs and lows of married or loving couples, and more precisely their sex lives. Both broadcasts have very similar provocative topics like: "I have sex with your sister, mother, father, brother etc.", "I am gay", "I'm leaving you". In addition, both broadcasts have the same setting: on stage, the debaters (two or three) face a large audience, which is grouped in tiered seats with the host(ess). In both broadcasts the participants are lay people (and not socially legitimated experts) who talk about their life experiences<sup>6</sup>.

#### 4.4 *Analyzing the linguistic dimension of globalization in the "statement talk-show" debate*

Considering the foregoing, I propose analyzing the linguistic dimension of the discourse of globalization in four excerpts taken from "Jerry Springer show" and "Ça va se savoir". In each case, I concentrate on two essential dimensions and compare the way they are realized in the American, respectively: first the arrival on stage of a male debater; and then the initial polemic phase engaging two debaters.

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<sup>6</sup> In this sense, the lay people are "experts": they know best about themselves, but are not socially legitimated experts such as politicians, professors, doctors etc.

a) *Case study 1: Michael onstage (The Jerry Springer Show, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2006)*<sup>7</sup>

In the first excerpt taken from "Jerry Springer Show", a typical low-middle-class American woman, Gale, reveals that her husband Michael is gay. Michael is in love with Mike and Gale, staying at home with two children, is desperate. Then the host requests Michael to come up on stage:

|    |             |                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | host        | ok here's your husband Michael                                                                                                                                                               |
|    | audience    | LOSER LOSER BOO BOO                                                                                                                                                                          |
|    |             | [Michael walks in, with one arm raised, and shouts abuse at the audience, who shout back. The crowd's jeers are impossible to make                                                           |
| 5  |             | out because of the cuts: close shot on the audience, on their feet; with arms raised: Michael stares defiantly at them.]                                                                     |
|    | Michael     | SHUT UP SHUT UP                                                                                                                                                                              |
|    | audience    | BOO BOO BOO (23 sec.)                                                                                                                                                                        |
|    |             | [Michael shakes his head to show that he disagrees]                                                                                                                                          |
| 10 | host        | <u>ok shtttt hoho Michael Michael welcome to the show why</u> why did you do this to your wife                                                                                               |
|    | Michael     | Jerry I'm just tired of it I just wanna her to leave me alone you know I'm just fed up                                                                                                       |
|    | host        | oaw (..) is this the first guy you've ever been with                                                                                                                                         |
| 15 | Michael     | no                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|    | host        | so you married her knowing you were gay                                                                                                                                                      |
|    | Michael     | yes                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|    | host        | and you had a child with her (Michael : yes)                                                                                                                                                 |
|    |             | and you never thought it was important to tell her you by the way                                                                                                                            |
| 20 |             | there is something you should know about me I also like gays because may be she wouldn't want to get married to a guy who was gay                                                            |
|    | deb Michael | Jerry (..) I (.) just was (..) hiding you know (..) I just did not know what the hell to say you know how to tell her (.) and finally it just came down to where I could not take it no more |

Through discourse the host constructs a typical statement's talk-show frame. Indeed, three expected role identities of the host are dominant in the excerpt. First, the host *lets the audience manifest without interfering*. As a matter of fact, the announcement of the coming on stage of the participant gives immediate rise to a direct confrontation engaging the audience and Michael. The former boos and the latter insults back. Secondly, *the host clearly steps aside, letting the debaters make the show*. Indeed, the shooting focuses on the audience and the participants on stage, but the host is no longer visible. This phase of confrontation and booing without the host lasts 23 seconds, which is quite long. Thirdly, the host does provide any media talk: in other words, the host does talk "FOR" the audience but talks from the beginning "WITH" the participants on stage<sup>8</sup>. In other words, *the host is not a interviewer*

<sup>7</sup> I use the following transcription notations: (.) (..) indicate appropriately timed pauses; underlining indicates overlapping talk; CAPS indicate that the current speaker talks loudly and even shouts; material in [square brackets] indicates the transcriber's commentary regarding non-verbal events. The numbers in the margin indicate each line of the transcribed text, and information like "host" or "Michael" refers to the current speaker's identity.

<sup>8</sup> See the definition and discussion about what "media talk" is in Jucker (1995) and Isotalus (1998).

*asking a neutral question*, but he becomes a kind of debater himself, more precisely a judge implicitly condemning Michael: "why why did you do this to your wife" (see l.10). Indeed, the lexical repetition and modulation of his voice that the host seems to characterize the actions of the participant as incomprehensible or acceptable (l.10-11).

As a matter of fact, the host(ess) provides a couple of implicit negative judgments: "so you married her knowing you were gay" (l.16) and "and you had a child with her" (l.18). Eventually, the minimal argumentation also has to be interpreted as an implicit judgment: "and you never thought it was important to tell her (...) because may be she wouldn't want to get married to a guy who was gay" (l.19-21).

In conclusion, it can be argued that the host is not a simple mediator of the show but a participant debating on stage against another debater. In other words, the linguistic features provide evidence that the host becomes a spokesperson of an ideal community. Indeed, he expresses a trivial opinion that could be that of anyone in the audience. Thus, one could argue that the host represents a majority of "watchers" (in the sense of Scollon, 1998) criticizing a single individual. Michael, on stage, is then obviously forsaken and condemnable. In this sense, Michael is put in a minority position not only by the audience, but also by the host himself.

*b) Case study 2: Etienne onstage (Ça va se savoir, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2006)*<sup>9</sup>

The following excerpt is taken from the French broadcast. It reveals a structure and function similar to the previous excerpt. Indeed, on stage, a middle-class French woman, Marie, explains that she is in love with Henri. They are both amateur actors in a play directed by Etienne, who is Marie's husband. Then the host requests Etienne to come on stage:

|    |          |                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
|----|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | host     | His name is Etienne (..) Etienne [the host gestures towards the stage and then steps aside]                                                                                                                                  |
|    | audience | Etienne Etienne Etienne [close shot on a man's face in the audience who is applauding and shouting the debater's name]                                                                                                       |
| 5  | Marie    | good <u>evening</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|    | Etienne  | <u>hello</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|    | host     | good evening Etienne [the host moves forward from the back of the set, then addresses the debater]                                                                                                                           |
|    | Etienne  | good evening                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| 10 | host     | Etienne you are forty five-years old <u>you are</u> (Etienne : <u>right</u> ) a tax inspector is <u>that right</u> (Etienne : <u>exactly</u> )                                                                               |
|    | audience | <u>booh ooh ooh ooh booh</u> (deb. Etienne : <u>exactly</u> ) [the audience is booing loudly] [face shot on a Indian woman in the audience] [the host leaves the floor again and addresses the audience] <u>ooh ooh booh</u> |

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<sup>9</sup> See Appendix for the original French transcript.

15 host                    eh (...) but (..) frankly (..) why (.) why this prejudice against bald people  
 [laughter in the audience ] (..) why (..) [face shot on the host looking at the  
 audience, from right to left-] why is it that (..) hum (.) because a man works in  
 the civil service (Etienne: exactly) one hears (.) hum rumors quite (.) quite  
 strange rumors and your passion  
 20                            (.) because you have a passion (.) it is theater  
 Etienne                    that's right

As in the Jerry Springer Show, the host initiates the sequence announcing the coming on stage of a participant (l.1). The name of the participant is repeated twice with the first syllable intensified and then a descending modulation of the voice. Therefore, the announcement constitutes an implicit encouragement for the audience to react (here the crowd is shouts the debater's name while the host steps aside). Thus, the host constructs the frame of a spectacle show rather than that of a serious public discussion.

In addition, the biographical information provided by the host and addressed to the audience (l.10-11) seems to be only a pretext for the audience to speak out against the debater, rejecting him because he is a tax inspector (l.12). Considering the immediate reaction of the audience, one can hypothesize that the host as well as the audience behave according to a well-known script of the program. As a matter of fact, the French host acts like Jerry Springer himself: he not manages linguistically to stop the boos (see the markers of opposition with "but" and "frankly", l.15), but he expresses a trivial critical opinion that could be expressed by anyone in the audience: "but why this prejudice against bald people (...) because a man works in the civil service" (l.15 to 18). The host seems to criticize stereotypes that lead to marginalizing people and put them in a minority position, at least here on stage.

When considering both sequences, we observe a similar functioning typical of the media culture of globalization realized through a "statement talk-show" debate. First, the host is on familiar terms with the participants on stage (indeed, all are addressed by their first name). Next conflict seems to be a key feature since it is provoked and exploited from the very beginning. Thirdly, the audience is a ratified participant of the talk show: it reacts according to some action of the host and constantly boos. Finally, the host is not a neutral mediator, but a participant systematically criticizing the debaters on stage as well as the audience.

c) *Case study 3: Polemic engaging Michael and Gale**(The Jerry Springer Show, March 1<sup>st</sup> 2006)*

The next two excerpts focus on the direct confrontation between the woman and the man on stage. Let us first consider the American broadcast and then the French one.

- 1 Gale Michael (..) I love you (...) I need you (..)(audience : aooohhh) your son needs you (.) and so does your daughter (..) we all love you we want you to come home
- Michael look you are the one who kicked me out (.) you are the one who told me
- 5 Gale I told you to leave and before you had even your stuff packed I begged you to stay
- Michael yeah but you kicked me out you said leave (..) you said God punished me for everything that has gone wrong
- 10 Gale no
- Michael yes
- Gale no he doesn't punish you for everything that has gone (Michael: yes) wrong he punishes for you for what you do wrong
- host do you have any feelings for her
- 15 Michael no
- host really no feelings
- Michael no
- Gale then why did you marry me
- Michael because
- 20 Gale to begin with why didn't you say I am I love you (...) and I've known this for a couple of months and I still love you (...) because we have a baby together
- Michael I married you to hide my gayness is that wrong yes it is wrong [Michael faces the audience] I am sorry that I'm gay (.) okay (..) ooo
- 25 audience oooo b ooo ooo ooo ooo [host makes big gestures to pacify the audience]
- Gale but you don't have to be this way (.) you can come home and be with me
- Michael I'm not
- host ok (..) no one is asking you to apologize for being gay what they are
- 30 saying (.) [a man in the audience is shouting] no one's angry at you for being gay they're angry because you deceived her (.) And you have a family you're deceiving the family
- Gale you're still not even there for your son
- Michael I'm not there because you're there [both quarrel again]
- 35 host let's meet his boyfriend (..) here is Mike

The polemic engaging Michael and Gale is clearly emphasized by discourse. As an example, consider the exchanges: "you are the one who told me to leave" as opposed to "I begged you to stay" (l.5 and 7); then: "yeah but" (l.8) as opposed to "no" (three times: l.10, 12, 15) and more globally the overlapping talk including the boos of the audience (l.19 and 20 and 25 to 29).

I will focus on just one speech event of conflict that seems particularly important, that is Michael's coming out. As a matter of fact, Michael's sentence: "I married you to hide my gayness" (l.23) is interpreted as an answer to Gale's question: "then why did you marry me" (l.18). But it seems evident that Michael is performing on stage a confession that confirms the implicit condemnation by the host at the very beginning of the sequence. Michael finds himself guilty as he admits: "is that wrong yes it is" (l.29).

Eventually, he apologizes: "I am sorry that I'm gay" (l.24). Thus, he addresses the audience as if he was in court.

The host's reaction is essential. It is notable that he interprets the booing of the audience in a specific way: "no one's angry at you for being gay" (l.29 to 31). And then he rewords the whole situation according to what he thinks about the situation himself: "they're angry because you deceived her and your family" (l.31 and 32). As a matter of fact, the concluding explanation of the host is a categorization that is typically found in the "statement talk-show" debate genre, especially in America. More precisely, according to Jane Shattuc, such talk shows systematically "construct a hierarchy of good behaviors for American culture" (Shattuc, 1997: 110). Thus, the politically correct attitude of the host is to put forward the topics "family" and "truth" instead of the topics "passion" and "cheating".

Generally, one observes in "statement talk-show" debates that problems introduced as personal problems (in this excerpt that of Gale and Michael) are soon generalized to a larger social issue. In this excerpt, the host seems aware of a possible distinction between "normal" people who are in the majority (i.e. straight, in this case) and "abnormal" people who are in the minority (i.e. gay)<sup>10</sup>. Such performance by the host leads clearly to what "statement's talk show" debates can be aimed at. According to Louann Haarman, talk shows guests "are often rather crudely displayed as emblematic of deviant classes or categories of society". They "belong in large part to the culturally underprivileged" (Haarman, 2001: 54-55). Talk shows the become the means to teach "how to monitor their behavior within the prescribed norms of American Culture" (Shattuc, 1997: 10); that is to let the underprivileged people "have a majority experience" (Shattuc, 1997: 97)

d) *Case study 4: Polemic engaging Etienne and Marie*<sup>11</sup>

(*Ça va se savoir*, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2006)

In the French broadcast, we observe that opposite cultural values are supported. The direct confrontation between Marie and Etienne shows similar properties as that between Gale and Michael, but it is anchored in the representation of a different cultural context. As a matter of fact, such a collaborative discursive construction of the polemic manifests the globalization of media culture.

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<sup>10</sup> In fact, Gale's reaction in l.27 was ambiguous: is she "denying" Michael's gayness and therefore asking him to be straight?

<sup>11</sup> See Appendix for the original French transcript.

- 1 Etienne listen listen (.) listen [the audience obviously disagrees] listen I will tell you for the moment (.) for the moment I will tell you (.) for the moment I stay relaxed for the moment (.) I expect the rest of your story what you will tell and then I will tell well (.) sss [static shot on each debater followed
- 5 by an establishing shot including the audience while the host is not visible]
- Marie there's not much to add to (..) apart from hum (...) that
- Etienne yes and and this playacting of yours has been going on for how long for how long (deb. Marie : since the be (..) since the beginning of the
- 10 rehearsals ) since I (.) hired Henri as a new actor
- Marie that's it now I've told you the whole truth
- Etienne that (.) what
- Marie since the beginning of the rehearsals
- audience ho ooh ooh booh (..) SCANDALOUS
- 15 Etienne since the beginning of the rehearsals (..) listen (.) listen (.) if I (.) if I (.) think about
- it for a minute (.) if I [face shot on the host's face who seems doubtful] (.) I do like you (.) then (.) (Marie: that's it that's it (.) that's it) (audience: ah ah ah ah ah ah) (Marie : that's it) no but wait wait
- 20 wait let me explain (audience: ah ah ah ah) [face shot on a man, in his sixties, smiling] if I do the same thing (audience: ooh ooh booh) now I'm getting irritated (..) the same thing (Marie : that's rare) and then if every time that I (.) for the (.) twenty years that we have worked at the theater together if I start (..) sleeping with every
- 25 woman I've selected for the stage I can assure you it's gonna be a mess (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh) [the host leaves again, he seems to acquiesce] [face shot on the man in his sixties, laughing] then we do not stage any play together no more it's a mess
- Marie etienne you have to admit for months now, things have not been going
- 30 well between us (..) here's the proof (.) you are always bossing me about.
- Etienne Well I agree Marie but even so we are fifteen days away from (Marie: but you are quick-tempered you are a) we have our first performance two weeks from now (Marie: I know) you are fucking things up.
- 35 Marie but no on the contrary
- Etienne No you are (.) in addition there is the Mayor in addition there's the Mayor coming in addition in two weeks so you get the picture (Marie : but what has the may) you get the picture (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh)
- Marie what does the Mayor have to do with this
- 40 Etienne oh come on come on (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh) QUIT THIS PLAYACTING OF YOURS (.) YOU'VE BEEN DOING IT FOR TEN YEARS (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh) [the audience is booing loudly]
- Marie yeah, right
- (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh)
- 45 Etienne AND THERE YOU ARE FUCKING THINGS UP (audience : ooh ooh booh oh oh oh)
- Marie yeah, right
- Etienne PUT YOURSELF IN MY PLACE (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh) [the audience is booing]
- 50 Marie yeah, right
- Etienne OH FUCK IT (audience: ooh ooh booh oh oh oh) [the audience is booing]
- Marie yeah, right [the host leaves the front row and joins the audience in the backmost rows]
- 55 audience torturer [laughter in the audience]

As in the Jerry Springer Show, the direct confrontation between the debaters on stage is marked by discourse. Consider as an example the clear polemic oppositions: "I expect the rest of the story" (l.3) as opposed to "there's not much to add to" (l.7); then "no but wait" "no but no on the contrary" (l.19, 35, 36,); and then the insults: "it's a mess", "it's gonna be a mess", "you're fucking

things up", "fuck it", etc. (l.25, 28, 34, 45, 51). The overlapping talk including the boos of the audience, also call for the manifestation of a typical discursive polemic.

As with the previous excerpt, I will concentrate on one speech event of conflict: the minimal argumentation provided by Etienne (l.20 to 38).

First, Etienne criticizes his wife concerning their *intimacy*: "if I start (..) sleeping with every woman I've selected for the stage I can assure you it's gonna be a mess" (l.24-25). Then, Etienne rewords the statement and emphasizes not the intimate but the *public dimension* of private life: "we have our first performance two weeks from now you are fucking things up" (l.33 and 34). Finally, Etienne underlines as a conclusion what is *socially at stake* with his wife's actions: "in addition there is the Mayor coming in two weeks so you get the picture" (l.36 to 39). Such an argumentative move is typically found in the statement talk-show debate: the individual identity (and not the social and collective identity) is the focus of an argument aimed at convincing the audience that one is right and the opponent wrong. What follows the scene is also a typical talk show conflict between the participants: one, Marie, ironically acquiesces and the other, Etienne, manifests his anger by shouting insults.

The host steps aside during the whole interaction. He is physically part of the audience and lets the debaters manage the controversy alone. At first, with a smile on his face he seems to show empathy with the apparently injured party: Etienne. But then he silently goes to the backmost rows, agreeing implicitly with the audience who speaks out against Etienne, who is characterized as violent.

## 5. Conclusion

What comes out of this paper is that both broadcasts under analysis resort to the "statement talk-show debate" genre. The category manifests some properties of a media culture affected by globalization. Indeed, the "statement talk-show" debates exaggerate the focus on the private domain and favor emotion and audience participation over argumentation provided by socially legitimated experts. Apart from equivalent genre properties, the two broadcasts that I have analyzed show important cultural adaptations. One can synthesize the differences between the American and the French program by considering the performance of the host (see fig. 4):

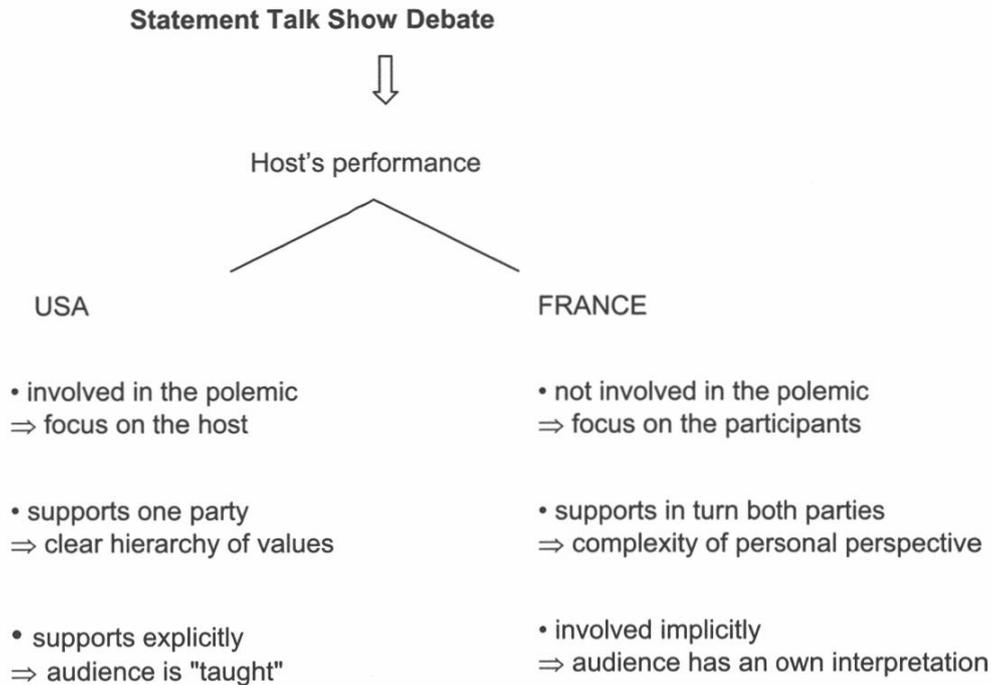


Fig. 4: Comparison of the hosts' performance

In fact, the hosts are not equally engaged in the polemic phase of the shows. First, in the US program the host acts as a debater. By contrast, the host in the French program lets the participants engage in the polemic. Secondly, in the US broadcast the host explicitly supports one party. In this sense, a clear hierarchy of cultural values is provided: the private action becomes public and are redefined by a moral dimension (i.e. "this" is good as opposed to "that" is bad). In other words, in the US broadcast a socially stereotypical perspective is preferred. By comparison, the French host supports both parties in turn. Therefore, he emphasizes the complexity of the personal perspectives of the debaters: both parties are right and are wrong, in turn, depending on the topics. In other words, because of the minimal interference of the part of the host, the privacy and intimacy of Etienne and Marie remains theirs even when confessed on a media stage. Thirdly, in the American show, the host talks to the audience explicitly. He is a kind of "teacher" engaged with the participants and the audience is addressed as "pupils". In the French show the host talks implicitly so that the audience and participants construct their own interpretation of what is going on. These differences are emblematic of the specificity of each broadcast. They can be considered realizations of the will to produce culturally adapted programs in the context of globalization of media cultures. It is interesting to observe that the discursive actions of media actors (in this case: the hosts of talk show debates) form an important dimension of globalization: spoken words become a means not only to perform but at the same time to reveal such particular media cultures.

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## Appendix

### Case study 2: original French transcript (*Ça va se savoir*, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2006)

- |    |                        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|----|------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1  | animateur public       | Il s'appelle étienne (..) étienne [ <i>l'animateur montre la scène et quitte l'avant salle</i> ]<br>étienne étienne étienne [ <i>gros plan sur un homme du public qui frappe dans les mains et scande le nom de l'invité</i> ]                                                                                                                    |
|    | déb. Marie             | <u>bonsoir</u>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| 5  | déb. Etienne animateur | <u>bonjour</u><br>étienne bonsoir [ <i>l'animateur revient de l'arrière salle vers l'avant salle s'adressant à son invité</i> ]                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
|    | déb. Etienne animateur | bonsoir<br>étienne vous avez quarante cinq ans <u>vous êtes</u> (déb. Etienne : <u>tout à fait</u> )<br>contrôleur fiscal                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 10 | public                 | <u>c'est ça</u> (déb. Etienne : <u>exactement</u> )<br><u>bouh ouh ouh ouh bouh</u> (déb. Etienne : <u>exactement</u> ) [ <i>sifflets du public</i> ] [ <i>gros plan sur le visage d'une dame du public : type indien, vêtue à l'indienne</i> ] [ <i>l'animateur repart vers l'arrière salle et s'adresse au public</i> ] <u>ouh ouh bouh</u>     |
|    | animateur              | <u>eh</u> (...) <u>mais</u> (.) franchement (.) c'est c'est quoi ce racisme anti-chauveu [ <i>rires du public</i> ]                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 15 |                        | (..) pourquoi (..) [ <i>gros plan sur l'animateur qui regarde son public, de droite à gauche</i> ] pourquoi est-ce que parce qu'un homme est (..) heu (..) dans l'administration (.) (déb. Etienne : exact) on entend des (.) des des rumeurs assez (.) assez curieuses et votre passion (.) parce que vous avez une passion (.) c'est le théâtre |
| 19 | déb. Etienne           | tout à fait                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |

Case study 4: original French transcript (Ça va se savoir, February 27<sup>th</sup> 2006)

- 1 déb. Etienne écoute écoute (.) écoute [ manifestations de désaccord du public] écoute je vais te dire pour l'instant (.) pour l'instant je vais te dire (.) pour le moment je reste calme pour l'instant (.) j'attends la suite de ton histoire c'que tu vas raconter et à ce moment là je te dirai quoi bon (.) sss [ gros plan sur chacun des débattants, puis plan élargi avec le public. L'animateur n'est pas visible ]
- 5 déb. Marie y a pas grand chose a ajouter de plus (.) à part heu (...) que  
déb. Etienne oui et ce et ce cinéma dure depuis quand depuis quand (déb. Marie : depuis le dé (..) depuis le début des r'présentations) puisque j'ai (.) Henri je l'ai engagé comme un un nouveau comédien
- 10 déb. Marie voilà comme ça je te dis toute la vérité  
déb. Etienne que quoi que  
déb. Marie depuis le début des répétitions  
public ho la la la la ho la (..) [ on entend crier depuis le fond de la salle ] SCANDALEUX  
déb. Etienne depuis le début des représentations (..) écoute (.) écoute (.) si moi (.) si moi (.) réfléchis
- 15 deux minutes (.) si moi [ gros plan sur le visage de l'animateur à la moue dubitative ] (.) je fais la même chose que toi (.) en (.)  
déb. Marie voilà voilà (.) voilà  
public ah ah ah ah ah ah  
déb. Marie voilà
- 20 déb. Etienne non mais attends attends attends laisse moi t'expliquer  
public ah ah ah ah ah [ gros plan sur le visage d'un débattant, homme dans la soixantaine, léger sourire en coin à la moue ]  
déb. Etienne si moi je fais la même chose (public : ah ah ah ah ) maintenant j'commence à m'énerver (..) la même chose (déb. Marie : c'est rare ça) et que moi à chaque (.) pendant des (.) les vingt
- 25 ans qu'on fait du théâtre ensemble si moi je commence à chaque (..) femme qui vient sur plateau que j'ai choisi occuper en m'envoyant en l'air mais j't'assure mais c'est un vrai bordel [ en surimpression à l'écran on lit le thème de la séquence : « Etienne, je te quitte » ]  
public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh [ l'animateur se retire de l'avant salle d'un pas assuré et en ayant l'air d'approuver ] [gros plan sur le visage du débattant homme dans la soixantaine qui rit]
- 30 déb. Etienne alors on fait plus de pièces ensemble c'est un bordel complet  
déb. Marie étienne admet quand même que ça ne va plus entre nous depuis des mois et des mois (..) la preuve elle est là (.) tu ne fais que gendарmer ma vie  
déb. Etienne mais je suis d'accord Marie mais quand même nous sommes à quinze jours (Déb. Marie : mais tu es colérique tu es quelqu'un d'iss) nous sommes à quinze jours d'une pièce (Déb. Marie : je sais) tu me fous un bordel pareil
- 35 déb. Marie mais non justement  
déb. Etienne mais mais si (.) en plus il y a le maire qui vient en plus dans quinze jours alors tu vois la situation (déb. Marie : mais qu'est-ce que le mm) tu vois la situation que c'est (public : ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh)
- 40 déb. Marie qu'est ce que le maire a à voir  
déb. Etienne ouais mais bon allez (public : ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh) ARRETE TON CINEMA ARRETE TON CINEMA (.) TON CINEMA TU ME LE FAIS DEPUIS DIX ANS  
public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh [sifflets du public qui est montré à l'antenne]
- 45 déb. Marie mais oui c'est ça  
public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh  
déb. Etienne ET LA TU ME FOUS LE BORDEL  
public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh  
déb. Marie mais oui c'est ça  
déb. Etienne METS TOI A MA PLACE
- 50 public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh [sifflets du public]  
déb. Marie mais oui c'est ça

déb. Etienne MERDE A LA FIN  
public ouh ouh bouh oh oh oh) [sifflets du public]  
déb. Marie c'est ça [ l'animateur quitte l'avant salle pour intégrer les derniers rangs du public ]  
55 public [ on entend crier du fond de la salle ] TORTIONNAIRE [ rires du public ]