

Discourse, politeness and gender roles: an exploratory investigation into British and Spanish talkshow verbal conflicts

Antonio GARCÍA GÓMEZ
Universidad Complutense de Madrid

ABSTRACT

The present paper aims to reflect on some key analytic elements for studying Conflict talk and how it gets structured by interactants. Although this type of talk may look chaotic, when closely examined it is, in fact, highly ordered.

Using samples taken from two popular British and Spanish Talkshows, the analysis will provide the opportunity of conceptualising the complex phenomenon of Conflict Talk. By analysing the turn-taking organisation, the generic aspects of the interaction, whether institutional or conversational, will be highlighted. Therefore, it will be acknowledged that in a conflictive episode the three-part exchange is a more powerful description of the basic unit of conversational organisation. Furthermore, the paper presents an innovative approach to the differences in the speaking patterns of British and Spanish men's and women's talk.

I conclude by considering the distinct exploitation of British and Spanish politeness strategies, which, in turn, will reflect the clear ideological process involved in pursuit of their goals.

0. INTRODUCTION

The present paper is aimed at analysing *Conflict Talk*. Conflict is an interesting but slippery concept, which has usually been applied, very loosely, to any sort of problem that may arise interactionally, and typically to local processes of verbal fights or quarrels. In addition, as Grimshaw (1990) rightly notes, while there are long rich traditions of both empirical sociological work on social conflict, when combining the interest in social conflict and discourse

there is only a handful of pioneering studies on the topic (Labov 1972a; 1972b), none of which directly focused on *Conflict Talk*.

The study takes as point of departure the fact that the importance of such interactions has been long recognised, but they are not well understood (Simmel 1908/1955), together with the fact that spontaneous verbal conflict has rarely been studied (Goodwin 1981). In spite of researchers having recognised this gap (Billings 1979; Coupland et al., 1991), few have made the necessary observations and much work has therefore been left undone.

In this paper, I shall be concerned mainly with an analysis of the verbal characteristics of Conflict Talk. The study could then be located within the framework of Conversation Analysis, linking the study with Pragmatics. Thus, sections 1 and 2 presents a concise theoretical background dealing with the notions of verbal conflict, and a brief explanation about the data selected and about the aims and scope of the research. Section 3 focuses on a local verbal analysis. Finally, section 4 compiles the main conclusions.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

My purpose in what follows is to present some theoretical aspects dealing with the notion of *Conflict Talk*. The first part of my discussion will then be devoted to spelling out some preliminary theoretical aspects especially to do with the definition of a verbal conflict and the explanation of the sample of data selected for analysis.

1.1. Definition of verbal conflict

As Vuchinich (1987: 592) points out, verbal conflicts “can take many shapes and are known variously to participants as arguments, disputes, quarrels and so on”. While the shape, intensity, and content of verbal conflict are flexible, such episodes always display the underlying form of mutual opposition. Therefore, it is this underlying form that makes it possible to recognise when an episode of verbal conflict occurs.

For current purposes, I will adopt Vuchinich’s (1987: 592) definition of *verbal conflict*, heavily indebted to Simmel (1908/1955), who defines this sort of interaction as:

a form of social interaction characterised by at least two persons verbally opposing each other. One person opposes another verbally by disagreeing with, challenging, correcting, downgrading, threatening, accusing, insulting or in some other way finding fault with another person. The speaker ‘puts down’ or calls into question

something the other person said, something they did, etc. The opposed person responds with a counter opposition or ‘counterattack’ then a conflict is fully under way. (My underlining)

1.2. The data

The sample of data is based on the video-tape recording and transcription of two popular Talkshows on British and Spanish Television: ‘Killroy’ and ‘Todo depende’. The programmes were recorded during October 1998 and March 1999. The total number of extracts is four and together they add up to around 20,000 words.

Both the British and Spanish Talkshows selected for analysis are quite an open-line show. Contrary to most talkshows, ‘Killroy’ and ‘Todo depende’ do not seem to have a strict agenda that has to be followed step by step. Once the topic is introduced by the host and some guests are asked directly to make comments on their own experiences, most of the programme is developed by the guests’ free contributions to discourse. In short, the basic structure is not that of host’s questions and guests’ answers, but a free dialogue established among all the guests.

Due to the fact that not all the programmes can be regarded as confrontational, a selection was done during the period of recording. In this sense, the ones chosen for analysis are highly confrontational: **“He left me holding the baby”**, **“I can’t help having a favourite child”**, **“¿Están los hombres asustados del poder de las mujeres?”** and **“Videntes y curanderos: iluminados o timadores”**.

With regard to representing the talk in written form, I have chosen to transcribe the conversations in a way that is faithful to the spontaneity and informality of the talk, but is also accessible to readers not familiar with conversational literature or phonological / prosodic symbols.

1.3. Selection of the data: Why Talkshows?

Studies of verbal conflict often use some kind of structured laboratory task to introduce verbal conflict behaviour (Billings 1979; Gottman 1979). People are typically brought into a laboratory and given an interaction task designed to produce conflict. Behaviour is then recorded and analysed. However, I suggest, along with Vuchinich (1987), that for the detailed study of *Conflict Talk* we must be concerned with whether laboratory conflict tasks distort normal patterns. One way of addressing this problem is to carry out a naturalistic data collection in routine situations in the home, taking family

disputes as a representative of *Conflict Talk* (Vuchinich 1984; García Gómez 1998).

Still my concern was that my findings would not reflect conflict patterns of only one subculture, ethnic group, social class or a particular social structure - such as the family, which led me to select a transcription of popular Talkshows. The sample chosen for analysis meets this condition since it was drawn to include a cross-section of British and Spanish people, although it is by no means representative in a rigorous statistical sense.

In order to argue the conflictive nature of this sort of interaction, I assume, with Gregori (1998: 76/77), that Talkshows are a cheap daytime television genre which deal with sensationalist topics and whose guests are mainly ordinary citizens. The overall topic of the programme is usually the discussion of a controversial topic or issue (Livingstone and Lunt 1994; Hutchby 1996), supposedly of general interest, with social and cultural consequences in society. In addition, talkshows often encourage people to emotionally rip themselves open (Bell 1996: 76), since the nature of the topics usually implies emotional risks, some kind of dispute, verbal duels and even physical fights between the participants. Thus, the development of the Talkshow agenda usually includes confrontation as a constant generic feature. In fact, most writers refer to talkshows as confrontational or *Conflict Talk*.

1.4. Establishing the speaker's personal goals: prerequisites

Since the achievement of goals operates on the basis of limitations imposed by time, which is ultimately related to the figure of the host, I will discuss only the speaker's personal goals which will constitute the prerequisites for a conflict to take place. Moreover, it will determine the overall categories Masculine and Feminine, which emerge as the discourse unfolds. For present purposes and in order to determine and establish the different goals that guests have in a verbal conflict, I shall postulate four main prerequisites:

i) Communication factors. The guests who take part in the debate are encouraged to emotionally rip themselves open (Bell 1996:76), since the nature of the topic implies emotional risks - some kind of dispute or verbal duel is present. Therefore, the communication involved in the episode under analysis displays the underlying form of mutual opposition.

ii) Structural factors. This 'underlying form of mutual opposition' is reinforced, on the one hand, by the nature of the topics selected, since it implies that there are two basic opposite groups: those who support one position and those who argue against. Note also how the topics imply a basic gender opposition: men versus women, so it sometimes becomes a cross-gender conflict.

iii) Personality factors. In addition to the controversial nature of the topic, the inner world of the participants plays an important role in the management of the debate and the conflict. All the guests invited to the programme have experienced either in a positive or in a negative way the effects of what they are defending or criticising. This fact permits the establishment of the following distinction on a subject matter basis: those who argue in favour of one point of view are going to be attacked. Besides, they will be asked to provide substantial evidence for their claim.

All these facts activate personality factors which lead easily to conflict. In addition to this, the cross-gender conflict implied in the interaction makes these personality factors liable to be affected in the following way:

a) Men are culturally legitimated as powerful. Furthermore, the development of this powerful masculine position is connected with the subordination of women. Men are going to be accused of enjoying power in society and benefiting from such a privileged position, of not taking on their responsibilities as fathers, of being afraid of women's power and so on. In this sense, men's personality factors will also lead easily to conflict.

b) Women are culturally legitimated as powerless. In this sense, there is a clear commitment in the verbal conflict, since they have undergone and still undergo their subordination to men in the public sphere, since they are the ones who are left and refrain from having powerful positions.

iv) Cognitive factors (cognition and commitment). There has to be two groups of participants who are aware of the fact that they are going to contend with opposing arguments; that is to say, they have to be conscious of the conflictive nature of the matter they are dealing with. In addition, they have to be able to commit themselves, to defend certain points, to accept responsibilities. As Mead (1974) cleverly argued, "a conflict is a conflict only to the extent that all protagonists participate actively in it". In sum, participants have to personalise conflict.

2. AIM AND SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

In the following sections, I will analyse the different discourse strategies that both British and Spanish speakers use in order to achieve their own and opposing goals in a verbal conflict. For this purpose, I shall concentrate on the turn-taking analysis involved in a Talkshow verbal conflict. My concern will then be to provide evidence for the twofold hypothesis:

(a) The analysis of the turn-taking system will allow us to establish the difference between the conversational and institutional nature of Talkshows, together with the possibility to point out the generic aspects of the organisation of Talkshow verbal conflicts. I will, in turn, acknowledge the instability and variability of gender identities for both British and Spanish speakers, since the

discursive strategies adopted by both genders do not endorse the stereotypical notions of men's and women's talk. In the end, the clear ideological process involved in the pursuance of their goals will open up a new subject position for each gender.

(b) The analysis of the politeness strategies used by both cultures will provide evidence of British and Spanish speakers legitimating their position by taking advantage of subtle discursive strategies, which manipulate their opponents and block them emotionally.

2.1. Turn-taking: some preliminary theoretical aspects

A basic empirical finding about conversation, one that has been discovered by different investigators (Goffman 1974:135; Goodwin 1981:2; Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson 1974), is that it consists of a sequence of exchanges that naturally develops out of series of turns at talking and which can be seen by even casual inspection of almost any fragment of conversation. However, no account of the systematics of the organisation for conversation of turn-taking is yet available, except for Sacks, Schegloff and Jefferson's (1974: 696-701) attempt to characterise turn-taking, in its simplest form.

For current purposes, I will use "exchange" to mean the minimal unit of interactive discourse and I will then adopt Sinclair and Coulthard's (1975: 21) identification of the three types of exchange: *Inform, Elicit and Directive*. The moves which initiate the exchanges have respectively Informative, Elicitation and Directive as their head acts.

The point of departure here shall be that the analysis of the turn-system reveals the real nature of the interaction, because each genre has a unique set of turn-taking¹ norms that apply only in that particular context. In other words, by analysing the turn-taking organisations, the generic aspects of the organisation of interaction, whether conversational or institutional, will be highlighted (Sacks et al. 1974; Drew and Heritage (eds.), 1992).

Therefore, I shall concentrate on the following aspects of turn-taking: (a) the number and nature of turns produced by both categories: host and guest; (b) the selection technique understood as a reflection of institutional and conversational talk; and (c) the function of the turns as an indicator of the appearance of the conflictual and non-conflictual moments.

2.2. Number of turns: specifying the double character of Talkshows

In this section, I shall devote myself to an inspection of the number of turns shown by each category identified in the interaction; that is to say, the host and

guest category. Furthermore, I shall attempt to identify the institutional and conversational character of Talkshows.

In general terms, the analysis shows that both British guests' number of turns (73.29 %) and Spanish guests' number of turns (76.29 %) are higher than those produced by the British host (26.70 %) and the Spanish one (23.76 %), which indicates that all in all guests participate more. Nevertheless, a detailed and individual computation of each programme indicates that the mean number of turns calculated for each category confirms that, since the host performs 20-30 % of all the turns, he participates more often than anyone else.

The implications deriving from these results are twofold:

(a) In producing more turns, it is the host who has more chances to guide and give structure to the interaction. Furthermore, speaker alternation is controlled and determined by this category, since he is the one who holds the floor (cf. Edelsky 1981) more often.

(b) The host's distribution of turns ensures equal participation to all guests, since the mean calculated for each guest individually showed a similar number of contributions for all of them.

The above analysis of the figures offers a general vision of the different production of turns by both categories and manifests the **institutional character** of the interaction, due to the fact that one of the main functions assigned to the host is to guarantee fair participation to all guests.

Nevertheless, I propose that a twofold distribution for turn-design may be argued according to the function accomplished. In view of this criterion, I will discuss separately in the following sections: (a) the turn-design in which speaker alternation is controlled and determined by the host category, since such a distribution of turns responds to the institutional character of the interaction; and (b) the turn-design when the guests are freer to make their contributions to discourse without the host's imposition, since such a distribution responds to the conversational character of the interaction.

2.3. Turn-taking: establishing the institutional character of Talkshows

In this section, I will deal with the characteristic turn-design which identifies the institutional features of Talkshows. For this purpose, I will first attempt to establish its specific characteristics as well as to analyse the function accomplished by such a turn-design.

When the data in both British and Spanish Talkshows are examined, it is found that some parts of the programme present the following pattern: (a) The host produces a particular first pair part in the form of an elicitation which sets up the expectation of a particular second pair part in the form of a response -

which is produced by the guest to whom the question was addressed. In short, this pair has been referred to as an adjacency pair (Schegloff and Sacks 1973).

Therefore, I argue that the adjacency pair which identifies the institutional character of Talkshow, has the following characteristics:

i) The host always asks the questions and addresses them directly to a particular guest.

ii) Such questions function as an elicitation to demand a specific piece of information from the guest; that is to say, it can be understood as an information seeking device.

iii) The host's elicitation is always answered by the speaker to whom it was addressed, who fulfils the illocutionary force with which it was produced; that is, guests produce the required piece of information.

iv) This question - answer pattern regularly takes place at the beginning of the programme or every time a new guest is introduced throughout the programme. In this sense, they are aimed at providing the necessary information for the debate to take place.

Let us consider the following pieces of British and Spanish data:

(1) **He left me holding the baby.**

A: **How long have you been together?**

B: We've been together ten years.

A: **So have you been under a fertility treatment?**

B: Yes.

(2) **¿Están los hombres asustados del poder de las mujeres?**

A: **¿A qué te dedicas?**

B: Soy ejecutiva además de llevar adelante mi casa y mis tres hijos.

A: **¿Puedes compaginarlo todo?**

B: Sí, claro ... cuando se quiere todo es posible.

In the light of this, it can be observed that turn-allocation is non-existent, since participation is determined by the host. This category always takes the turn through self-selection which accomplishes the function of eliciting information from guests. In addition, the high figures of turn-allocation by the host to guests also contrasts with the fact that guests allocate no turns to the host.

All these characteristics would be a very unlikely situation if guests were not reproducing a Talkshow structure; that is to say, if guests were not involved in what may be called **institutional talk** (cf. Gregori 1998). In this view, it may be argued that although guests are directly or indirectly involved in what is being said and have a lot to say, they do not allocate turns to others; they then orient to an institutional activity, in which the host is the one who allocates the turns. In this sense, the institutional character imposes a limitation on the guest category which is reduced to answering the host's questions. In other words,

each category plays a distinct role in the Talkshow; that is to say, the main function of the host category is asking questions whereas the main function of the guest category is answering them.

In sum, considering the turn-design, British and Spanish Talkshows have been shown to orient to an institutional activity; that is to say, the fact that guests only engage in answering the hosts' questions speaks of the institutional character of the interaction. Guests then show an orientation towards the specialised turn-taking system as well as towards the constraints imposed on their identity, since their subject position as guests makes them refrain from asking questions. Hence, they reproduce the Talkshow structure. Finally, since this paper is not aimed at dealing with the institutional character of the interaction, further analysis will not be carried out.

2.4. Turn-taking: revealing the conversational nature of Talkshows

In this section, I will concern myself with the analysis of the turn-taking which responds to the conversational character of the interaction. Therefore, I will first attempt to establish its specific characteristics as well as to analyse the function accomplished by such a turn-design.

Consider the following piece of British and Spanish data:

(3) **He left me holding the baby.**

A: **What sort of person do you think yourself to be? I mean do you call yourself a man?**

B: Yes

A: **How?**

B: 'coz I face my responsibilities

A:] It doesn't look like, how can you say when you can walk away from a child that for me is completely helpless, when he is one year old.

(4) **¿Están los hombres asustados del poder de las mujeres?**

A: **¿tú crees que los hombres son más problemáticos que la mujer?**

B: No creo, afirmo.

Thus, I argue that these exchanges identify the conversational character of Talkshows. Contrary to the above argued turn-taking, the former exchanges share the following characteristics:

a) Most of these turns are produced by the guest category who self-selects to initiate a new course of action; that is to say, this distribution takes place when the host's imposition is eliminated and guests are allowed to make their own contributions to discourse.

b) Guests have access to all types of activities to make these contributions: questioning, answering and commenting - which are based on

the three types of exchanges identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975): Inform, Elicit and Direct.

c) Such exchanges present a high degree of overlapping and interruption; that is, they are mostly cases of simultaneous speech.

All these characteristics may be considered the key features to test the degree of conversationalisation, since institutional styles of interaction are characterised by a high degree of pre-allocation. In this sense, the exchanges introduce and reproduce the conversational dimension on Talkshows - which in turn denotes the flexibility of the genre and its quasi-conversational nature.

In short, British and Spanish Talkshows have been shown to orient to a conversational activity, in which guests engage in all types of activities and the question-answer sequentiality is not always present. Thus, this section has argued for the relative freedom of turn-exchange embedded in the Talkshows activity framework - a further analysis will be carried out in the following section.

2.5. Analysing the conversational turn-taking: Conflictual Vs Non-conflictual moments

In this section and within the turn-design argued for in the former section, I shall attempt to establish the criteria for the search for the alternation between the conflictual and non-conflictual moments, which are included in the development of the agenda of Talkshows as a constant generic feature. In pursuance of this aim, I will first attempt to characterise the nature of Conflict Talk - taken as the point of departure to develop the analysis of such a specific kind of interaction.

Following Vuchinich (1987), I assume that a verbal conflict always displays the form of mutual opposition - which makes it possible to recognise when an episode of this nature occurs. Therefore, I propose that the conflictual episodes in Talkshows share the following characteristics:

i) They consist of sequences made up of eliciting, directing and informing initiating exchanges, which are followed by an oppositional move, which does not fulfil the illocutionary intent with which this first move is produced.

ii) Such an exchange is frequently seen as incomplete and a further contribution -a follow up move- from the speaker is required as a new attempt to recover the intention of the first move.

iii) Most of these turns are produced by self-selection and present a high degree of overlapping and interruption, due to the fact that each participant is likely to take any opportunity to express their own ideas; that is, each has strong reasons to be in the speaker role.

iv) The sequence is liable to threaten the participants' FACE; in Brown and Levinson's terms (1987), such illocutionary acts involved may be regarded as "Face Threatening Acts" (FTAs).

My study will therefore be restricted to the initiating moves of eliciting and informing exchanges which are followed by a challenging move as a response. With regard to the challenging move and before establishing the criteria for the study, two main aspects should be pointed out: (a) according to Givón (1978), challenging moves are based on one fundamental speech act type-pragmatic negation. In formal terms, pragmatic negation simply negates a referent which refers to the other person's utterance, action or self; (b) pragmatic negation is based on antonymic polarity (Givón 1978). The referent is located on one pole, the negation of it is located at the other. If the referent is in a negative form the opposition may be in the affirmative form in order to establish the polarity.

Following this, I shall concern myself with how directly the pragmatic negation is carried out by means of linguistic devices, which may explicitly or implicitly be used in order to achieve such a move. The criteria that are proposed for studying the challenging moves which occur in the British and Spanish Talkshows -based on Vuchinich's (1984) psychological approach to verbal conflict- will be discussed under the following headings: (a) Simple Negation; (b) Disagreement; and (c) Indirect Negation.

In view of these criteria, I shall first concern myself with the study of the characteristic turn-taking system in a conflictual episode. This analysis will address the following phenomena:

a) The linguistic resources available to participants -highly determined by the specific goal they have in conflict- will show the basic organisational structure of such episodes.

b) The discourse patterns of male and female speakers will also acknowledge the instability and variability of gender identities, since the discursive strategies adopted by both sexes do not endorse the stereotypical notions of men's and women's talk.

c) Finally, it may be appropriate to mention that such a specific turn-taking analysis will also reflect the exploitation of British and Spanish speakers' politeness strategies.

3. ANALYSING TALKSHOW CONFLICTUAL EPISODES

In this section, I shall devote myself to analysing those exchanges which consist of eliciting and informing initiating moves, which are followed by an oppositional move achieved by means of simple negation, disagreement and indirect negation. Such a turn-taking analysis will attempt to address two different phenomena: (a) participants' exercise of power; and (b) the

construction of participants' social identities. In pursuance of this aim, I shall devote myself to discussing separately the Eliciting and Informative exchanges identified by Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), in accordance with the way these moves are challenged.

3.1. Eliciting exchanges

Following Sinclair and Coulthard (1975), the term elicitation is used here as a discourse category aimed at eliciting a linguistic response or its non-verbal surrogate. Furthermore, I will adopt Tsui's (1994) subclasses of elicitation to the different responses prospected; that is "elicit: inform", "elicit: confirm", "elicit: agree", and "elicit: commit". Further description of the subclasses will be provided when dealing with the data under analysis.

3.1.1. Simple Negation

In this section, the investigation will be restricted to eliciting initiating moves which are followed by a challenging move achieved by means of 'simple negation'. To develop the analysis, simple negation should be understood as a negation morpheme which may be used as a complete turn at talk to achieve the challenging move as well as some conventionalised lexical items such as 'bah', 'uh', etc. Let us consider the following pieces of British data of eliciting initiating² moves:

(5) On fathers not facing their responsibilities.

Initiating move:	W	A:	What sort of person do you think yourself to be? I mean do you call yourself a <u>man</u> ?
Elicitation			
Responding move:	M	B:	Yes
Challenge			<u>How</u> ? It doesn't look like, how can you say so
Follow-up move	W	A:	when you can walk away from a child that for me is completely <u>helpless</u> , when he is one year old.

In example (5), the speaker's (A) elicitation expresses what she assumes to be true and wants the addressee to **confirm** that assumption. However, the addressee (B) is not willing to confirm that he is not a good father and he cannot then call himself a man; because of that, he challenges the speaker's (A) elicitation. The exchange is perceived as incomplete and the speaker (A) produces a third move to produce a negative evaluation to recover the

illocutionary intent of the first initiating move and to support what she believes self-evidently true.

(6) On one of the guests' drinking problem.

Initiating move:	W	A:	That sounds a very forward looking way of solving your drinking problem Does it satisfy you?
Elicitation			
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:	No.

In example (6), speaker (A) invites the addressee to **supply a piece of information**. Contrary to Quirk et al.'s (1985) claim, in a talkshow conflictive episode this kind of utterance cannot be considered as a "neutral polarity yes-no question", since the speaker (A) does have some assumptions as to whether the answer is 'yes' or 'no'. Therefore, speaker (A) has previously provided the information aimed at satisfying the addressee's need, so that an affirmative answer is expected. However, addressee (B) challenges the speaker's (A) initiation and disconfirms her assumption.

Let us consider the following pieces of Spanish data of elicit initiating moves:

(7) On power creating or not addiction.

Initiating move:			
Elicitation	W	A:	¿El poder no crea adicción?
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:	No
Follow up move	W	A:	Ay, ¡por favor!

In example (7), speaker (A) elicits her addressee to **seek agreement**. However, the addressee (B) challenges A's elicitation by means of a simple negation and therefore disagrees with the speaker's assumption. Since speaker (A) assumes her proposition self-evidently true, she produces a third move to complain about the addressee's challenge.

(8) On a fortune-teller's capacity to foresee the future.

Initiating move:	W	A:	No me dirás que tú nunca has cometido un error
Elicitation			(pause) y has visto cosas que nunca han sucedido ¿No me vas a contestar ahora?
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:	No (unconcerned)
Follow-up move	W	A:	Para que veas, pero bueno al callarte ya me estás dando la razón.

In example (8), speaker (A) elicits the addressee (B) to **confirm** that he has some time made a mistake in his predictions. Nevertheless, addressee (B) does not provide the expected verbal response and challenges the initiating move by using a simple negation. Finally in order to complete the exchange, speaker (A) produces a third move to complain and produce a negative evaluation on the addressee's (B) attitude.

3.1.2. *Disagreement*

In this section, I will concern myself with those exchanges made up of eliciting initiating moves which are followed by a challenging move achieved by means of 'disagreement'. To develop the analysis, disagreement should be understood as a syntactic and semantic structuring beyond the morpheme level, which may be used to achieve a challenging move. The negative morpheme often appears in the syntactic construction.

First, let us consider the following pieces of the British data, for example:

(9) On men not taking on their responsibilities as fathers.

Initiating move:

Elicitation W A: How can you call yourself a man?

Responding move:

Challenge M B: 'Coz I face my responsibilities

Follow-up move W A: It doesn't look like

In example (9), speaker (A) wants the addressee (B) to **supply a piece of information**. The face threatening nature of such an initiating move makes the addressee (B) challenge the speaker's (A) assumption that he cannot call himself a man. In doing so, he provides what he believes to be a good reason. Nevertheless, speaker (A) does not accept B's disconfirmation and produces a third move - indicating the inadequacy of his answer.

In example (10), speaker (A) wants the addressee to **supply a piece of information** "what does it take guts to do?" and also to **urge** the addressee to produce a verbal response to explain why it takes a lot of guts to leave. However, addressee (B) challenges the illocutionary intent of the elicitation and produces a verbal response which does not provide the information elicited. Interestingly enough, another speaker self-selects to produce an answer which challenges the addressee's (B) verbal response. In doing so, she explains what it takes a lot of guts to do, in which a highly face threatening pejorative judgement is asserted.

(10) On what a father has to do.

Initiating move:

Elicitation W A: What does it take a lot of guts? to leave? (sarcastic)

Responding move:

Challenge M B:] Yeah

Responding move:

Challenge W C:] No, it doesn't. It takes a lot of guts to stick and solve the problem and make a happy home and solve the problems in the relationship so you've got a stable home for a child to grow up in, that what it takes a man to do, that takes guts. It is easy to walk away for a man. It has nothing to do with being a man, being a man is coping with the responsibilities and taking the consequences of your actions. You were happy to make that child, you did not have the guts to split up the relationship before she got pregnant, and then you have the guts to walk away afterwards... it isn't guts, it's just the opposite of guts.

Let us consider the following pieces of Spanish data, for example:

(11) On which sex is more conflictive at work.

Initiating move: M A: ¿Tú crees que los hombres son más problemáticos que las mujeres?

Responding move:

Challenge W B: No creo, afirmo.

In example (11), the speaker's (A) elicitation invites the addressee (B) to **confirm** that his assumption "men are not more problematic than women are" is true. In disconfirming the speaker's assumption, he does not fulfil the illocutionary intent of the eliciting initiating move and challenges it.

(12) On foreseeing the future.

M A: Todavía no he visto a nadie que me demuestre que puede predecir el futuro.

W B: Si dices eso no eres buena persona, porque niegas a Dios] que ...

Initiating move:

Elicitation M A:] pero primeramente ¿Cómo puedes valorar mi calidad personal?

Responding move:

Challenge W B: Por el mero hecho de negar eso que es evidente, quién sino Jesús fue el mejor vidente, curandero y hombre en la tierra.

In example (12), speaker (A) wants to **urge** the addressee (B) to give reasons why and how she can question his personal values. Since addressee (B) does not fulfil the illocutionary intent, she refuses A's injunction to provide proper reasons, the elicit initiating move is therefore challenged - which in turn supports her point of view.

3.1.3. *Indirect Negation*

In this section, I will examine those eliciting initiating exchanges which are challenged by means of indirect devices. This third variant includes no overt direct negative linguistic constructions characteristic of the simple negation and disagreement variants. This variant relies on indirect devices such as **presupposition** and **implication** to achieve pragmatic negation (Goffman 1981; Searle 1969; Grice 1975; Goodwin 1981).

Let us consider the following pieces of the British data, for example:

(13) On leaving a child with a violent father.

	W	A:	So you left the boy with a violent father?
	W	B:	They saw me being beaten up, they saw me being beaten up.
Initiating move:	W	C:	So what was your excuse for leaving a child under the age of sixteen with a violent man?
Elicitation			
Responding move:			
Challenge	W	B:	They saw me being beaten up

In example (13), speaker (A) wants to **urge** the addressee to supply an excuse for leaving her six-year-old child with a violent father. Nevertheless, addressee (B) does not justify her action and disagrees with the speaker's (A) assumption that there is no excuse. This disagreement challenges the illocutionary intent. Addressee (B) repeats three times the very same words to inject attitudinal meaning into lexical items.

In example (14), speaker (A) tries to invite the addressee (B) to **agree** with her assumption that what he has done to his child is wrong. No verbal response seems to be involved, since the speaker herself intends to provide the answer for such a rhetorical question. However, addressee (B) challenges the initiating move by providing an answer. Moreover, he contradicts the speaker's assumption that he did not know what he has done to his child. The exchange does not stop here but the speaker expresses what was self-evidently true in her question. Once more, addressee (B) **provides a piece of information** which challenges A's assumption by denying it.

(14) On the repercussion of leaving a baby.

	W	A:	You said you loved your son to pieces, but Do you have any idea of what you are doing to him by leaving when he is a week old? he is going to know when ... How old is your boy now?
Initiating move:	W	B:	He is coming up for two in December.
Elicitation	W	A:	He is going to know one day that when he was a week old his daddy left. Have you got any idea of what he is going to feel?
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:] I can imagine.
	W	A:	because I can't tell you right now what he is going to feel.
	M	B:	It'd have been better for him to stay there and make his life miserable.
Follow-up move	W	A:	I feel very sorry for you.

Let us consider the following pieces of Spanish data:

(15) On women's capability of achieving the same job as men.

Initiating move:	M	A:	Pero ¿tú para qué quieres, no os tiréis el rollo, para qué queréis ser generales?
Elicitation			
Responding move:			
Challenge	W	B:	Para lo mismo que tú quieres ser general.

In example (15), speaker (A) wants to **urge** the addressee (B) to explain why they want to be on the same level. However, addressee (B) refuses to produce a verbal response which argues her point and to provide the piece of information elicited. Contrarily, she challenges the elicitation by means of implication; that is, addressee (B) does not accept the fact that women cannot have a responsible post in the Army, just because of a matter of gender.

(16) On the domestic sphere.

Initiating move:	M	A:	Las tareas domésticas las realizan en un 88% las mujeres, en un 8% los dos, el 2% una asistente y los hombres un 2%, y cada vez hay más mujeres que trabajan y entonces no puedo evitar preguntarme ¿Existe la super-woman?
Elicitation			
Responding move:			
Challenge	W	B:	¡Qué remedio! no nos queda más remedio.

In example (16), speaker (A) enjoins the addressee to supply a verbal response which **confirms** that his assumption is true. Nevertheless, speaker (B) does not provide the information required but challenges the illocutionary intent by the implication that these facts are due to historical, cultural and religious reasons. Since men have dominated these spheres, they are responsible for women's involuntary subordination and relegation to the domestic sphere.

Before considering the implications from both British and Spanish data bases, it should be kept in mind that the selection of the sample was based on the assumption that the status patterns which are adopted in dialogue are an important aspect in interactional encounters (Cheepen 1988: 16) in that they serve to define the precise nature of the encounter, and to enable the participants to pursue their goals.

Given that there is a tenuous interpersonal connection among the guests, the formal feature of the sample chosen for analysis may be defined as one adopting complimentary roles of equal / equal; that is to say, the guests' subject position (Fairclough 1989) is supposed to be set up on an equal status basis. Thus, no restriction in the guests' participation is expected - in terms of the parameter of power - and consequently the analysis will reflect without any restriction the distinct linguistic resources that participants may use in order to impose on the other and gain leadership³.

In conflicting about a particular 'disputed issue statement', both British and Spanish speakers show a tendency to adhere to one's position and to devaluate the validity of the opponent's position. In pursuance of this aim, guests attempt to legitimate their positions against their opponents by taking advantage of certain linguistic devices, which are aimed at varying the equal status distribution among participants. In other words, guests' goals in a Talkshow conflictual episode -the legitimisation of their points in their fight for leadership- lead to an assertive style of discourse, which relies on the following strategies:

a) **Elicitations.** There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that British and Spanish Speakers seem to identify elicitation as potentially powerful forms, and that they produce them as a way to establish power status in a Talkshow conflictual episode.

The central point here is that elicitation implies an **asymmetrical discourse status**, because they oblige powerful forms as they oblige the addressee to produce an answer, and to produce an answer which is conversationally relevant (see Grice 1975).

Furthermore, I propose that the establishment of power status is emphasised by the following aspects:

i) Elicitations enable participants to **control the topic** of discourse in a Talkshow verbal conflict.

ii) The **informational content** of these elicitations is the cumulative expression of the speaker's attitude and negative evaluations against his/her opponent.

iii) The attitudinal colouring of these elicitations include a severe **damage of the opponent's face** want, since a **social evaluation** is implied.

Thus, in the light of these features, I argue that this sort of elicitations in a Talkshow conflictual episode may be certainly regarded as aggressive and confrontational linguistic devices.

In addition, considering the examples on a genre based distinction, it is found that, contrary to the stereotypical notions, women produce a higher number of elicitations. What emerges from the use of this device is that in public life, it is the discourse patterns of male speakers, the dominant group in public life, which seems to be the established norm.

b) **Challenging move.** In general terms, I propose that both British and Spanish speakers seem to produce a challenging move as an attempt to regulate the balance of power; that is to say, speaker's challenges invalidate the illocutionary intent of the elicitations - which in turn display the speaker's power. In this sense, it can be understood as a mechanism of social control.

Such a device may be claimed to account for British and Spanish speakers' motivation to stay in control and signal their intentions to achieve changes in the unbalanced situation that the elicitation has forced. In other words, such devices may be regarded as a reflection of the speakers' power, since they are presented as attempting to be in control while communicating his/her social intentions by displaying this exercise of power.

On a genre based distinction the following differences may be drawn. Interestingly enough, men tend to use the three above mentioned linguistic resources to invalidate the illocutionary intent of women's elicitations. In this sense, when the elicit initiating utterances that women produce are subjected to the interpretation in their response -in the form of a challenge- the interaction, however, does not stop here. Women make a further contribution to show that men have not produced an acceptable response and to recover the former illocutionary force of the initiating move. Nevertheless, when the elicit initiating utterances are produced by men, the exchange should be said to be incomplete, since men do not try to recover the illocutionary force of the initiating move by means of a follow-up move.

What emerges from the discussion is that when men challenge the eliciting move - women adopt a more assertive style of discourse in this particular public sphere and make a further contribution. Therefore, an equilibrium in the exchange occurs at the three turn-length, where the follow-up move is a very important element in the exchange; that is to say, a follow-up move is uttered to confirm the inadequacy of the previous response as well as revealing British and Spanish women's competitive goals.

My concern now turns to pointing out the **different functions** that the follow-up move carries out in this kind of exchange: that of **complaint**, that of **insistence** and that of **negative evaluation**.

Finally, the analysis of the exploitation of politeness strategies involved in these moves show that elicitation plays a major role in constructing the participants' social identities. What is suggested here is that British and Spanish speakers' elicitations are concerned with **social sanction**. This is captured in the speaker's negative judgements related to moral regulation (e.g. leaving their wives holding the baby) or whether the behaviour of the person is seen as ethical or truthful (e.g. leaving a child with a violent father). To achieve such a social sanction, the speaker manipulates his/her opponent and constraints his/her production of personal pieces of information, which will disarm his/her positive face want. The strategy is then aimed at proving that the opponent's behaviour or position deviates from the British and Spanish socially acceptable system. In other words, the speaker can only exercise power and impose on the addressee by having access to the negative social consequences of the addressee's behaviour, which, in turn, puts the addressee in a position in which s/he has to provide a piece of personal information that disarms her/his positive face want in front of the audience.

3.2. Informing Exchanges

In this section, I will deal with the 'inform initiating moves' which are followed by a challenging move. Following Tsui (1994), the term *informative* is used here as a discourse category aimed at providing information, but also at reporting events or states of affairs, recounting personal experience, and expressing evaluative judgements, feelings and thoughts. In this view, I will also adopt Tsui's subclasses of informatives; that is, **reports**, **assessments** and **expressives**. Further information on the subclasses will be offered as the analysis unfolds.

3.2.1. Simple Negation

Let us consider the following pieces of British data of inform initiating moves:

(17) On having a favourite child.

Initiating move:	W	A:	You hesitated when I asked you if you have a favourite child.
Inform			
Responding move:			
Challenge	W	A:	No
Follow up move	W	A:	Yes, you did.

In example (17), by insisting on the fact that she hesitated when she was asked about having a favourite child, speaker (A) is **conveying an evaluative judgement** on speaker (B) concealing the truth. However, addressee (B) challenges the illocutionary intent in A's inform initiating move and disagrees with the speaker's evaluation. Finally, since speaker (A) believes that her negative evaluative judgement is self-evidently true, she produces a third move to insist on her previous idea and recover the illocutionary force.

(18) On having a favourite child.

Initiating move:	W	A:	You cannot say I love all my children the same but
Inform			I've got a favourite
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:	Yes of course
Follow-up move	W	A:	You can't

In example (18), speaker (A) **asserts her judgement** on what the addressee (B) had said. The negative evaluative judgement would be that the addressee's previous statement is in contradiction. Nevertheless, addressee (B) disagrees with the speaker evaluation - and challenges the initiating move by means of a simple negation. The lack of a positive response makes the speaker produce a follow-up move to emphasise her point.

Let us turn our attention to the following Spanish data, for instance:

(19) On women discrimination

Initiating move:	W	A:	Los hombres nos han relegado a la casa y siguen
Inform			haciendo estas cosas. Es obvio que la mujer
			siempre pringa
Responding move:			
Challenge	M	B:	Sí, sí (laughing)
Follow-up move	W	A:	Pues claro que sí.

In example (19), speaker (A) **asserts her judgement** of the reasons why women have been relegated to the domestic sphere; that is, men are to blame. Addressee (B) does not support such a feminist point of view and challenges the illocutionary intent by laughing at the speaker's proposal. Finally, speaker (A) attempts to recover the illocutionary force by insisting on her previous idea.

In example (20), speaker (A) **asserts her pejorative evaluation** on fortune-tellers asking for huge amounts of money to help people. Addressee (B) disagrees with such an evaluation by means of simple negation. The lack of argumentation leads speaker (A) to produce a follow-up move to emphasise that her assumption was self-evidently true.

(20) On fortune-tellers' honesty

Initiating move:	M	A:	Si Dios os ha regalado ese don no entiendo cómo podéis cobrar, si fuera cierto lo daríais gratis.
Inform			
Responding move:	W	B:	No
Challenge	M	A:	Eso prueba que lo hacéis para llenaros los bolsillos.

3.2.2. *Disagreement*

Take the following British examples:

(21) On leaving the children behind

Initiating move:	M	A:	Now going back to what you said, the people who are choosing to leave their wives and kids are the ones who have decided that this is the best option open to them and we wouldn't]
Inform			
Responding move:	W	B:] because they don't have guts to stick and solve the problem.
Challenge			

In example (21), the speaker's (A) inform initiating move **asserts his judgement of a state of affairs**; that is, she conveys that sometimes leaving your wife and kids is a positive thing to do. Nevertheless, addressee (B) does not produce the prospected response in which she agrees, rather she gives a second opposite assessment which contradicts the speaker's utterance.

(22) On leaving home.

Initiating move:	W	A:	So you've reported basically that you walked out
Inform			
Responding move:	M	B:	No, I didn't walk out
Challenge			

In example (22), speaker (A) is reporting what the addressee has said before. Although its primary illocutionary intent does not seem to **assert an evaluative judgement**, it contains a negative one "the addressee walked out leaving his wife holding the baby". Addressee (B) does not accept what the speaker has reported as a true factual account of the event and challenges the inform initiating move by denying the fact that he walked out.

Let us now consider the following Spanish examples, for instance:

(23) On having a favourite child.

Initiating move: Inform	W	A:	Lo primero que quiero decir es yo nunca iría a la consulta de esta señora porque no me inspira ninguna confianza y me parece una timadora.
Responding move: Challenge	W	B:	El hecho de que nunca vendrías a mi consulta no te da derecho a insultarme, en eso como en todo hay profesionales y timadores.
Follow-up move	W	A:	La verdad duele.

In example (23), speaker (A) **asserts a severe pejorative evaluation** on addressee (B). However, addressee (B) disagrees with the speaker's evaluation and provides information to support the challenging move. Speaker (A) does not accept such a response and produces a follow-up move to emphasise her point.

(24) On women's equality

Initiating move: Inform	M	A:	La mujer quiere ser igual al hombre en lo que le interesa.
Responding move: Challenge	W	B:	No digas más tonterías.

In example (24), speaker (A) **asserts his opinion** about women only asking to be equal to men in certain grounds. Nevertheless, addressee (B) does not support such a chauvinist point of view and challenges the illocutionary intent by invalidating and ridiculing the speaker's judgement.

3.2.3. *Indirect Negation*

Let us consider the following piece of British data:

(25) On leaving a child.

Initiating move: Inform	W	A:	But your baby wants you to be there.
Responding move: Challenge	M	B:	Oh! Yes! and quarrel all day long in front of the child

In example (25), the speaker's (A) **assessment** is a negative evaluation directed at the addressee; that is, she implies that although he felt shut out, his

baby wanted him to be there. Nevertheless, addressee (B) challenges and invalidates A's assessment by implying that his child would prefer to have a father and a mother than his parents quarrelling in front of him.

(26) On who suffers more: the mother or the child.

Initiating move:

Inform W A: He lost six years of his life

Responding move:

Challenge W B: I've lost twenty

Follow-up move W A: I am not saying that what happened to you was right, but what happened to Dean was wrong.

In example (26), speaker (A) **asserts her negative evaluation** on what addressee (B) has done to her own son. Although such an initiating move presupposes that speaker (A) believes that her evaluation is an accurate representation of the evaluated referent, addressee (B) responds to the negative evaluation by an indirect negation which implies that she suffered much more - understood as a justification for her behaviour. Speaker (A) recovers the illocutionary intent of the preceding move by making clear her position.

Let us consider the following pieces of Spanish data, for instance:

(27) On fortune-teller's honesty

Initiating move: M A: Lo que más me fastidia es que tenga la poca vergüenza de salir aquí y decir que si ven, que si curan y no traigan una sola prueba fiable.

Responding move: W B: Es que con esa cara de agrío qué futuro pretendes que te veamos.

Follow-up move M A: Por lo menos no me gano la vida engañando a nadie.

In example (27), speaker (A) **asserts her judgement** of little credibility that fortune-tellers deserve for her and accuses addressee (B) of not providing any evidence at all. Addressee (B) challenges the accusation by means of indirect devices, together with the fact that speaker (A) is insulted. Finally, speaker (A) attempts to recover the illocutionary force by criticising her appearance and lack of integrity to release from the speaker's imposition.

In example (28), speaker (A) **produces a statement to agree** with women regarding the fact that her housework is valued as much as it deserves. Nevertheless, addressee (B), the female speaker discredits the male speaker's utterance by means of indirect negation which are aimed at questioning the veracity of men's intervention. The face threatening nature of the former

challenge cause speaker (A) to produce a follow-up move to complain about the impossibility to seek sympathy with women.

(28) On women being discriminated

Initiating move:	M	A:	Primero, quiero decir una cosita, que sí reconocemos la labor que hace la mujer en el hogar, es magnífica y digna de alabar.
Inform			
Responding move:			
Challenge	W	B:	Y gratis. (ironic).
Follow-up move	M	A:	Hay que tener posturas abiertas y no radicales que no llevan a ninguna parte.

In conflicting about a particular ‘disputed issue statement’, British and Spanish speakers produce inform initiating moves to adhere to one’s position and to devaluate the validity of the opponents.

In the light of this, guests’ conflictive goals in a Talkshow verbal episode may be also realised by the following linguistic devices:

a) **Informatives**. Considering the former examples of both corpora of data, I argue that inform initiating moves may be regarded as potentially powerful forms and they are produced to establish power status. Therefore, I propose that the highly confrontational and aggressive nature of such a move comprise the following features:

i) Both British and Spanish speakers tend to use, in Tsui’s terms, **assessments** - a subclass of informatives, in which a negative judgement or pejorative evaluation of certain people, object, event, states of affairs and so on, is asserted.

ii) The informational content of these informatives may be labelled as **criticism**. Such a face threatening act, which is supposed to be avoided unless interlocutors know each other very well, is very frequent in these episodes. This category thus severely damages the opponent’s face want.

b) **Challenging move**. Close inspection of the former examples shows that British and Spanish speakers counteract the face threatening illocutionary intent imposed by the inform initiating move in term of simple negation, disagreement and indirect negation.

The fact that an assessment asserts the speaker’s negative judgement or evaluation of the addressee in some way prospects the presence of an oppositional move - aimed at disagreeing with such an evaluation. Bearing in mind that the speaker’s social image is already damaged by the informational content of the assessment, the speaker communicates—in the form of a challenge— his/her social intention by denying the validity of the pejorative judgement. In doing so, s/he tries to recover her/his face loss and regulate the balance of power.

Moreover, since an assessment presupposes that the speaker believes his/her negative judgement is an accurate representation of the evaluated referent, and a challenge does not fulfil its illocutionary intent, the interaction tends to have a follow-up move to recover the illocutionary force of the first move.

With regard to women's and men's differential use of linguistic resources, it is observed that, contrary to the stereotypical assumption that men make more direct declarations of fact or opinion than women do (Fishman 1980), the examples show that most of the informative moves including pejorative judgements are produced by women. In this view, I propose that women socialise into a more competitive style of speech, when entering the public domain, to adapt to what is supposed to be required in a public discourse - taking a Talkshow as a representative of this.

In addition to the **social sanction** involved in the exploitation of politeness strategies in the informatives, it may also be claimed that British and Spanish speakers legitimate their position and the performance of FTAs providing a vast amount of negative assessments. This strategy is a way in which the opponents' behaviour or position is evaluated as one failing to live up to socially desirable standards. In this sense, the speaker enlists social pressure on the addressee, who is urged to provide personal information, this pressure, in turn, constrains his/her contributions to **undermine the addressee's social esteem** as well as completely disarming his/her positive face. In other words, the speaker qualifies his /her position drawing on a more accurate account of socially reprehensible behaviour, which discredits the addressee's positive face in front of the audience.

4. CONCLUSION

In summary, what I have spelled out in this paper has been a reflection on some key analytic elements for studying Conflict Talk and how it gets structured by interactants. Therefore, this study has not set out to solve all the problems and has not purported to offer a conversational model of Conflict Talk that serves everyone's needs perfectly. Its goal has been more modest.

The above analysis of Talkshow verbal conflicts has been proved to have a particular turn-design, which consists of a three-part exchange as its basic organisational unit. Thus, the initiating utterance -Elicit and Inform- that the speaker produces is subjected to the interpretation of the addressee, who displays his/her interpretation in the form of a challenge. In this interactive process, the meaning and the illocutionary force of utterances are negotiated between the speaker and the addressee, which in turn causes the interaction not to stop there. This then may require a further contribution from the speaker as an attempt to recover the illocutionary force intended in the previous move.

The central point here is then that the equilibrium in the exchange in a Talkshow conflictive episode occurs at the three turn-length, where the follow-up move is a very important element of the exchange. My descriptive framework for analysing Conflict Talk - using Talkshow conflictual episodes as a starting point, runs against many discourse linguists (Sacks et al. 1974; Burton 1981; Edmonson 1981), who have claimed that exchanges in social discourse consist of two parts. Contrary to these influential views, I argue, heavily indebted to Tsui (1994), that in a conflictual episode the three-part exchange is a more powerful description of the basic unit of conversational organisation.

Furthermore, the study has shown how, in conflicting about a particular 'disputed issue statement', British and Spanish speakers tend to adhere to their own position and to devaluate the validity of the opponent's position. In pursuance of this aim, guests attempt to legitimate their positions against their opponents by taking advantage of certain linguistic devices, which are aimed at varying the equal status distribution among participants. Thus, they adopt an assertive style of discourse which relies on the use of the following linguistic devices:

British and Spanish speakers seem to take advantage of elicitation and informatives to exercise power and legitimate them as being in control.

In addition to this, both British and Spanish speakers have been shown to regulate the balance of power by producing challenging moves - by means of simple negation, disagreement and indirect negation.

Another important consequence of turn-taking analysis is that it is also possible to assign the speakers' social identities. Even though it is now widely accepted (Coates 1995: 13) that women and men talk differently, I have argued that the overall categories Feminine and Masculine seem to fade in a Talkshow conflictual episode, in which women adopt the discourse patterns of male speakers. In doing so, women socialise into a competitive style of discourse and are urged to adapt to what is required, by accepting the male-dominated discourse in the public sphere. In this light, close inspection of the data has shown how women: (a) constantly interrupt the speech of men; (b) are likely to challenge or dispute men's utterances - this is not expected from an inferior; (c) use mechanisms of controlling the topic and challenge men's attempts to do so; and (d) make direct declarations of facts or opinions, even though they may be face-threatening acts- to men. In this sense, this fact reflects the social confusion about women's role in the public arena.

All in all, this systematic and empirical study has left much work undone on Conflict Talk. This approach may be enriched by further research on cognitive grounds to shed further light on the parameters which activate conflict, whether with regard to the informational content or to other linguistic strategies.

NOTES

¹ The study of turn-taking organisation has proved to be one central issue to take into consideration when analysing spoken language in different contexts. Examples include works on courtroom interaction; therapeutic discourse or classroom discourse, etc.

² It is worth making explicit that the selection of the eliciting and informing initiating exchanges taken to illustrate the analysis belongs to a bigger unit of analysis: the MFTA (Macro Face Threatening Act) - which I have adopted from Garcés' proposal (1991), heavily indebted to Van Dijk's concept of Macro-Speech Act. In addition, initiating moves were not only understood as totally initiating, i.e. in a bounded episode, since most conflictive episodes developed and operated over lengthy sections of discourse. In the light of this, initiating moves were mainly regarded as potential triggers of a verbal conflict. However, for the sake of space it is not possible to offer the whole extension of the episode, which would certainly provide the information that the audience and the participants have of the situation under discussion.

³ Note that in other kinds of power relationship, limitations are expected, i.e. a boss-secretary or mother-son relationship.

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