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*The Idea of Debate and the Rules of Interaction
in Polish Pre-election TV Debates*

KEY WORDS

pre-election television debates, debate formats, debate as a rhetorical genre, Polish debates, interaction rules in debates

ABSTRACT

This article presents formats of Polish pre-election TV debates and also compares their rules of interaction, which were one of the elements of these formats. The order of statements made by politicians, principles governing argumentation and asking questions have been evaluated from the standpoint of normative understanding in the area of this speech genre, as well as for the purpose of debating as a tool for political communication in a democratic state. The object of study was a series of presidential debates in 1995, 2005, 2010 and debates carried out before the elections to Parliament in 2007. Only meetings between the two presidential candidates with the highest social support, as well as discussions between representatives of the three largest parties in parliamentary elections, were taken into account.

The meaning of television pre-election debates can be considered from two perspectives: from the point of view of their influence on the decision-making process of a citizen, as an important element of the election campaign, or from a broader perspective, as a tool for a politician to communicate with voters in democratic systems. These two perspectives have common ground: the features of persuasive communication transmitted to the receiver. The first perspective will be more important for politicians, their advisers and campaign staff, but also for political marketing researchers. The second perspective will be familiar to viewers of the debate, independent organizations sponsoring¹ the event, and political language and public communication researchers.

¹ In the United States, organizing presidential debates is in the competencies of the Commission on Presidential Debates, created in 1987. See further in: T. Płudowski, *Komunikacja polityczna w amerykańskich kampaniach wyborczych*, Warszawa 2008, pp. 122–123.

Opinions on the influence of debates on election results are mixed². Enthusiasts underline the fact that, for a few reasons, debates are one of the most important events in a campaign. First, because of their information function. Televised debates are much longer than other common message forms, such as TV spots, therefore providing an in-depth presentation of a candidate's platform issues. Second, they give the chance to show differences between candidates, both in their programmes and personalities. Finally, candidates show themselves in person, spontaneously answering questions, which allows voters to see the natural reactions of politicians, who are more authentic than in statements prepared for TV spots. Debates are focal points of the entire election campaign³ or even miniature campaigns themselves⁴.

On the other hand, there are also voices undermining television debates as a meaningful communication tool with voters, one that has significant influence on decisions made at ballot box. Meadow writes about the myth of the first American debate between Kennedy and Nixon and its meaning for results of the election⁵. Debaters, due to a limited time, can only briefly refer to important state issues, presenting basic catchphrases familiar throughout the campaign⁶. The real game belongs to journalists commenting disputes and spin-doctors, who create a fuss around debate results. These elements are among actions typical for post-debate strategies⁷.

Pre-election television debates take place in many countries⁸. In Poland, so-called Great debates (a term coined in research discourse after 1960 and analyzing the Kennedy–

² W. Cwalina, A. Falkowski, *Marketing polityczny. Perspektywa psychologiczna*, Gdańsk 2006, pp. 353–386.

³ D.P. Carlin, *Presidential debates as focal points for campaign arguments*, "Political Communication" 9 (1992), pp. 251–265.

⁴ T. Faas, J. Maier, *Mobilisierung, Verstärkung, Konversion? Ergebnisse eines Experiments zur Wahrnehmung der Fernsehduelle im Vorfeld der Bundestagswahl 2002*, "Politische Vierteljahresschrift" 45 (2004), p. 56; T. Faas, J. Maier, 'Miniature Campaigns' in Comparison: *The German Televised Debates, 2002–2009*, "German Politics" Vol. 20 (2011), No. 1, pp. 75–91.

⁵ R.G. Meadow, *The triple agenda of presidential debates revised: Audience and the implications of sponsorship*. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, San Francisco, CA, November 1989, pp. 21–22, [after:] S.A. Hellweg, M. Pfau, S.R. Brydon, *Televised Presidential Debates: Advocacy in Contemporary America*, New York 1992, p. 36.

⁶ L.F. Bitzer, T. Rueter, *Carter vs. Ford: The counterfeit debates of 1976*, Madison, Wis. 1980; R.G. Meadow, *Televised presidential debates as whistle stop speeches*, [in:] *Televised coverage of the 1980 presidential campaign*, ed. by W.C. Adams, Norwood, NJ 1983, pp. 89–102.

⁷ R.V. Friedenberg, *Patterns and Trends in National Political Debates: 1960–1996*, [in:] *Rhetorical Studies of National Political Debates - 1996*, ed. by R.V. Friedenberg, Westport, CT 1997, p. 84.

⁸ Up to 2006, they were held in Australia, Canada, France, Germany, Greece, the Netherlands, Israel, New Zealand, Scotland, South Korea, Switzerland, Poland, Taiwan, Ukraine and the United States. S. Coleman, *Meaningful Political Debate in the Age of the Soundbite*, [in:] *Televised Election Debates: International Perspectives*, ed. by S. Coleman, London 2000, pp. 1–24; W. Benoit, L. Sheaffer, *Functional Theory and Political Discourse: Televised Debates in Israel and the United States*, "Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly" Vol. 83 (2006), pp. 281–297. In recent years, the following countries can be added to the list: Brazil, Bulgaria, Finland, Guatemala, Spain, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Mexico, Nigeria, South Africa and Venezuela.

Nixon clash)⁹ have taken place four times (in the years: 1995, 2005, 2007, 2010), in the United States ten times¹⁰. In Germany, debates are divided based on their format: debates in 1972, 1976, 1980, 1983, 1987 took place with all the members of significant political parties. Television disputes in the 2002, 2005 and 2009 have been called debates in an American style, meaning with two candidates¹¹. In France, pre-election debates in presidential campaigns, so-called debates before the second round, took place in 1974, 1981, 1988, 1995 and 2007¹².

Comparing the state of research on Polish pre-election debates¹³ with similar work on to debates in America, demands the conclusion that the analyses are fragmentary, lacking synthesis, and most of all, normative postulates concerning the organization of pre-election debates in Poland. The following proposal is an attempt to look at the contribution of our debates from 1995 to 2010, with the inclusion of a narrow, yet very meaningful issue, which are the rules of interaction created in television formats.

Debate format

A successful debate is made up of a proper subject and the argument strategies of the speakers, but also, or maybe most of all, the right format¹⁴, which is a set of rules on the course of the meeting, agreed upon beforehand by the organizers and accepted by the

⁹ *The Great Debates: Background, Perspective, Effects*, ed. by S. Kraus, Bloomington, IN 1962.

¹⁰ In the years: 1960, 1976, 1980, 1984, 1988, 1992, 1996, 2000, 2004, 2008.

¹¹ T. Faas, J. Maier, *Chancellor-Candidates in the 2002 Televised Debates*, "German Politics" Vol. 13 (2004), No. 2, pp. 300–316; idem, 'Miniature Campaigns'...

¹² *Face à face. Le débat télévisé au second tour de l'élection présidentielle (1974–1995)*, www.leboucher.com [accessed: 12.02.2011].

¹³ K. Pankowski, *Wpływ debat telewizyjnych na preferencje i zachowania wyborcze*, [in:] *Prognozy i wybory: Polska demokracja '95*, ed. by L. Kolarska-Bobińska, R. Markowski, Warszawa 1997, pp. 147–166; W. Godzic, *Telewizja jako kultura*, Kraków 1999, pp. 62–81; K. Buczak-Sawczyńska, *Retoryczne strategie ataku i obrony jako element dialogu w debatach prezydenckich*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 1999, No. 1/2, pp. 91–100; idem, *Debata prezydencka: między agonem a dialogiem*, "Zeszyty Prasoznawcze" 2000, No. 1/2, pp. 34–46; D. Galasiński, *Strategies of Talking to Each Other: Rule Breaking in Polish Presidential Debates*, "Journal of Language and Social Psychology" 17 (June 1998), pp. 165–82; D. Galasiński, A. Jaworski, *Unilateral Norm Breaking in a Presidential Debate: Lech Wałęsa versus Aleksander Kwaśniewski*, "Research on Language and Social Interaction" 33 (2000), 3, pp. 321–345; M. Mazur, *Telewizyjne debaty prezydenckie na przykładzie USA i Polski*, [in:] *Media i komunikowanie w społeczeństwie demokratycznym*, ed. by S. Michalczyka, Sosnowiec 2006, pp. 158–179; J. Smół, *Debata wyborcza w świetle zasad etykiety językowej*, "Poznańskie Studia Polonistyczne. Seria Językoznawcza" T. 14 (2007), pp. 77–90; A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Taktyka mutatio controversiae i sposoby jej realizacji na przykładzie debat przedwyborczych*, "Forum Artis Rhetoricae" 2009, No. 3/4, pp. 24–51; idem, *Format from the rhetorical perspective – principles of the Polish pre-electoral TV debates in 1995–2010*, [in:] *Rhetoric and Politics*, ed. by M. Załęska, Newcastle, UK [in print]; M. Piasecki, *Wyborcze debaty telewizyjne w Polsce. Funkcjonalna analiza dyskursu politycznego*, [in:] *Studia empiryczne nad komunikowaniem politycznym w Polsce*, ed. by B. Dobek-Ostrowska, K. Majdecka, Wrocław 2011, pp. 123–151; A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Debaty konkursowe i telewizyjne debaty przedwyborcze – problemy dispositio w dwóch realizacjach gatunkowych*, "Forum Artis Rhetoricae" 2011, No. 2, pp. 137–153.

¹⁴ R.J. Branham, *Debate and Critical Analysis: The Harmony of Conflict*, Hillsdale, NJ 1991.

participants. Researchers underline that the format, more than other aspects, was the reason for a weaker presentation of one of the candidates in the Kennedy–Nixon debate¹⁵. The Carter–Ford debate is also referred to as format in which the rules restricted argumentation¹⁶. The rules and type of format influence the relations between candidates and how the argumentative clash between them develops¹⁷.

During the fifty year tradition of Great Debates in the United States, many formats have been tried out. They can be narrowed down to three types: 1) *press conference*, where candidates are asked questions by journalists 2) *town hall meeting format* in which questions are asked by the public 3) *a single moderator format* in which the moderator also asks the candidate questions¹⁸. The division is based on the type of people asking the questions, as a significant factor influencing the dramaturgy of the event. Each format has detailed rules, stating the order of the interaction (who, to whom and how directs the question), the amount of time for a speaker, the order and nature of the answers (a possibility to answer an opponent or lack of thereof), placing the audience of the debate within a space (micro situation) and its participation in the debate, stenography details, way of framing participants and the audience, and also details connected with campaign strategies and the producer potential of the television broadcaster.

The rules of the pre-election television debate format are shaped by a few factors. First, the basis for creating the rules is a rhetoric genre model, which is to the greatest extent exercised in so-called competitive debates¹⁹, with an order of speaker statements, a set time and a round divided into spheres of argument. In argumentation statements, the constructive (affirmative) and refutation parts can be distinguished. The constructive usually appears first

¹⁵ S. Kraus, *Televised Presidential Debates and Public Policy*, 2nd ed., New York 2000, p. 31.

¹⁶ L.F. Bitzer, T. Rueter, *Carter vs. Ford...*

¹⁷ *The effects of presidential debate formats on clash: A comparative analysis*, auth. D.B. Carlin and oth., "Argumentation and Advocacy" Vol. 27 (1991), pp. 126–136; D.B. Carlin, E. Morris, S. Smith, *The influence of format and questions on candidates' argument choices in the 2000 presidential debates*, "American Behavioral Scientist" Vol. 44 (2001), pp. 2196–2218.

¹⁸ R.M. Perloff, *Political Communication: Politics, Press, and Public in America*, New York 1998, pp. 384–385; M. Piasecki, *Prezydenckie debaty telewizyjne w USA w 2008 r. Analiza zawartości*, "Studia Medioznawcze" 2009, No. 2, pp. 68–69.

¹⁹ Among the most popular formats of competitive debates in the United States, six are noted: Policy Debate, Lincoln–Douglas Debate, Parliamentary Debate – NPDA, Parliamentary Debate – Worlds Style of European/British Parliament, Public Forum and Karl Popper Debate. *Discovering the World through Debate: A Practical Guide to Educational Debate for Debaters, Coaches and Judges*, auth. R. Trapp and oth., New York 2005; G. Rybold, *Speaking, Listening and Understanding: Debate for Non-Native English Speakers*, New York 2006; Cf.: J. Szeja, *Debata szkolna jako element kształcenia retorycznego*, [in:] *Uwieść słowem czyli retoryka stosowana*, scienc. ed. by J.Z. Lichański, Warszawa 2003, pp. 109–122; idem, *Debata szkolna – współczesna retoryka stosowana – jako metoda kształcenia*, [in:] *Nauczanie retoryki w teorii i praktyce*, ed. by J.Z. Lichański, E. Lewandowska-Tarasiuk, Warszawa 2003, pp. 165–179; for more on the comparison between competitive and pre-election debates see: A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Debaty konkursowe...*

in the debate, after which are ripostes. Most often, these are shorter than the affirmative. It is important for every participant to have the same time span for their speech²⁰.

Second, debates are a media event is influenced by the television broadcaster, who offers certain possibilities, but also restraints, in the terms of producing and broadcasting (especially with debates taking place in television studios). Lastly, the format, understood as the rules of the meeting, are created through negotiations between campaign staff, in accordance with the strategy and tactics they intend to use during the event. The debate is a clash, a duel of words, which is done with the rules of the art, in a time and place, planning the tactics of attack and defense. Areas out of line, what is valid and what isn't, are set. The first factor that influences the format comes from the rhetoric art of discourse. The second is connected with the medium (in this case television), transmitting the debate for an audience. The third factor, which influences the shape of the format, is linked with the individual rhetorical strategies of the speakers. The first factor decides about the genre continuity of the debate and is relatively stable. Too much influence in the structure of the debate on the part of the negotiating campaign staff, thus revoking the assumptions in its genre base, result in departing from the model of the debate, therefore making the argumentation less transparent and turning it into a media show, a counterfeit debate²¹. It should be noted that in the process of shaping the debate during the negotiation of the rules of the format, no one represents the voters, those for which the debate is being staged²².

To provide viewers with the best possible conditions to reliably evaluate the argumentation of both sides, a debate should, according to Jeffrey Auer, comply to five crucial conditions: (1) a confrontation, (2) in equal and adequate time, (3) of matched contestants, (4) on a stated proposition, (5) to gain an audience decision. Each of these elements is essential if we are to have true debate²³. Not fulfilling these rules in television debates makes them counterfeit. Auer's definition surfaced in discussions of American scholars after the first television debates in the United States. It came from the need to arrange the rules of political communication. If such a short-term event can influence voter opinion, it should be framed in methodological procedures which will shape its form so that it is not overtaken by political campaigns, but serve the purpose of a democratic institution, in the structures of which politicians place their message.

²⁰ R.J. Branham, *Debate...*

²¹ A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Format...*

²² R.V. Friedenberg, *Patterns and Trends...*, p. 207.

²³ J. Auer, *The Counterfeit Debates*, [in:] *The Great Debates...*, p. 146.

Auer, accusing the first American debates – between Nixon and Kennedy – of not meeting the standards of a real debate, based his assumptions on the obligations of the democratically chosen leaders, who have the duty to reliably present viewers their project of running the country. Reliability and openness in presenting political programmes consists of showing differences between candidates and indeed is the purpose of the debate. Voters judge which concept of government is better. Their opinion will be justified if the confrontation between candidates is held according to fair, transparent rules, which will allow politicians not only to present their rights, but also criticize the arguments of their opponent and leave no doubts in the audience. Society deserves such an honest debate.

Auer's criticism, published in 1962, was voiced in a society with a much lower level of mediatization. Today, there is no chance to keep viewers in front of their televisions for long hours before a spectacle of two actors. Most debates in the world last between 60–90 minutes as an optimal time for broadcasting television and radio debates. The meeting has to have a dynamic character, since they is what viewers expect. It's enough to compare the length of opening and closing speeches in consecutive American debates²⁴. It is clearly visible that the structure of interaction in the debate is evolving towards a frequent exchange of arguments. Auer's postulate concerning providing enough time to present the views of both sides is unachievable in television debates (although one can prolong the debate on one issue during the meeting, at the same time limiting the number of issues discussed; compare with British debates – table 2). He does however draw attention to the equal division of time for each speaker.

To provide the proper confrontation, consistent with the rules of the art of rhetoric debates, certain sections, focused on the moderator's question (journalist's, audience's), should follow the interaction order as presented in table 1²⁵.

²⁴ In the evolution of American debates, there is a visible tendency to shorten the amount of time for statements, at the same time, increasing the number of argument exchanges between candidates. The makrological type of debate (*makrology* – from gr. *brevity of speech*), represented by the famous clash between Lincoln and Douglas in 1858, which was a reference point for many American scholars, was substituted by the brachological model (*brachylogy*– gr. *superfluity of speech*). Each of the seven Lincoln-Douglas Debates lasted 3 hours. The first of the participants spoke for an hour, the second for an hour and half, and for the remaining 30 minutes the first speaker answered the arguments of his opponent. Still, in the first television debates between Nixon and Kennedy, opening statements lasted 8 min. Now the time for one statement is a maximum of 2 min.

²⁵ A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Format...*

Table 1. Interaction order in one section (thematic sequence)

Person asking questions	Candidate
The same question asked both candidates	affirmative part of the argumentation candidate A
	affirmative part of the argumentation candidate B
	refuting part of the argumentation candidate A
	refuting part of the argumentation candidate B

Source: All tables are own source.

Affirmative and refutation argumentation categories were introduced to differentiate a candidate's answer to a question from ripostes referring to the statement of his opponent (refutation). This division has a formal character and concerns rules, not actual statements. In practice, elements of rebutting co-exist in answers with affirmative argumentation. The interaction order presented in the table takes into account: the rule of equal balance of power (the same possibility of affirmative and refutation argumentation), second: the rule of impartiality (the same questions for everyone) and third: the possibility to confront views (separating refutation). If, e.i. the moderator asks a question: what should Poland's policy towards Russia be?, each of the candidates has the possibility to present their own vision, and the chance to critically assess the vision of his political rival. Such planning guarantees order in arguments, assuring the order of reception. The audience expects, knowing all the rules of interaction, that in these two statements it will be encouraged by both sides to support the promoted projects/ideas/programs, as well as hear their criticism. Accepting this interaction model forces politicians to discipline themselves in organizing their statements. What is more, it invites the narrator/journalist to formulate short and unbiased questions, limiting the questioning position.

An example of the above interaction model were the first pre-election television debates in Great Britain (April 15, 22 and 29, 2010). Three candidates took part in them: the sitting Prime Minister Gordon Brown representing the Labour Party, conservative leader David Cameron and Nick Clegg, representing the Liberal Democrats. The events took place in different locations and were produced by several television stations (ITV, Sky News, BBC). Each meeting had a different moderator²⁶, and questions were posed by voters from the circuit, in which the debate was taking place (in a town hall format). Each section (thematic

²⁶ Respectively: Alastair Stewart, Adam Boulton, David Dimbleby.

sequence) focused on a question asked by a member of the audience. Before the debate each party leader had an opening statement (1 min) and after eight sections, a closing speech (1,5 min)²⁷.

Table 2. Interaction scheme in one section (thematic sequence) according to format rules in British television pre-election debates in 2010

Person asking questions	Candidate
Member of the audience asks the candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A (1 min)
	argumentation of candidate B (1 min)
	argumentation of candidate C (1 min)
	refutation of candidate A (1 min)
	refutation of candidate B (1 min)
	refutation of candidate C (1 min)
	free debate between candidates (4 min)

Underlined is the planning of the argumentation according to contest debate rules, separating the refutation part for each candidate. Each thematic round has 10 minutes, and each debate had eight such sections²⁸. The format accepted in British debates allowed the possibility of an interaction between candidates according to the purpose of debates in democracy. Alan Schroeder judged the British debates as follows: “With its five decades of history, the institution of presidential debates in the U.S. proved highly influential in the design and execution of Britain’s first prime ministerial match-ups. In the final analysis, however, America may have lessons to learn from its pupil”²⁹.

Formats of Polish pre-election television debates between 1995–2010

Polish television pre-election debates between two candidates running for president, or between party representatives, as in the case of debates from 2007, were arranged according

²⁷ Q&A: *Prime ministerial debates*, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/politics/election_2010/8587362.stm [accessed: 4.05.2010]. Circumstances for the debate, rules of the format and its consequences for the British political scene are discussed by K. Zuba, *Pierwsze telewizyjne debaty wyborcze w Wielkiej Brytanii*, “*Studia Medioznawcze*” 2011, No. 3, pp. 59–70.

²⁸ By comparison, it should be noted, that in the first and third pre-election debate between Obama and McCain in 2008, the time for an interaction between politicians on one issue (moderator’s question) was 9 min. Debates had ten sections, www.debates.org/index.php?page=2008-debate-transcript [accessed: 11.11.2011].

²⁹ A. Schroeder, *Summing Up the British PM Debates: A Guest Post by Professor...*, <http://presidentialdebateblog.blogspot.com/search?q=%22Guest+post+by+Professor+Alan+Schroeder%22&max-results=20&by-date=true> [accessed: 20.05.2010].

to various formats, always in a television studio and with television journalists. Single moderator formats, or town hall meetings were not yet practiced. In 1995 and 2010 debates took place without an audience, contrary to the years 2005 and 2007. In debates organized in the TVP studio in 2005, the audience was shown in a full shot, as an element of the set. Another idea was used in TVN for debates that year. In the first debate, supporters sitting behind candidates where public figures, family members of the candidate, and also anonymous people. The audience were figures reinforcing the image of the speaker.

In all three debates from 2007 broadcast by TVP, the audience was also divided into supporters of certain candidates, and active during the dispute. They lively reacted, applauding answers of their candidate and booing at the statements of his opponent. Experience from the Tusk–Kaczyński debate shows that an audience supporting the candidate restricts the freedom of communication of his political rival, expressing their emotions during his statement.

The structure of Polish debates (apart from debates in 2005) is usually divided into three parts. The division concerns thematic sections, or, as journalists call them, “rounds”. The expressions: “three thematic rounds”, “three rounds of questions”, “three rounds of clashes” are an element of the broadly understood martial-arts metaphor. Both in debates from 2007 and 2010, questions were asked by three journalists.

Our debates have the press conference format, based on the idea of three persons hosting the debate and the way in which it was hosted. The comparison in table 3 has important elements of the formats that organized the meetings, and also information on the participants, time and place of the debates.

Table 3. Format elements of Polish pre-election television debates between 1995–2010

Time and place	Candidates	Journalists	Formats
1995			
TVP 2 debates: November 12	Lech Wałęsa – Aleksander Kwaśniewski	Moderator: director of TVP Wiesław Walendziak Journalists invited by Aleksander Kwaśniewski: - Andrzej Kwiatkowski - Sławomir Zieliński Journalists invited by Lech Wałęsa: - Jan Nowak Jeziorański - Jerzy Marek Nowakowski	Topic: vision of presidency Rules of each round: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • questions to both candidates • answers of both candidates (1 min) • two questions from journalists to the rival candidate • candidate answers • two questions from journalists to the rival candidate • candidate answers

November 15	Lech Wałęsa – Aleksander Kwaśniewski	Moderator: director of TVP Wiesław Walendziak Journalists invited by Aleksander Kwaśniewski: - Andrzej Kwiatkowski - Sławomir Zieliński Journalists invited by Lech Wałęsa: - Tomasz Wołek - Andrzej Urbański	Closing statement after three rounds Topic: public policy and social issues The same format
2005			
TVP 2 debates: October 7	Lech Kaczyński – Donald Tusk	Kamil Durczok Dorota Gawryluk	Three topics: public policy, foreign policy, ethical rules of politics - journalist's question (different) to one of the politicians - candidate answers (1 min) No closing statements
October 21	Lech Kaczyński – Donald Tusk	Kamil Durczok Dorota Gawryluk	Four topics: public policy, economy, vision of state, foreign policy Rules of each round: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two same journalist's questions to both candidates • candidate answers (0,5 min) • two mutual questions • answers (1 min) • ripostes (0,5 min) Closing statements
TVN i TVN24 2 debates: October 6	Lech Kaczyński – Donald Tusk	Bogdan Rymanowski Justyna Pochanke	No clear debate topics Round of journalist questions to candidates: - answers (1 min) - ripostes (1 min) Round of mutual questions: - candidates ask each other one question - answers (1 min) Closing statements (1 min)
October 20	Lech Kaczyński – Donald Tusk	Bogdan Rymanowski Justyna Pochanke	Similar format Difference: in the round of mutual questions, candidates ask each other two questions. Closing statements (1,5 min)
2007			
TVP 1 debate: October 1	Jarosław Kaczyński – Aleksander Kwaśniewski	Joanna Wrześniewska-Zygier (Polsat) Monika Olejnik (TVN 24) Krzysztof Skowroński (Polish Radio)	Topics: economy and social issues, foreign policy, problems of Polish statehood Rules of each round: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journalists ask each candidate 3 identical questions • each candidate answers (1 min) • candidates ask each other one question • answer (1 min) • riposte (0,5 min) • summary of round (1,5 min) Rules of each round <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journalist's question to both candidates

TVP 1 debate: October 12	Jarosław Kaczyński – Donald Tusk	Joanna Wrzeźniewska-Zygier Monika Olejnik Krzysztof Skowroński	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • candidate answers (1 min) • two mutual questions to candidates • answers (1 min) • ripostes (0,5 min) • journalist's questions to both candidates • candidate answers (1 min) <p>Closing statements after three rounds of questions</p> <p>Format as in the previous debate</p>
TVP 1 debate: October 15	Donald Tusk – Aleksander Kwaśniewski	Roman Młodkowski Krzysztof Skowroński Dorota Gawryluk	
2010			
TVP 2 debates: June 27	Jarosław Kaczyński – Bronisław Komorowski	Joanna Lichočka (TVP) Magda Sakowska (Polsat) Monika Olejnik (TVN)	<p>Topics: social policy, economy, foreign policy and security</p> <p>Rules of each round:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • journalist's questions to both candidates • candidate answers (2 min) • summary of each round (2 min) <p>Closing statements after three rounds of questions (2 min)</p> <p>The same format</p>
June 30	Jarosław Kaczyński – Bronisław Komorowski	Joanna Lichočka (TVP) Katarzyna Kolenda-Zaleska (TVN) Jarosław Gugała (Polsat)	

In none of the formats of Polish pre-election debates was the interaction order based on the rhetorical model (table 1) used. Two most important departures from it are: lack of the refutation element (in debates from 1995, 2010) and dissimilar questions (issues) to candidates (in debates from 1995, 2005, 2007).

Reviewing interaction models in the following pre-election television debates in Poland, three parameters were taken into account: the question, argumentation and refutation. It was important whether both candidates were asked the same or different questions. Also taken into account was whether the person asking the question was the moderator, journalist (who was also the moderator), or one of the candidates.

Debates from 1995 – collective hearing

The format of the first Polish presidential debates should be taken as more of a collective hearing than a press conference. Journalists made accusations towards the rival of the political candidate who invited them. Politicians dismiss these charges. The argument is on two

grounds: the first is in the format – the confrontation between journalists and politicians, the second, which the rules of the confrontation don't allow, is between candidates themselves.

Table 4. The interaction scheme according to format rules of one round of questions consisting of five sections (thematic sequences)

Person asking questions	Candidate
Moderator asks both candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
First journalist invited by politician A asks politician B a question	argumentation of candidate B
Second journalist invited by politician A asks politician B a question	argumentation of candidate B
First journalist invited by politician B asks politician A a question	argumentation of candidate A
Second journalist invited by politician B asks politician A a question	argumentation of candidate A

In debates from 1995 and 2010 (mentioned later on) the negotiated formats did not provide mutual questioning of candidates, nor a chance for refutation. This did not restrain participants in criticizing each other. This was clearly visible in the Wałęsa–Kwaśniewski debate, where interactive argumentation between candidates was not included, but *de facto* each of the candidates began their answer with a reference to his opponents accusations. Had the order of the debate foreseen a refutation element, then such argumentation would be prepared by the debaters. Candidates who do not want to talk face-to-face, put restrictions in the format, which exclude an open exchange of arguments. If they don't want an exchange of arguments referring to the merits of a case, they assume direct clashes will be incidental, depending on the situation and style of their opponent. Moreover, if the debate order does not provide time to refer to the statement of the opponent, then rebuttal arguments will appear in those parts of the debate, which according to the order, had a different purpose. The rules of the debate are then broken and the actual order differs from the assumed one, negotiated by both sides of the meeting³⁰.

Confrontation in the Wałęsa–Kwaśniewski debates concentrated on the candidate's image because the participants themselves did not refer to the of merit of issues. The aim was to gain control of the discourse and reinforce the leadership ethos, at the same time, diminishing the image of the opponent. As this debate shows, gaining control of the situation and dominating the opponent does not guarantee success. In the first debate, Wałęsa had that control, breaking not only the rules of the debate, but also by using arguments *ad personam*. He was not however the favorite of the debate, mostly because he violated the rules of

³⁰ A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Format...*

linguistic politeness³¹, which his opponent tried to abide to. His image of a person running for reelection was harmed.

Debates in 2005

In 2005, the parliamentary and presidential elections took place. Before them, Polish public television hosted many debates with politicians on different levels. The analysis below took into account two debates from the series “Prezydent dla Polski” (President for Poland) on TVP between Donald Tusk and Lech Kaczyński. Debates had a similar format in TVN³² (see table 3), in which the interaction order will not be presented here. Both series were hosted by two journalists.

■ First debate in TVP

The meeting was laid back in terms of interaction rules. It is difficult to assume if that was a condition accepted by both campaign teams. Journalists informed the audience before the debate that each candidate has one minute to answer the question. Measuring the equal treatment of speakers was the time for their statements. As table 5 shows, there were five variations of the interaction in each thematic section.

Table 5. Interaction scheme in the debate³³

Person asking questions	Candidate
Journalist asks both candidates the same questions	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
Journalist asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
	refutation of candidate B
Journalist asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B
	refutation of candidate A
Journalist asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
Journalist asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B

An equal amount of time as a criterion of a fair treatment of both candidates makes sense when all other rules are abided to, otherwise it becomes a counterfeit criterion. In French debates, where two journalists play the role of moderator, time is a actual modal frame of interaction. The host does not ask detailed questions, nor confront the speaker. He initiates

³¹ D. Galasiński, A. Jaworski, *Unilateral Norm...*

³² The article does not take into account debates between both candidates on the TV channel Polsat, in the programme hosted by Tomasz Lis *Co z tą Polską*, and also the meetings with both candidates on the TV channel TVN, in the programme *Teraz my*, hosted by Tomasz Sekielski and Andrzej Morozowski. Debates between candidates with smaller support in polls, which took place in the series *Prezydent dla Polski* (President for Poland) were also not taken into account.

³³ The rules were not clearly stated. The presented scheme resembles the actual interaction model.

the debate and makes sure it goes according to course. Politicians have a relaxed discussion, and the time is counted in total, as the statement length in the entire debate, and not the amount of time to answer one question.

In the analyzed Polish debate from 2005, the interaction was managed by journalists in a way that they assigned questions according to script. It was a mistake was to introduce time-regime as an objective criterion for the equal treatment of candidates, at the same time, with an uneven distribution of issues to be discussed.

A few days after the debate, the campaign staff of Lech Kaczyński sent the head of TVP an analysis of the questions asked during the debate on October 7th 2005. The letter contained a table with the questions, their addressee and its evaluation: “Is the question negative/positive for the candidate?”. A summary of the analysis is presented below:

Donald Tusk was asked 13 questions.

Lech Kaczyński was asked 8 questions.

Both candidates were asked 5 questions.

Donald Tusk was asked **13** questions. **8** was asked in a positive way for the candidate, **4** in a neutral way, and **1** was negative.

From the **13** question Tusk was asked, in 5 instances he was given an opportunity to refer to a negative statement about Kaczyński (e.i. questions **2, 11, 12, 13, 26**).

Lech Kaczyński was asked **8** questions. **4** put L. Kaczyński in a negative light. The remaining **4** were neutral or positive³⁴.

These remarks, however subjective they may be (their category “question asked in a negative/positive/neutral way” was not defined), are justified claims of unfair treatment of politicians during debates.

In that same letter, campaign manager Zbigniew Ziobro concludes: “Not accepting the use of similar methods during the upcoming debate, we appeal with the proposal of conducting detailed merit and organizational consultations. We are hoping that the presented analysis will become the basis of changing the current style of hosting debates in public television, a station with special commitment in terms of reliability and objectivity”.

■ Second debate in TVP

Before the second round of elections, another meeting took place between the two politicians, with the same journalists. After the intervention of Lech Kaczyński’s campaign staff, the rules of interaction were modified and both journalists and politicians abided to them.

Table 6. Interaction scheme according to the format rules of one round of questions, consisting of six sections (thematic sequences)

³⁴ All underlines are in the original document. Dział Dokumentacji Aktowej TVP B2, Wybory 2005, t. 5, sygn. 3795/26.

Person asking questions	Candidate
Journalist X asks both candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
Journalist Y asks both candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate B
	argumentation of candidate A
Candidate A asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B
	refutation of candidate A
Candidate B asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
	refutation of candidate B
Candidate A asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B
	refutation of candidate A
Candidate B asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
	refutation of candidate B

Apart from questions of journalist's, so-called mutual questions were introduced. This interaction model worked better than the previous one. Care was taken to evenly divide the issues (same questions for both candidates) and equal time was given for their resolution. It was, however insufficient. In 0,5–1 minute, one can list their views only through catechisms, and an in-depth discussion on programme issues is hard to expect. It is the only drawback of most Polish debates (also see table 3 – response time of politicians).

Debates from 2007 – television showdown

In television showdowns before parliamentary elections in 2007, ideas from the last presidential debate in 2005 were used and it was additionally agreed that apart from questions from journalists, politicians would also question each other³⁵.

Table 7. Interaction scheme according to format rules (debates 2 and 3) of one round of questions, consisting of six sections (thematic sequences)

Person asking questions	Candidate
Journalist asks both candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
Candidate A asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B
	refutation of candidate A
Candidate B asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
	refutation of candidate B
Candidate B asks candidate A a question	argumentation of candidate A
	refutation of candidate B
Candidate A asks candidate B a question	argumentation of candidate B
	refutation of candidate A

³⁵A format in which participants can ask each other questions was done in the US only once – in 1992 in the vice-presidential debate – and was never again used in a presidential debate. The merit level of the debate was criticized by scholars. J. Kay, T.A. Borchers, “*Children in a sandbox*”: *Reaction to the vice presidential debate*, [in:] *The 1992 presidential debates in focus*, ed. by D.B. Carlin, M.S. McKinney, New York 1994, pp. 99–108.

Journalist asks both candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B

In practice, confrontations according to this interaction model have produced the least substantial, apart from the clash in 1995, pre-election television debate. The form of mutual questions allowed participants of the debate to fulfill strategies connected with image goals³⁶. In this case, actions such as 1) creating a more positive self-image 2) creating a more negative image of the opponent 3) positive modification of the existing self-image 4) negative modification of the opponent's image³⁷. The format of these debates allowed eristic misuse³⁸. Mutual questions had a quizzing quality or were *ad hominem* attacks, where it was argued that the opponent once had other opinions than his current ones, that his statements are incoherent, that he is not telling the truth etc. This in turn forced those in question to use tactics connected with evading answers³⁹. The actual realization of the interaction departed from the form presented in table 7. Questions asked during the debate forced those answering them to rebut arguments. Instead of arguing as an answer to mutual questions, in the most cases, there was refutation referring to defending the attacked image.

The obvious value of these debates was the sheer fact of creating confrontation between candidates. Unfortunately, handing over the initiative to politicians in terms of selecting the debate issues made it concern not their political programmes, but their image. Polls showed that the strategy was used better by Donald Tusk⁴⁰.

Debates in 2010 – joint press conference

As in the debates from 1995, the interaction model acquired in 2010 did not foresee a dispute between candidates. Already planning the debate, the basic idea of confrontation was abandoned.

³⁶ According to Friedenber, strategic goals of candidates are divided into *issue goals* and *image goals*. R.V. Friedenber, *Patterns and Trends...*, pp. 61–87.

³⁷ Ibidem.

³⁸ See: A. Budzyńska-Daca, J. Kwosek, *Erystyka czyli o sztuce prowadzenia sporów. Komentarze do Schopenhauera*, Warszawa 2009, pp. 25, 30, 71, 103, 121, 154; A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Taktyka mutatio controversiae i sposoby jej realizacji na przykładzie debat przedwyborczych*, [in:] idem.

³⁹ A. Budzyńska-Daca, *Taktyka mutatio...*

⁴⁰ For a comparison of polls after the debates in 2007, see: M. Kolczyński, M. Mazur, *Broń masowego wrażenia. Kampania wyborcza 2007 r. w Polsce*, Warszawa 2009, p. 87.

Table 8. Interaction scheme according to format rules of one round of questions consisting of three sections (thematic sequences)

Person asking questions	Candidate
First journalists asks candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
Second journalist asks candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate B
	argumentation of candidate A
Third journalist asks candidates the same question	argumentation of candidate A
	argumentation of candidate B
Closing statement of candidate A	
Closing statement of candidate B	

In the first debate, Lech Kaczyński was in the previously agreed framework, which meant he abided to the time limits, did not rebut attacks from his rival in a non-regulatory way. His appearance was rated as significantly worse than his opponents. In the second debate, in which he departed from the rules, rebutted arguments and himself attacked, although the debate rules did not allow it, he was judged as the winner in opinion polls.

The agreed format privileged the position of journalists⁴¹. The interaction model carried out, mostly referred to the format of a joint press conference. Criticized by American scholars and not used since 1992 in the United States, this format is at once the most comfortable both for politicians and media broadcasters. Its faults are: over-exposing the role of journalists (often biased) during the dispute, which makes them to be perceived as a third party in the meeting, formulating irrelevant questions from the perspective of voters and the candidate himself, quizzing politicians, waiting for their slips⁴². Finally, creating situations in which those who create news are the ones who write news⁴³.

Conclusion

Presenting interaction models in Polish debate formats shows, first of all, that in this parade of experiments there was no arrangement that would allow conducting the genre order of the debate. This is because, and here the second accusation, the main debate actors determine its

⁴¹ During the second debate, one of the journalists read her question for 2 min. It was the same amount of time each candidate had to answer a question.

⁴² S.A. Hellweg, M. Pfau, S.R. Brydon, *Televised Presidential...*, pp. 21–36.

⁴³ R. Kemp, *Let the "Times" report but let the people determine winner of candidates on joint appearances*. Paper presented at the Speech Communication Association Convention, Boston, MA, November 1987, p. 6, [after:] S.A. Hellweg, M. Pfau, S.R. Brydon, *Televised Presidential...*, p. 32.

format, not taking into account the rules, which from the point of view of genre traits and the viewers, should be maintained. Voters rate what they get, which is a media show, through the prism of parameters created by the campaign team in so-called post-debate strategies, and by journalists.

The choice of different variations of the press conference, where journalists want to mark their presence in a very clear way, shatters the idea of the debate. This procedure takes place in the form and way of asking questions, which are not debatable. Creating rules, which will be broken and applauded in commentaries after the debate of the politician, who was more active, understood as breaking the rules more often, writes itself in the tradition of everyday television pseudo-debates. No distinction in the format between the affirmative and refutation, which is persuasion aimed at defending one's own programme ideas and pointing to the weaknesses in the opponent's project, also repeats this version of daily television conversations. In fact, Polish pre-election campaigns are different from usual debates in that they are longer and more intensely proclaimed in the media, different in the level of ritualization and established rules. The interaction, which takes place according to those rules or despite them, does not fulfill conditions of an equal confrontation of opinions in a true debate.