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**CROSS-SEX MISCOMMUNICATION IN  
FICTIONAL-TALK: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY**

por

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Dissertação submetida à Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina para a obtenção do grau de MESTRE EM LETRAS.

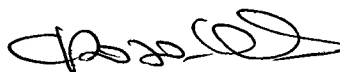
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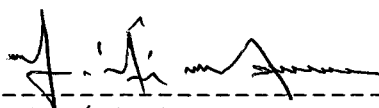
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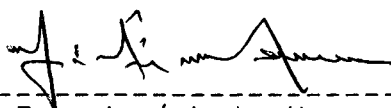


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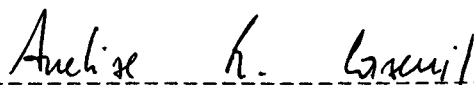
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UNIVERSIDADE FEDERAL DE SANTA CATARINA  
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**ABSTRACT**

This study is concerned with the analysis of fictional cross-sex miscommunication and fictional talk. The data collected are samples of fictional interactions extracted from films produced in English. The analysis of the data focuses on the use of conversational rules by women and men (as film-characters) and on the extent this use differs from what occurs in real conversations. Women's and men's conversational styles have been described in studies on *Language and Sex* as different from one another. Thus, this study also offers an analysis of these styles and the way speakers use them in instances of fictional conflict-talk. On the whole the chapters deal with: a structural analysis of the data collected (Turn-Taking System) and a semantic analysis (the Cooperative Principle, the Coherence Rule, and the use of Indirectness). The main findings of this research reveal that both women and men may adopt conversational styles which have been described as being particular of the other sex. Also, one of the factors that influence the speakers to adopt a conversational style (regardless of it being described as specific to women or men) is how they establish dominant and submissive conversational roles intrinsic to the logic of winning and losing.

## RESUMO

Este estudo se preocupa com a análise da má comunicação entre os sexos em interações ficcionais. Os dados coletados para a análise são exemplos de interações ficcionais retirados de filmes produzidos em inglês. O enfoque da análise se dá no uso de princípios conversacionais por mulheres e homens (como personagens de um filme) e até que ponto este uso difere do que acontece em conversações reais. Os estilos conversacionais de mulheres e homens têm sido descritos em estudos sobre *Linguagem e Sexo* como diferentes um do outro. Assim, este estudo também oferece uma análise destes estilos e o modo como os falantes os usam em casos de conflito falado. Em termos gerais, seus diferentes capítulos trazem: uma análise estrutural dos dados coletados (Sistema de Tomada de Turnos) e uma análise semântica (o Princípio Cooperativo, as Regras de Coerência, o uso de 'Indirectness'). Os principais resultados desta pesquisa revelam que tanto mulheres como homens podem adotar estilos conversacionais que têm sido descritos como sendo específicos do outro sexo. Além disso, um dos fatores que influencia os falantes a adotar um estilo conversacional (independente de ser o estilo considerado feminino ou masculino) é como eles negociam papéis conversacionais de domínio e submissão intrínsecos a uma lógica de ganhos e perdas presente no conflito falado.

**CROSS-SEX MISCOMMUNICATION IN  
FICTIONAL-TALK: A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS STUDY**

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## TRANSCRIPTION CONVENTIONS

... indicates long pauses

(...) indicates short pauses

/?/ indicates transcription is impossible

- hyphen after a word or a partial word indicates interruption or self-interruption

/words/ within slashes indicate uncertain transcription

→ arrow indicates turns under analysis

[brackets] are used for comments on quality of speech and explanations about the context

[ brackets between lines indicate overlapping speech  
two people talking at the same time

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

When speakers engage in a conversation they may be engaging in a pleasant communication game or in a hotchpotch of misunderstandings. By this I mean that conversation can be described as an activity in which speakers may either experience a sense of accomplishment or a feeling of deep frustration. Everyone has heard about or has had the experience of an argument or of cheerful 'small talk' with someone else. In this study I look into the problematic conversational circumstances between women and men which I term here as 'cross-sex miscommunication'.

To be specific, I want to consider cross-sex miscommunication under two perspectives: that of the use of conversational rules proposed by studies on conversational analysis and that of the differences in the speech of women and men proposed by studies on language and sex. These two



perspectives will be analysed in instances of miscommunication. In other words, I want to observe how interactants establish different conversational roles through the use of conversational rules and different conversational styles.

In theoretical terms, conversation has been described as a rule-governed system, even though, apparently, it may seem to be disorganized. Conversational analysts have observed, for example, that there is a set of rules for the organization of turns in conversation (Sacks et al:1978), that there is a relationship between utterances in conversational exchanges (Tsui:1991), that there are certain principles that the speakers follow when they interact with one another (Grice:1975), and that speakers may be indirect in most of the things they say (Tannen:1986).

Conversational analysts have also developed studies on conflict talk (Grimshaw, 1990). In this respect one important characteristic of conflict in conversation is that it expresses opposition. In other words, the participants adopt opposing conversational positions (dominance and submission) which are present on the linguistic and paralinguistic devices and body language used during the conflicting interaction. In such circumstance, the participants oppose their utterances, actions, or selves of one another along the conversational exchanges (Vuchinic, 1990).

Moreover, it has been observed that conversation is, in general terms, highly linked to socio-cultural phenomena which characterize differences in the way people speak (Gumperz:1988). In this respect, there has been some evidence from studies on

language and sex that women and men grow up in different cultural groups (Maltz & Borker:1988, Coates:1986), perform different social roles (Lakoff:1975), and, as a consequence, develop different conversational styles (Tannen:1986). These findings have been largely explored by psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists, and linguists. This interest is justifiable because these findings bring to light basic differences between the sexes as social and cultural subgroups.

Let us turn now to the way this study will be organized. I will consider here the turn-taking system, the coherence rule, the cooperative principle, and the use of indirectness in conversation. They will serve as tools for the data analysis as well as a way for organizing the chapters. This study, then, consists of five chapters as follows:

Chapter 2 deals with the structural aspects of the turn-taking system. Chapter 3 focuses on a semantic analysis of the use of irony and conversational coherence. In Chapter 4, the focus shifts to the interrelation between messages and metamessages in the use of indirectness. And Chapter 5 presents the concluding remarks and suggestions for further research.

The theories to be used are reviewed according to the development of the study. In the pages that follow this introduction I restrict my discussion to some of the characteristics of cross-sex communication, the definition of conflict talk, and explanations about the data collected for the analysis. With this preliminary considerations in mind, I want to begin by commenting on one of the perspectives referred above:

the differences between the speech of women and men.

### **1.1. What Happens in Cross-sex Communication?**

Many studies have shown that woman and men have different cultural rules for conversation and that miscommunication usually happens in cross-sex communication. In this regard, Maltz & Borker (1988) said that women and men have problems when interacting with one another because they have different concepts and rules for communicating what they mean.

In examining the data of previous studies on the subject, Maltz & Borker found out that the speech of women and men have peculiar features. These features, on the one hand, characterize the differences of their speeches and, on the other hand, can be the source of miscommunication between the sexes. Thus according to them, women tend to inquire more often, that is, they ask questions more frequently with the purpose of keeping the flow of the conversation. They also use more positive minimal responses (huh-huh, yeah, etc) and insert comments during the conversation. They react when being interrupted. When minimal responses are not provided, they get silent and they usually acknowledge the presence of the other participants by using the pronouns 'you' and 'we'. Men, for their part, interrupt more often when other speakers have the floor and are more likely to challenge what is being said. They do not acknowledge other peoples statements and scarcely offer some kind of feedback. Also, they tend to control the topic of a conversation and generally make direct statements.

Considering these differences between women and men, Maltz & Borker verified that researchers offered two types of explanations for them: the reflexion of the social system in the speakers' conversational behaviour and different psychological attitudes characterized by the sex-role requirement established by the society. In this way, the roles played by women and men are distinguished by differences in social power. That is, the features of men's speech is characterized by the dominant role that they play in society and women's speech by the non-dominant role that they play. These explanations, however, are not all inclusive for Maltz & Borker for they believe that women and men have different 'sociolinguistic subcultures'. In other words, because women and men grow up in different social contexts, they acquire different conceptions and rules for speaking.

In the light of this belief, Maltz & Borker suggest that women and men have different experiences during childhood which influence their learning of what conversation is. Basically, girls seek for 'intimacy, equality, mutual commitment, and loyalty' (p.205). The world of boys, on the contrary, is characterized by a relation of power. The status of dominant and non-dominant boys are marked hierarchically and this is done through the use of speech, organization of plays, and story telling ability.

Consequently, women quite often negotiate relationships or express solidarity in their speech. In contrast, men's speech is composed of '... shouting, waging, name-calling, and verbal threats (...) also practical jokes, put-downs, insults, and other

forms of verbal aggression' (Maltz & Borker 1988:212). These verbal strategies characterize men's conversational behaviour as a challenging one.

In short, Maltz & Borker say that there may be a clash of different rules for speaking when women and men interact due to cultural differences. These differences, then, may be a fertile soil for miscommunication in cross-sex conversation. In general terms, Maltz & Borker's research showed the importance of the consideration of a cultural perspective in the study of cross-sex communication.

Given these facts, avoiding cross-sex miscommunication is not just a matter of achieving real communication during a conversational exchange. There are subtle and implicit aspects such as those described above that highly influence the route an interaction takes. Conversational analysts, however, say that being alert to these problems is only a step we take towards better communication. Gumperz (1982) and Tannen (1986), for example, suggest that by saying in a different way what was misunderstood and by trying to attune different conversational styles interactants may avoid break downs in communication. Smith (1985) goes a little further by suggesting that even though speakers can try to interactionally adapt themselves to one another during a conversation (attuning levels of control (dominance) and affiliation (developing relationships)), this may not be of great help in conflicting interactions:

... the interactants in mixed sex encounters may sometimes be negotiating at cross-purposes,

resulting in misunderstandings, conflict, and dissatisfaction. Difficult problems arise when this conflict becomes the focus of the interaction. Unless and until it is recognized that the root of the conflict lies in differences of interactional purpose, interactants may attempt to accommodate to each other by changing levels of control or affiliation without converging in terms of underlying goals. On the other hand, people may find that converging in terms of goals is unsatisfactory because it necessitates the abandonment of the original salient and satisfying goal dimension. For example, women may acquire the skill of assertiveness and thus successfully engage in control-related aspects of interaction, while still feeling that they have not solved the essential problem of goal divergence, or satisfied the affiliative requirements of interaction. (Smith 1985:168)

Women and men bring with them differences specific to each sex and these differences may influence the way they interact with one another. Although, cross-sex miscommunication has been the focus of attention of many researchers, there is still much to do in this area. The analysis I propose here is a contribution to new insights into the semantic and structural aspects of conflicting interactions between women and men.

## 1.2 - Conflict talk

As I said earlier, the analysis in this study also focuses on the interactants' management of opposing linguistic behaviour (and on miscommunication as the outcome of this opposition). This leads us to another important issue; that of conflict talk. According to Vuchinich (1990):

In verbal conflict talk the participants verbally place themselves in symbolic positions that are opposed to one another. Oppositional turns can take many forms, which range from stating opposing positions in a rational debate format, to the irrational trading of vicious insults or threats. Whatever specific form it takes, this oppositional positioning establishes preconditions for the display of dominance and submission. Once the oppositional positions have been taken up, one of the participants may give in or submit to the other. Submission by one party marks the dominance of the opposing party. (...) In terms of game theory the dominant participant is the winner and the submissive participant is the loser." (p.120)

Thus, in conflict talk speakers engage themselves in a win/lose logic (Goffman, 1967) that assigns dominant and submissive conversational roles. These roles display a breakdown in consensus on the matter being talked over. Lack of consensus, then, can be found on social issues like the truth and existence of facts, rights, and feelings which create the very basis for a conflict.

It is important to notice that the participants in conflict talk, like in games, are aware that they may be winners and losers and that the conflict breeds from this participants' conversational struggle. In short, speakers in conflict talk, may either accept (submission) or reject (dominance) the opponent's position, but they always try to make their participation a final and decisive one.

Let me now relate this to the research I propose in this study. Considering Vuchinich's (1990) concept of conflict talk I concentrate the analysis of cross-sex miscommunication on the

speakers' management of submissive and dominant roles through the use of conversational rules and sex differences.

### 1.3 - Data

In order to carry out this investigation, I collected twenty conflicting interactions from films produced in English (see APPENDIX). In general, these interactions are scripted conversational exchanges between women and men who have some kind of intimate relationship between them (wife/husband, girlfriend/boyfriend, fiancée/fiancé, and lovers). In having women and men as participants in conflicting interactions, I have restricted the data to cross-sex miscommunication. I must clarify, though, that miscommunication is to be viewed here as one variety of conflict talk; a distinctive discourse unit. As a variation, miscommunication in my data goes from simple squabbles to hostile arguments.

At this point it is relevant to discuss the choice of pseudo-interaction as data for the analysis. According to Caldas-Coulthard (1987) there is a difference between real-talk and fictional-talk. The second is an author's attempt to imitate the first based on her/his intuitions about what real-talk really is. Taking this into account, writers of scripted dialogues will basically resort to their assumptions of what conversation is to create fictional-talk. In this way, one basic difference between real-talk and fictional-Talk is that they are produced for



different purposes. Real-talk, on the one hand, is essentially realized for communicative and interactive purposes (even if it is a simple exchange of phatic communion - communication that does not convey information, but aims at establishing social contact). Fictional-talk, on the other hand, is not simply created with the aim of establishing communication, but it is part of a work (eg. novel, play, or film) which has other artistic purposes related to the creation of a mood, or a setting, or a plot, and so on. In other words, although real-talk and fictional-talk may seem to be alike, they are, in fact, different from one another. Caldas-Coulthard (1987) makes an interesting analogy about this in saying:

... Just as a spectator in a theatre viewing from a distance a heavily made-up face has the impression of normality, so a reader confronted with 'fictional' or 'represented' interaction (...), which differs in significant ways from real interaction, has the impression of reality. If the face is examined closely, however, one realizes that the first impression is caused by simplification or exaggeration. In the same way, authors simplify or exaggerate features of interactions according to their motives and ideological constraints. (p.29)

In establishing the differences between real-talk and fictional-talk, it is somehow evident that the analysis of scripted dialogues between women and men, is, to a certain extent, the analysis of a standardized form of their speech. That is to say, conventional ideas of how women and men actually speak may be expressed in fictional dialogues depending on the author's view of the world. In sum, the speech of women and men is not

free from being stereotyped in scripted dialogues since they are creations of an author. It is not necessary to say, however, that every stereotype is based on a real event. If we compare any kind of stereotype to the drawing of a caricature, we may say that stereotypes are, in some way, exaggerated pictures or imitations of certain 'basic features' of something or somebody. Therefore, it is these basic features that I consider as a case in point that cannot be disregarded.

To the extent that there is some foundation in stereotypes and in the reproduction of conversational rules in fictional-talk, it is worthwhile analysing fictional-talk based on the principle that first, we are not dealing with real-talk and second, that our aim is to observe what is being said within the constraints of fictional-talk as a form of interaction.

It is necessary to say here that in fictional talk, a form of pseudo-interaction, turns are allocated to the characters by the script writer. For this reason, the analyses of fictional talk is, as I have already said, the analysis of its author's concept of what real talk is. In this study I refer to the characters (women and men) as the participants who exchange conversational turns for a simple matter of convenience. I emphasize here, though, that scripted dialogues are in actuality, the voice of script writers and that the current chapters offer analyses on how script writers reproduce conversational rules to create conflict talk.

Finally, from all that has been said in this introduction I can summarize what is going to be explored in this research in

the following way: basically, I want to observe how the interactions collected are structured and semantically organized in terms of the use of conversational principles and sex differences. All this under the focus of the win/lose logic present in situations of cross-sex miscommunication. These points, however, will be discussed in the following chapters of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

# STRUCTURAL FEATURES IN MISCOMMUNICATION

In this chapter I investigate how conflicting interactions between women and men are structured in terms of the turn-taking system. In order to develop this investigation I resort to some of the points I have described about turn taking in cross-sex communication and Uchinich's concept of conflict talk.

This chapter is organized around the following questions: do women and men (as characters in pseudo-interaction) keep the cooperative and competitive styles in scripted conflicting dialogues? Or is it the logic of winning and losing a factor that establishes which style the participants adopt? These questions specify the topic to be studied and serve as guidelines for the development of the analysis. Bearing this in mind, I consider the

role of the following turn taking features:

- Interruptions, Self-Interruptions, and Stammers
- Opening and Closing Turns
- Overlaps
- Silent Turns.

## 2.1 - Turn-taking theory and cross-sex miscommunication

According to Sacks et al. (1978) one fundamental rule in conversation is that the speaker and the listener change from time to time. That is, speakers may have the floor for longer periods and listeners may play this role for a long time, but this is not a static situation in conversational exchanges. In this respect, the roles of speakers and listeners are exchanged according to the type of speech event and the communicative needs of the participants, so one neither speaks or listens all the time.

Another conversational rule proposed by Sacks et al. (1978) is that only one person speaks at a time. The view here is simply that there would be a clash of sounds and information if all participants decided to play only the role of speaker (or an embarrassing silence if they decided only for the role of listener.) Of course this rule may be violated by momentary overlaps (two people speaking at the same time) and interruptions, but, sooner or later, conversationalists look forward to the gradual exchange of the speaker-listener role-play

in conversation.

It seems, therefore, that the rules for turn-taking play an important role in the participants' ability to communicate. For it is by knowing how to manoeuvre our opportunities to talk and by knowing when to listen that we are able to participate in conversation. Thus, considering women and men as cultural subgroups, we can foresee that some differences in the use of the turn-taking principles can be found in their discourse. In fact, there seems to be a consensus among researchers that this seems to be the case.

As already mentioned before, as a consequence of these differences, several studies on language and sex (Lakoff:1975, Coates: 1986, Coulthard:1991, Maltz & Borker:1987, Wolfson: 1989) have pointed out that women tend to develop a more cooperative style in conversation and men a more competitive style. Differences in style, in fact, influence the production and organization of conversational contributions. According to the studies I have just referred to the following features have been found in women's and men's conversational styles concerning the use of the rules of turn-taking: women tend to respect the turns of other speakers, their interruptions are most of the time interactive supports such as minimal responses (yeah, huh, uhm-uhm, etc); they ask questions to facilitate the conversation's flow, and they get silent when faced with abrupt and constant interruptions or delayed minimal responses. Men, by contrast, interrupt the other participants more often challenging or debating over their utterances: they make most of the

overlapping, hold the floor longer when they have a turn, and do not always provide links between the turns (they may give delayed minimal responses or jump to another topic ignoring what was said previously).

Different turn-taking characteristics, therefore, do exist in the speech of women and men. Needless to say, these differences may cause problems in cross-sex communication: conflicts are bound to happen whenever opposing forces are put in friction.

The analysis in this chapter also focuses, as mentioned before, on the interactants' management of dominant and submissive linguistic behaviour (intrinsic to conflict talk) through the use of turn-taking rules. In real conflict talk, turn taking is competitive and overlaps and interruptions occur more often. Opening and closing turns mark how opponent speakers adopt dominant and submissive roles (Vuchinich, 1991) and silence generally indicates a breakdown in the mechanics of the interaction as well as a way through which interactants manage negative emotions (Tannen, 1991). This shows that the organization of turns in conflict talk is one way participants may exercise power over the others and establish statuses. Richards (1980) makes this point when he says that:

To some degree turn-taking is by rank, and assertion of the right to talk an indicator of the power or status of the speaker and the degree to which the participants in conversation are of the same or different ranks. Turn-taking is one way in which roles and statuses are negotiated in conversation. (p.425)

In fictional-talk, however, script writers basically follow the one-speaker-at-a-time pattern in their dialogues. In order to portray conflict they may follow the rules for real-talk. For this reason, the analysis of this chapter per se focus on how script writers conversationally develop miscommunication.

## 2.2 - The organization of some turn-taking aspects in fictional cross-sex miscommunication

### 2.2.1 - Interruptions, Self-Interruptions, and Stammers

Broadly speaking, interruptions are, the breakdown of the continuity of something. In this way, they are, in many occasions, seen as uncooperative conversational behaviour. Wardhaugh (1985), for example, says that

... Not all conversations proceed smoothly, effortlessly, and cooperatively. Sometimes it is necessary to interrupt what someone is saying and be uncooperative. Any kind of interruption is a violation of another's territory or right. (p.150)

Since interruptions are considered as a violation of one's right to complete or finish her/his contribution, in conflict-talk they may appear as an important ingredient that gives evidence for the presence of the win/lose logic. That is to say, by interrupting the turn of other speakers we adopt a



dominant role by controlling the amount of talk and the course of the arguments. If, after interrupting and speaking we do not grant the other speaker the right to finish or complete her/his fair share in the interaction, s/he will surely get out of the conversation with a sense of incompleteness and frustration.

Self-interruptions and stammers, on the contrary, are not considered as signs of dominance. Instead, they are primarily considered as signs of hesitation in conversation. By hesitation I mean a speaker's state of uncertainty and unwillingness which is reflected in her/his speech as repetition and word or sentence repairs that characterize a submissive role.

In analysing the twenty interactions collected for this study, I observed women's and men's speech separately and found out that there is a significant number of interactions in which interruptions, self-interruptions, and stammers do not occur in their speech. This, I may say, is a characteristic of fictional-talk since hesitation phenomena and interruptions will largely depend on extra-conversational factors such as the author's idea of what conversation is, the mood of the scene, and the actress' or actor's performance. Abercrombie (in Burton:1986), in this regard, says that real speakers do not speak like characters of novels, plays, or films because the excessive amount of hesitations and interruptions, natural in real-talk, would make the speech of the characters confusing and inarticulate.

Now let's turn to the analysis of the interruptions itself. A clear fact in my data is that women made most of the interrupting, all the interruptions being evident demonstration

of dominance. By this I mean that the interruptions appear as constraining and controlling conversational devices. In other words, by producing them, the women take the floor, control the course of the arguments, and mark the presence of miscommunication. As an illustration, in interaction N Dex and Gail meet to sign the papers of their divorce. Inevitably they start talking about the end of their relationship. (Turns being interrupted are arrowed.)

#### Interaction N

- 18 Dex: You know marriages can't always be as hot as a honeymoon. There are ups and downs. Two people when they live together-
- 19 Gail: You know, you are so smart! And you don't have the faintest idea what I'm talking about, do you? (...) 'Cause like making love became a matter of just going through emotions was hard enough! But I could take it if you'd only talked to me!
- 20 Dex: Talk!? I talk. All day, every day it's what I do-
- 21 Gail: No, it's ironic /?/. It's not intimacy. And after a while it's abuse. I'm sorry I lied when I said: 'For better or worse.' I'm not gonna stick around when someone I love is withering away!

In this piece of conversation, the woman deliberately interrupts the man. In doing so, she grabs the floor constraining both the content of what is being said (she introduces her view of the problem) and the man's right to speak. This conversational behaviour, then, structurally implies that the woman is the winner and this guarantees her the status of power-holder in the conflict.

In some way most of the interruptions in my data occur in the same vein. That is, the writer ascribes the women with the role of dominant participant and conveys the presence of miscommunication. However, let's observe what happens in interaction I in which the man is the interrupter. Holly, one of Hannah's sisters, writes a book about their family. Hannah reads the book and finds out that she has written private things about her relationship with John, her husband. She believes he has been talking to one of her sisters about their personal problems. John curtly interrupts Hannah in an attempt to refute her accusations.

Interaction I

- 1 Hannah: Have you been talking to Holly or Lee about us? About our personal life?
- 2 John: Me? Of course not.
- 3 Hannah: These things Holly wrote about in the script, about us, they are so personal that they can only come from you!
- 4 John: Look, I've got splitting headache and I don't like being accused!
- 5 Hannah: I'm not accusing you! I'm asking! Do you-do you find me too-too-too competent? Too-too disgusting perfect or -something?
- 6 John: -No! [shouting]
- 7 Hannah: Oh, what is it, then? What-what's come between us? How have I alienated?
- 8 John: Hannah, my head is /sober/!
- 9 Hannah: You never wanna talk about it. I-, everytime I bring it up you-you change the subject! What is it? Did you-, We're communicating less and less-
- 10 John: Hannah, I'm very mixed up! Please! [shouting]
- 11 Hannah: Do you talk to Holly or Lee behind my back? Do you? You must! They seem to know so much about us!

Although this interruption may seem to be a demonstration of dominance, for it is an attempt to change the topic or finish the conversation, it is the woman who keeps the dominant role. That is, she doubts her husband's honesty and in consequence she bombards him with questions disregarding his abrupt interruption. In this case, the interruption produced by the man is much more a defensive conversational behaviour than an attempt to control the situation.

In these dialogues, in short, the women did not use interruptions as interactive supports, they did not respect the other participants' turns, but they asked questions as a dominant conversational strategy. Finally, they were not intimidated when being interrupted. Structurally speaking, women's interruptions were controlling and constraining conversational aspects that characterized dominant conversational roles.

In terms of hesitation-phenomena, women's turns are, in these data, full of hesitations. Men's are not so much, but along the interactions as a whole they hesitate several times as well. Interactions I, H and U are good examples of the difference between women and men in terms of the amount of self-interruptions and stammers in their speech. In these interactions women hesitate more every time they have the floor while men hesitate once in a while. This means that writers see women and men as different categories.

As mentioned before, hesitation phenomena is seen in general as a marker of submissive conversational roles. By hesitating the speaker assents (comply) the oppositional attack

and this signals submission (Vuchinich, 1991). However, let's take a look at interaction H where Hannah and John are talking about their relationship. Hannah thinks that there is something wrong with John because he is cold and stands aloof from her. (hesitation-phenomena are underlined.)

#### Interaction H

- 23 Hannah: Are you in love with someone?  
 24 John: My God! What-what is this? The Gestapo?  
 No!  
 25 Hannah: Well, what-what are you not telling me?  
 26 John: John: What kind of interrogation-Su-  
suppose that I said yes. I-I-I am  
 disenchanted! I'm in love with someone  
 else!  
 27 Hannah: Are you?  
 28 John: (...) No! But, you keep asking these-  
these awful questions! My God, it's-it's-  
 like you want me to say yes!

In this passage we find hesitations in the speech of both participants. The man, however, self-interrupted more and there are more stammers in his speech. Although we find a stammer in the woman's speech (it simply marks some nervousness), she is the dominant participant in the interaction because she bombards him with questions. The next passage, by contrast, conforms to the rule. It shows us a man as the dominant participant. Whereas the woman's speech is marked by stammers and self-interruptions, the man's speech is marked by appeasing comments and no hesitations.

Jack and Nora are talking about Nora's decision to quit her job in interaction U. She is very depressed and he tries to comfort her. But when he gets to know that she does not want to

work anymore they start quarrelling.

#### Interaction U

- 1 Jack: Nora, calm down! Just get control of yourself! What's wrong with you?
- 2 Nora: (...) I'm sorry. (...) I'm alright. Honestly! See! I'm in control. (...) New shirt? [trying to change the topic]
- 3 Jack: Yeah.
- 4 Nora: It's very nice.
- 5 Jack: Oh, thanks.
- 6 Nora: No, Honey! I-I-I-huh-I-I think it's actually a- (...) breakdown that I'm having. It's-it's-it's more like a-huh- total mental collapse. I can't do it! I won't do it! I can't! [crying]
- 7 Jack: Calm down, Sweetheart! I'm here! Don't worry! Everything is gonna be alright! Please! Please! Shhhhhh!

It is possible to observe here that structurally the hesitation-phenomena in the woman's speech really reflects her state of mind.

The data discussed above suggests that the interruptions made by the women were demonstrations of dominance like in the win/lose logic of real conflict talk. Men, on the other hand, did not make a great number of interruptions as it is generally thought that they do. In effect and in a broad sense, the interruptions in these examples are much more an aspect of the turn-taking system that demonstrates dominance for they are the opponents' attempts to control and constrain the participation of the other speakers. That is to say, the interruptions marked the presence of miscommunication.

From the point of view of self-interruptions and stammers as hesitation-phenomena, both women and men played the role of submissive participants in some interactions. An interesting finding, though, is that hesitation-phenomena as a demonstration of submission stands as a signal of compliance. This in the game theory, means that women and men hesitated when being losers.

Having examined interruptions and hesitation-phenomena in the speech of women and men. I will, in the next section, discuss how opening and closing turns mark the presence of miscommunication between the sexes.

### 2.2.2 - Opening and closing turns

Another curious and interesting aspect of real-talk is how people begin or end a conversation. Speakers follow certain rules in order to begin or stop a conversational exchange. One usual way to open up a conversation is through the use of 'adjacency pairs' ('a sequence of two related utterances by two different speakers. The second is always a response to the first' Richards et al. 1985:5). The adjacency pair 'greeting-greeting' (eg. speaker A: How do you do., speaker B: How do you do!), for example, is commonly used by speakers to begin a conversation. Also, in bringing a conversation to an end, speakers do not suddenly and unexpectedly stop talking. The end of a conversation is usually negotiated by the participants and linguistic pre-closings such as 'Well, I must be going. See you later!' or

extra-linguistic pre-closings such as a glance at a watch may give us clear hints of the participant's desire to finish the conversation.

Bearing the above explanation about openings and closings in mind, I want to observe how speakers begin or terminate the conflict in the fictional interactions of my data. In order to verify this I analysed the openings and closings of the interactions and found out that both women and men introduced the conflict in the very opening turns in thirteen interaction (women: H/I/N/S/T/B, men: A/D/E/F/Q/L/C). A basic feature in these interactions is that the conflict is sometimes mitigated or sometimes stated directly. Basically the speakers mitigated the introduction of the conflict with questions, a tag question, and a metastatement. The openings below illustrate the mitigation of the conflict. In interaction H Hannah wants to know why John is nervous, in D Dan wants to end up the relationship with Debbie, and in A Dan has to tell his wife he had an affair. (Mitigated openings are arrowed.)

#### Interaction H

- 1 Hannah: Are you in a bad mood?  
2 John: I don't know I'm just anxious. [nervously]

#### Interaction D

- 1 Debbie: Dan!  
→ 2 Dan: In here. (...) I'm sorry. It's just not working out, is it?



## Interaction A

- 1 Dan: (...) Honey, we've gotta talk.  
 2 Beth: ... What is it? [scared]

In contrast, there are interactions in which the conflict is stated in a straightforward manner in the opening turns (S/T/F/Q). For example, in S Susie tells Jack she is leaving their band because she is unhappy with their intimate relationship and in Q Gil tells Karen he has quit his job because of a quarrel with his boss. Karen, however, does not think it is the right moment to quit his job since she is pregnant.

## Interaction S

- 1 Susie: I told Frank I'm quitting  
 2 Jack: (...) Congratulations. [ironically]

## Interaction Q

- 1 Gil: I quit my job.  
 2 Karen: (...) Why?

In the remaining interactions the conflict is introduced in other turns (U/P/G/M), by an overlap (J), and by silent turns (R/O) (overlaps and silent turns will be discussed in 2.3.3 and 2.3.4 respectively).

Also, I observed that closing turns, as the ending of the interaction, also mark a dominant/submissive relationship between the participants. In terms of consensus, there is only one interaction in which the conflict is apparently solved and the participants seem to reach an agreement in the closing turn. In

interaction E Lauren is jealous of a woman named Cony Holt who usually calls her lover. Hobbie makes her believe, though, that Mrs. Holt is nothing to him and that there is no reason for them to argue. (closing turns are arrowed)

#### Interaction E

13 Hobbie: [kisses her] Will you stop? Can you stop it? Can you just be sweet and loving? And stop fighting?

14 Lauren: To hell with Mrs. Holt!

→15 Hobbie: To hell with her. [embrace each other]

In all the other interactions the participants end off the conversation, but not the conflict. The impression we get is that in their next or future meeting they will return to the same topic. In interaction A Dan and Beth get to the climax of a discussion when Dan tells her he had an affair. Beth is furious with him, but they only stop arguing when they see their daughter in the room. Let me illustrate how the conflict is not solved in a passage of the interaction referred above:

#### Interaction A

17 Dan: I don't know. That's what she says. Listen Beth, please! Please!

18 Beth: Get out of here! I want you out of here! I want you out of this house! I want you out now!

19 Dan: [How could you do that? I hate you! Don't you understand!

20 Beth: [I don't wanna hear it! I don't wanna hear it!

21 Dan: [Please, Beth! Please! Just listen to me!

→ 22 Beth: What's the matter with you? [shouting]  
 [they stop arguing when their six - year old  
 daughter comes in]

Having identified what occurs in the opening and closing turns of some of my examples, I want to consider, again, the question of dominance and submission between the participants. An interesting point about opening turns is that the participants who mitigated the introduction of the conflict adopted a submissive participation and those who stated it directly were giving clear demonstrations of dominance in the very act of pointing out the problem in the opening turn. This, in consequence, gave them the status of dominant participants. These roles, however, were not played during the entire dialogue in some interactions. That is, a speaker who had began as a submissive participant at some point became the dominant one or vice versa. This exchange of dominant and submissive roles is the result, then, of the win/lose logic that rules conflict talk. By trying to be winners, the speakers oppose their utterances to overcome the pungency of the preceding remark. As examples of these situations let's observe interaction S with a direct statement and interaction I with a mitigated opening both with oscillations of dominant and submissive role. (M = man, W = woman).

TRANSCRIPTION - INTERACTION S

COMMENTS

1 Susie: I told Frank I'm quitting the job.

W directly states the problem  
 - dominant role.

2 Jack: (...) Congratulations!

3 Susie: As it from now.

4 Jack: Well, (...) if you need a recommendation you let me know, huh!

5 Susie: Jesus, your cold! You know that? God, you're like a fucking razor blade!

6 Jack: 'Careful or you'll make me think you're getting soft on me.

7 Susie: You don't care about it, do you? About anything!

8 Jack: What do you want from me? Do you want to stay? So, this what you're looking for? You want to make me get down on my knees and beg you to save The Baker Boys [him and Frank] from /?/. Forget it, Sweetheart! We survived for 15 years before you started on this thing. 15 years! Two seconds and you're bawling like a baby! You shouldn't be wearing a dress. You should be wearing a diaper!

9 Susie: Jesus, you and Frank aren't brothers, are you?

10 Jack: Let me tell you something! Over years they drop like flies in every fucking hotel in this city! We're still here! We could never have a day off in our lives. Frank is an easy target. But he's been doing quite fine.

M shows indifference.

W tries to constrain his indifferent comment.

M shows indifference again.

W loses the dominant role by addressing his callous conversational participation.

M becomes ironic (dominant role). See 3.1 for details on irony in cross-sex miscommunication.

W carries on addressing his callousness.

Since M's callousness constrained W's participation (she stopped being direct and addressed his indifference), he carries on being ironic and indifferent.

W still addresses M's coldness.

M aggressively answers her question.

11 Susie: Yeah! Frank is doing great! He's-  
 huh- got the wife, the kids, a  
 little house in the suburbs.  
 Meanwhile, he's brother is sitting  
 in a shitty apartment, with a sick  
 dog, looking after an orphanage,  
 and a tip on his shoulders, but a  
 belly as big as a cadillac!

12 Jack: Listen to me, princess! We fucked  
 twice! That's it! Except for that  
 you still don't know a shit about  
 me! Got it!

13 Susie: I know one thing. While Frank  
 Baker was sleeping last night,  
 little brother Jack was out  
 dusting off his dreams for a few  
 moments. I was there! [she saw him  
 playing jazz in a bar the night  
 before] I saw it on your face!  
 Oh, you're a shit! You're a fake!  
 Everytime you walk into a shitty show  
 we had, you're selling yourself on  
 the cheap! I know a lot about that!  
 I bribe myself at the end of the  
 night with some creep and tell  
 myself it didn't matter. And you kid  
 yourself that you got this empty  
 place inside where you can put it  
 all. But you do alone and after all  
 you are as empty!

14 Jack: I didn't know whores were so  
 philosophical!

15 Susie: At least my brother is not my

With the previous answer  
 W gains the dominant role  
 again for her question in  
 9 constrained his  
 participation.

M perceives her dominant  
 participation and  
 returns to his earlier ironic  
 and aggressive participation.  
 W carries on with the  
 constraining discourse  
 introduced in 11 which made  
 her participation a dominant  
 one.

M fights for the  
 conversational power by  
 insisting on an excessively  
 ironic and aggressive  
 discourse.

W ends up the conversation

pimp! ... You know I had you  
 pictured for a loser the first  
 time I saw you, but I was wrong!  
 You're worse! (...) You're a  
 coward! [she walks away]

#### TRANSCRIPTION - INTERACTION 1

- 1 Hannah: Have you been talking to Holly  
 or Lee about us? About our  
 personal life?
- 2 John: Me? Of course not.
- 3 Hannah: These things Holly wrote about  
 in the script, about us, they are  
 so personal that they can only  
 come from you!
- 4 John: Look, I've got splitting headache  
 and I don't like being accused!
- 5 Hannah: I'm not accusing you! I'm  
 asking! Do you-do you find me  
 too-too-too competent? Too-too  
 disgusting perfect or  
 something?
- 6 John: No!
- 7 Hannah: Oh, what is it, then? What-  
 what's come between us? How have  
 I alienated?
- 8 John: Hannah, my head is /sober/!

by ignoring his attempt to  
 be the winner and by being  
 direct.

#### COMMENTS

- W mitigates the introduction  
 of the problem. Submissive  
 role.
- M answers her question
- W disregards his answer and  
 directly states the problem  
 demonstrating dominance.
- M perceives that she  
 adopted a dominant  
 conversational behaviour  
 and to refuse it he is  
 incisive.
- W tries to mitigate her  
 discourse again by saying she  
 is asking and is not being  
 direct. She also stammers as  
 a sign of lack of submission.  
 See 2.3.1.
- M shouts an incisive 'no' to  
 her questioning adopting a  
 more dominant participation.
- W carries on asking  
 questions.
- M disregards what she says  
 and implicitly signals that  
 he wants to end up the

9 Hannah: You never wanna talk about it. I-, everytime I bring it up you-you change the subject! What is it? Did you-. We're communicating less and less. You sleep with me less and less-

10 John: Hannah, I'm very mixed up!  
Please! [shouting]

11 Hannah: Do you talk to Holly or Lee behind my back? Do you? You must! They seem to know so much about us!

12 John: Oh, maybe I've asked advice once or twice or-or made a joke.

13 Hannah: What do you mean? Did-did-did you talk to Holly or Lee or what? Did-did you

14 John: phone them?  
Leave  
me alone, can you! Jesus, I told you I need someone I can matter to!

15 Hannah: You matter to me! Completely!

16 John: You can't be around someone who gives so much and-and needs so little in return!

17 Hannah: Huh, I-I have enormous needs!

conversation.

W complains about his conversational indifference.

M continues to disregard what she says and expresses his desire to finish the conversation.

W comes back to the conflicting topic, but mitigates it by asking a question.

M answers her question in an attempt to satisfy her and, consequently, to stop the dialogue.

W perceives that the question in 11 has constrained his discourse and as a result she bombards him with more questions to keep the conversational dominance.

M angrily refuses the constrain she tries to put him on and recovers the dominant role lost in 12.

W yields to his discourse adopting a submissive role by providing explanations.

M disregards her explanation and carries on with a dominant participation.

W provides another

18 John: But, I can't see and neither can  
Lee or Holly! [leaves the room]

explanation

M ends up the conversation by  
ignoring her explanations and  
by being direct.

In these examples we have an idea of how the conflict is introduced and how the speakers express conversational dominance and submission. An interesting point to observe, as I have already mentioned, is the relation between the manner in which the conflict is expressed in the opening turns and the dominant and submissive roles adopted by the participants. In the two interactions above, the mitigation of the conflict in the opening turn gives the speaker a submissive role and the direct statement expresses a more dominant role, though both situations were not constant along the interactions. Also it was not possible to identify conversational behaviours specific to each sex in terms of the introduction of the conflict, for both women and men mitigated it and also stated it directly, thus adopting both dominant and submissive roles.

In relation to closing turns it is common that speakers who have the 'last word' in conversation make their point as a final and decisive contribution, thus expressing dominance. In my data, both women and men had the 'last word' in some interactions (women A/L/N/O/T, men B/D/F/I/J/P/Q). Besides being, in some way, a demonstration of dominance, the last word in closing turns also shows us how successful the participants have been in reaching a consensus. In this respect, an outstanding feature in my data is that the participants may end off the conversation in the closing



turn, but not the conflict. The impression we get is that the topic will be discussed in the next or future conversation. The following interaction may exemplify what occurs in closing turns in the instances of fictional cross-sex miscommunication here under study. Dan had an affair with Alex, a girl from the office. She gets pregnant and Dan tries to tell his wife what happened.

#### Interaction A

- 1 Dan: (...) Honey, we've gotta talk.
  - 2 Beth: ... What is it?
  - 3 Dan: (...) I know who did this.
  - 4 Beth: (...) You do? Who?
  - 5 Dan: Remember the girl who-huh- (...) came to the apartment? The one I met at the Japanese restaurant?
  - 6 Beth: (...) The one with the blonde hair?
  - 7 Dan: [keeps silent]
  - 8 Beth: Huh, you're scaring me.
  - 9 Dan: [keeps silent]
  - 10 Beth: What is it? (...) Do you have an affair with her?
  - 11 Dan: Yes. ... Beth! (...) Beth, I'm so sorry. The last thing (...) I ever wanted was to hurt you.
  - 12 Beth: (...) Are you [crying] in love with her?
  - 13 Dan: No. No, it was-it was one night. But it ain't mean anything.
  - 14 Beth: (...) What does this go to do (...) with (...) with what's happened?
  - 15 Dan: ... She's pregnant.
  - 16 Beth: She's- (...). It's yours?
  - 17 Dan: I don't know. That's what she says. Listen Beth, please! Please!
  - 18 Beth: Get out of here! I want you out now!
  - 19 Dan: { How could you do that? I hate you!
  - 20 Beth: { Don't you understand!
  - 21 Dan: { I don't wanna hear it! I don't wanna hear it!
  - 22 Beth: { Please, Beth! Please! Just listen to me!
- 22 Beth: What's the matter with you? [shouting]  
[they stop arguing when they see their six-year old daughter comes in]

In 22 the conversation comes to an end, but we clearly notice that the conflict is not over. Moreover, the last word here is shouted out (a paralinguistic aspect of conflict talk) being in this way an expression of dominance, although the presence of the speakers' daughter (an extra-linguistic factor) contributed to the closing of the interaction.

Concerning the logic of winning and losing, both women and men played the roles of dominant and submissive participants in opening and closing turns. On the one hand, opening turns revealed the roles adopted by the participants despite the dominant and submissive role oscillation. On the other hand, closing turns revealed dominant participations in the sense that they contained the 'last word'. In the sense that participants negotiate a consensus, closing turns also revealed that the conflict was not solved because the participants do not wear the topic out and, in consequence, the conversation ends off in a frustrating tone.

In general, openings and closings in fictional cross-sex miscommunication do mark the presence of the conflict and demonstrate how women and men play dominant and submissive conversational roles in the way they introduce or terminate the conflict. This, in sum, has been the topic of this section. In the next section I will describe how overlaps, simultaneous talk among speakers, operate in my data.

### 2.2.3 - Overlaps

So far I have described how structural turn-taking features such as interruptions, hesitation-phenomena, and opening and closing turns operate in fictional cross-sex miscommunication. Here, I want to discuss the occurrence of overlaps in these fictional interactions, and how the participants make use of this conversational feature during the conflict.

As I have said before conversational overlaps are instances of simultaneous attempts to get the floor. In other words, conversationalists may sometimes momentarily speak at the same time. According to Sacks et al. (1974) speakers cannot speak at the same time if they want to understand each other. However, speakers sometimes overlap their speech with the speech of others to seek for clarification, to express completion or rapport and so on (Coulthard, 1978). In this way, the exchange of the speaker - listener role is not damaged and neither is the communication between the participants. The continuous occurrence of overlaps in conversation, however, may cause the violation of Sacks et al's rule. Consequently, this will involve a situation in which communication does not go on.

In my data overlapping speech occurs in six interactions. Women are responsible for the overlaps in three interactions (A/P/T) and men for the overlaps in the other three (I/J/V). These overlaps, however, differ in terms of what they express in the interactions. Let us now turn to what they express by looking

at examples (turns containing overlaps are arrowed).

**1 - Introduction of the conflict** - From the overlap made by one of the participants, the other one clearly sees that there is something wrong.

#### Interaction J

- 1 Debbie: Dan!
- 2 Dan: In here. [in the bedroom dressing himself up]
- 3 Debbie: Hi, Honey! You're gonna go to the basketball?
- 4 Dan: Yes.
- 5 Debbie: [kisses him], Huh, before you go can I show [you something?
- 6 Dan: [Do you thing you can clean up some of this shit? [there are some clothes spread over the bed]
- 7 Debbie: [disappointed] Ok.

**2 - Development of the conflict** - The conflict is introduced in the opening turn of the interaction. Then, it is marked by an interruption. Next, the overlap indicates that the dispute for the dominant role is increasing.

#### Interaction T

- 1 Claire: Let me out of the car! (...) Let me out or I'm gonna jump! [opens the door]
- 2 Cole: Hey! Hey! Hey! [stops the car and she gets out] claire! (...) Wait! I just-
- 3 Claire: Get away or I'll call the police!
- 4 Cole: You'll what?
- 5 Claire: You heard!
- 6 Cole: Ok! Call the police! but I'm not leaving till [you talk to me. [shouting]
- 7 Claire: [I've nothing to say! [curtly]
- 8 Cole: Well, I do! [shouting]
- 9 Claire: Ok, great! Let's hear it! [ironically]
- 10 Cole: Just-

11 Claire: You shouldn't be driving a car anyway.  
Not on the road, not on the racetrack  
and not on a parking lot! You're  
selfish! And you're crazy! And you're  
scared!

**3 - Climax of the conflict** - With the development of the dialogue, the conversational tension increases up to the moment that communication and the speaker-listener role-play is broken by the successive overlaps. This establishes the climax of the conflict.

#### Interaction A

12 Beth: (...) Are you [crying] in love with her?  
[a girl from the office]

13 Dan: No. No, it was-it was one night. But it  
ain't mean anything!

14 Beth: (...) What does this got to do (...) with  
(...) with what's happened?

15 Dan: ... She's pregnant.

16 Beth: She's- (...). It's yours?

→ 17 Dan: I don't know. That's what she says Listen  
Beth, please! Please!

→ 18 Beth: Get out of here! I want  
you out of here! I want you out of this  
house! I want you out now!  
[How could you do that? I hate you!  
[shouting]

→ 19 Dan: Don't you understand!

→ 20 Beth: =I don't wanna hear it! I don't wanna  
hear it!

→ 21 Dan: Please, Beth! Please! Just listen to me!

→ 22 Beth: What's the matter with you? [shouting]

**4 - A defensive conversational device** - Regarding the win/lose logic, the data shows that when speakers who play a submissive role feel themselves conversationally threatened (bombarded with questions or with an aggressive discourse = loud voice, irony, and pungent remarks), they use overlaps as a

defensive conversational device.

### Interaction I

- 1 Hannah: Have you been talking to Lee or Holy about us? About our personal life?
- 2 John: Me? Of course not!
- 3 Hannah: These things Holly wrote in the script, about us, they are so personal that they can only come from you!
- 4 John: Look, I've got splitting headache and I don't like being accused!
- 5 Hannah: I'm not accusing you! I'm asking! Do you-do you find me too-too-too competent? Too-too disgusting perfect or  
[ -something?
- 6 John: [No! [shouting!

### Interaction I

- 11 Hannah: Do you talk to Holy or Lee behind my back? You must! They seem to know so much about us!
- 12 John: Oh, maybe I've asked advice once or twice or-or made a joke.
- 13 Hannah: What do you mean? Did-did-did you talk to Holy or Lee or what? Did-did you  
[phone them?
- 14 John: [Leave me alone, can you? Jesus, I told you I need someone I can matter to!

### Interaction P

- 6 Susan: Oh! Are you accusing me of making that hole?
- 7 Nathan: [ironically] No, a woodpecker came in here, went into the bathroom, opened the drawers with its little wing, and pecked a couple of holes in your diaphragm! (...) I can't believe you were jeopardizing our plan, Susan! Remember when we read a vast majority of truly exceptional people have their own children or first born when there is at least a five year separation between sibs. We agreed [in this!
- 8 Susan: [No, you agreed. And they are not sibs! They are babies! And I wanna have another one!

In each of these uses of overlaps the conflict is expressed differently. In the introduction of the conflict (interaction J) the man curtly interrupts the woman with an overlap giving a clear hint that there is something wrong. Through the overlap the man introduces the conflict (turn 6), but the woman does not understand what the problem really is. In consequence, the woman becomes the submissive participant and the man the dominant one because she assents after the man's oppositional turn.

As a sign of the development of the conflict (interaction T) we see that the woman does not want to discuss the conflicting topic. For this reason, she interrupts the man with an overlap giving, at the same time, a demonstration of dominance and aloofness in discussing the topic. The man, however, aggressively responds to the woman's demonstration of dominance - the overlap - by shouting. But, this does not intimidate the woman and, as an expression of dominance, from this point on she provides a continuous oppositional attack.

The use of overlaps as the marker of the climax of the conflict (interaction A), conversely, shows us that there is a struggle between the participants to be winners. In other words, they struggle for conversational dominance. Finally, it is the woman who has the 'last word' which gives herself, in this way, the status of the dominant participant or the winner in the interaction.

Also, as illustrated above, the speakers during a conflict may interrupt each other with an overlap as an attempt to conversationally defend themselves from the opponent's oppositional attack which is, at the same time, an attempt to become the dominant participant. The attempt to change the submissive participation to a dominant one is, in particular, very frustrating in interactions I and P for none of the submissive speakers were able to change their roles except momentarily (with the production of the overlap).

It is possible, therefore, to conclude that overlaps as a structural feature can give us important information about the way conversationalists indicate the presence of the conflict in fictional cross-sex miscommunication. In terms of the differences in the speeches of women and men, this section reveals that overlaps are used by women and men to express opposition in conflict talk. It was not verified, that men are responsible for most of the overlapping as language and sex studies describe. The overlaps, in the examples above, are competitive attempts to adopt dominant or winner roles during a conflict and they are used in this sense for both women and men.

After having considered the meaning of overlaps in my data, I want to consider next what implications silent turns might have in the characterization of miscommunication in these fictional interactions.



### 2.3.4 - Silent Turns

Silence in conversation may be defined as a period during which one participant or the participants are not speaking. Although this is a correct definition, it is not a thorough one for silence as other verbal turns may convey important information. If we look closer into silent turns in conversation, we will probably see that silence is not merely the absence of meaningful sounds uttered by a speaker. On the contrary, silence may have a semantic value. That is to say, verbal signs may not be used by the speakers, but there are conversational assumptions and expectations that they usually carry with them and which help the speakers to extract the semantics of silence.

These assumptions and expectations are most of the time derived from the surface structure of the sentences in the interactional moves and they form the means by which conversationalists signal and interpret the meaning and relations of the utterances in a discourse. Thus, silent turns are always surrounded by other verbal turns which make up a context that allows speakers and listeners to infer meaning from silence. In this respect, we find in conversational context what we call **contextualization cues** that implicitly signal meaning and direct interpretations.

According to Gumperz (1982) contextualization cues are

... habitually used and perceived but rarely consciously noted and almost never talked about directly. (...) Roughly speaking a contextualization cue is any feature of linguistic

form that contributes to the signalling of contextual presuppositions. (...) The code, dialect and style switching process, some of the prosodic phenomena (...) as well as choice among lexical and syntactic options, formulaic expressions, conversational openings, closings and sequencing strategies can have similar contextualizing functions. (p.131)

In relation to silent turns, the messages conveyed by silence can be interpreted through the information this kind of cue carries. This information, however, is transmitted in a subtle way and depends largely on the participant's ability to perceive the meaningfulness of such cues.

Tannen (1990) investigates the role of silence in fictional talk. She suggests that silence is related in certain circumstances, to conflict and negative emotions. First, because it signals a breakdown in conversation. And second, because it conveys a lack of rapport. She also says that in conflicting scripted dialogues the author "calls for silence at the points where potentially explosive information is confronted [and] silence represents climaxes of emotion in interaction, the point at which the most demaging information has just been introduced into the dialogue." (p.260). In this last sense, the more the participants, in conflict talk, try to overcome their opponents' oppositional position, the more it is probable that they fall into silence signalling the climax of the conflict.

Considering, then, these basic information on conversational inference (means by which speakers and listener interpret and express intentions (eg. contextualization cues)) and on silence in fictional talk I investigate in this section

the meaning of silent turns in the data collected. Basically, there are four aspects of conversational inference that I consider in order to develop this analysis:

- 1 - Opening turns - initial move(s)
- 2 - Communicative goal (sequencing strategy) - verbal turns produced before the silent turn
- 3 - Silence - the silent turn itself
- 4 - Breaking of the silence (sequencing strategy) - verbal turns produced after the silent turn

In the practical level, these aspects may give us insights into the meaning of silent turns. On the one hand, opening turns, in some interactions, are introductory conversational turns that mark the presence of the conflict. This means that opening turns frame the interaction as being a conflicting one. On the other hand, sequencing strategies are the verbal moves that surround the silent turns and which create the linguistic context. Basically, it is this linguistic context that will implicitly reveal the meaning of silence in the conversation, and finally, the period of actual silence (silent turns) is to be viewed here as an instance of non-verbal activity which is contextually bound and, for this reason, susceptible of semantic analysis. That is to say, silence may give the participants important information, although conversationally it may be perceived as the lack of verbal meaningful signs.

In line with the scope of this study, the analysis I propose in this section is also concerned with conversational differences between women and men. The main issue, however, is to

describe the use of silent turns by women and men and observe to which extent this use expresses a dominant or submissive conversational behaviour in the fictional data under analysis.

Among the twenty interactions of my data only five contained silent turns (A/H/O/R/T) and the periods of silence were only found in men's speech. Firstly, in interaction A we have Beth and Dan who are married. Dan has an affair with Alex. She gets pregnant and Dan tries to tell Beth what happened between him and Alex. (silent turns are arrowed)

- 1 Dan: (...) Honey, we've gotta talk.
- 2 Beth: ... What is it?
- 3 Dan: (...) I know who did this.
- 4 Beth: (...) You do? Who?
- 5 Dan: Remember the girl who-huh- (...) came to the apartment? The one I met at the Japanese restaurant?
- 6 Beth: (...) The one with blonde hair.
- 7 Dan: [Keeps silent]
- 8 Beth: Huh, you're scaring me.
- 9 Dan: [Keeps silent]
- 10 Beth: What is it? (...) Do you have an affair with her?
- 11 Dan: Yes. ... Beth! (...) Beth, I'm so sorry. The last thing (...) I ever wanted to do was to hurt you.
- 12 Beth: (...) Are you [crying] in love with her?
- 13 Dan: No. No, it was-it was one night. But it ain't mean anything.
- 14 Beth: (...) What does this got to do (...) with (...) with what's happened?
- 15 Dan: ... She's pregnant.

A first interesting feature in this interaction is the use of the metastatement 'Honey, we've gotta talk' in the opening turn. By starting the conversation with it, the man frames the interaction as a serious one. We do not normally initiate a conversation saying that we need or have to converse, we simply

start talking. So, in the very opening turn there is a slight hint of the conflict in the interaction that is to come.

In this way, in order to express his communicative goal (to reveal his infidelity) straightforwardly the man uses a small narrative of past events to introduce the topic. This is a type of mitigating as well as defensive interactional strategy which prepares the grounds for the crucial information conveyed by the silent turns 'It is the blonde one. And I had an affair with her.' Also, through the turns which follow the silence, we see that the woman understands the semantic value of the silent turns. Her first question is 'What is it? Do you have an affair with her?' which is the information the man wants to convey, but does not verbalize. Finally, when breaking the silence the man initiates an apologetic discourse confirming the woman's inferences. At this point, the conflict is already established and a clear evidence for that are the continuous overlaps produced. Briefly, the silent turns in the speech of the man convey decisive information. This information (his infidelity) is highlighted by the contextualization cues described above. Besides their semantic value, silent turns, in this interaction, are a demonstration of fear to verbalize the conflicting information. This behaviour also reveals that the man plays the role of the submissive participant in this interaction.

Again, in interaction H it is the man who keeps silent. John is in love with Hannah's (his wife) sister. Hannah does not know about their love affair, but she notices John is upset about something. They start talking about his mood and end up

discussing their relationship. In the opening turn we get to know that something is wrong through the question 'Are you in a bad mood?' which suggests that the speaker is searching for the causes of a problem. During the progress of the interaction the man does not clarify his communicative goal, for this reason, the woman asks a series of questions in an attempt to find out what it is. Since the man does not state the problem explicitly, the woman goes from the broad topic of future plans to particular speculations about their relationship.

19 Hannah: Are you angry with me?

20 John: No!

21 Hannah: Do you feel-huh-. Are you disenchanted with our marriage?

22 John: I didn't say that!

23 Hannah: Are you in love with someone?

24 John: My God! What-what is this? The Gestapo? No!

25 Hannah: Well, what-what are you not telling me?

26 John: What kind of interrogation -. Su-suppose that I said yes. I-I-I am disenchanted! I'm in love with someone else!

27 Hannah: Are you?

28 John: (...) No! But, you keep asking these-these awful questions! My God, it's-it's- like you want me to say yes!

29 Hannah: Oh! What are you talking about? Of course not. I'd be destroyed.

→ 30 John: [thinking to himself] "For Crist's sake, stop torturing her. Tell her you want to have it and get rid of it right away. You're in love with her sister. You didn't do it on purpose. Be honest! It's always the best way."

31 Hannah: Oh, can I help you? If you're suffering over something, will you share with me?

32 John: (...) you know how much I love you! (...) I have to have my head examined. I don't deserve you! [holds her]

One interesting aspect in this interaction is that the lack of meaning for silence is present only between the participants, that is, the man stops talking but we, viewers, (the interaction is part of a film-script) are able to follow his thinking. The characters stop interacting, but we still hear the voice of one of them. In this way, viewers have access to the character's mind. With this strategy we get to know what his real communicative aim is, but the woman, as a conversational participant, is only able to perceive that something is wrong. For her the silent turn, did not convey any information except that it is, together with the other contextualization cues, an indicator of the presence of some problem.

The moves which break the silence serve as a distinct evidence of the woman's lack of awareness of her husband's affair and of the man's inability to verbally express his communicative goal.

In interaction 0, Michael is a detective who is married to Ellie. He falls in love with a witness of a crime who is under his protection up to the day of her testimony. Michael and Ellie go to a restaurant. There they start discussing Micheal's tour and Ellie finds out about his love affair. In this interaction the conflict is not introduced in the opening turn. Instead it appears with a minor discussion on Michael's change of tour where the woman asks key questions that raise the topic of infidelity.

7 Ellie: I'd really like you to switch to days.  
You know be home for dinner.

- 8 Michael: Oh!
- 9 Ellie: Helen insisted that TJ be home for dinner. That's why he's on days.
- 10 Michael: Yeah, but TG, huh (...) a seniority. You know! (...) I'll-I'll talk to lieutenant Garber about it, Ok?
- 11 Ellie: I already did. Well, I mean I spoke to his wife and his wife spoke to him.
- 12 Michael: (...) Wait, wait a minute. What am I hearing? (...) You talked to his wife? My wife talks to his wife about which tour I'm gonna work? What is this, Ellie? Huh?
- 13 Ellie: What's the difference which tour you work on, Michael?
- 14 Michael: Oh, God!
- 15 Ellie: Unless there's some particular reason that you feel better to be around her at night?
- 16 Michael: [keeps silent]
- 17 Ellie: Is there, Michael?
- 18 Michael: [keeps silent]
- 19 Ellie: Oh! What is this? (...) Is it serious?
- 20 Michael: [keeps silent]
- 21 Ellie: Stop looking at me like that! What is this ridiculous silence?
- 22 Michael: [keeps silent]
- 23 Ellie: God damn you!
- 24 Michael: [keeps silent]
- 25 Ellie: [crying] You, son of a bitch!
- 26 Michael: You don't understand-
- 27 Ellie: What do you mean? Is this a confession? I don't understand?! (...) You get off this case or you don't come home! [getting up] And I'd like to remember that I behaved like a lady! The kind of lady you apparently prefer! [leaves the restaurant]

As we can see, in this case all the silent turns can be considered as affirmative answers to the woman's questions. In other words, the silent turns express confirmation and convey crucial information (the woman even questions the presence of the silence acknowledging that it is a marker of the conflict). With the continuous silent turns the woman gets to know that he had an affair. By using pejorative language, then, she undoubtedly



expresses that she understands the information conveyed by the silent turns. The man, in turn, breaks the silence with an apologetic discourse which is also a confirmation of the accuracy of the woman's inferences. Again, this behaviour on the part of the man reveals that he plays a submissive role.

Finally, in interaction T Cole is a racer who had an accident while driving on a racetrack. He goes to hospital and Claire is the doctor who takes care of him. They get involved, but Cole does not overcome the trauma caused by the accident. Thus, whenever he is driving, he puts his and others' lives in risk.

1 Claire: Let me out of the car! (...) Let me out or I'm gonna jump! [opens the door]

2 Cole: Hey! Hey! Hey! [stops the car and she gets out] Claire! (...) Wait! I just-

3 Claire: Get away or I'll call the police.

4 Cole: You'll what?

5 Claire: You heard!

6 Cole: Ok! Call the police! But I'm not leaving till [you talk to me.

7 Claire: [I've nothing to say!

8 Cole: Well, I do! [shouting]

9 Claire: Ok, great! Let's hear it!

→ 10 Cole: [silently looks at her]

11 Claire: That's it! Fine! [ironically]

12 Cole: Just-

13 Claire: You shouldn't be driving a car anyway. Not on the road, not on the racetrack and not on a parking lot! You're selfish! And you're crazy! And you're scared!

14 Cole: I'm not scared.

15 Claire: You're scared to death! You and Rowdy [another racer], you have the same sickness! It's called denial and it's probably gonna kill you both! (...) You wanna control something that is out of control. That's what you said to me, wasn't it? Well, I'll let you know a little secret that almost everybody else in this world automatically knows!

Control is an illusion, you infantile egomaniac! Nobody knows what's gonna happen next! (...) Nor in a freeway, nor in an airplane, nor inside of our own bodies! And certainly nor in a racetrack with other infantile egomaniacs! Nobody knows and nobody controls anything! And you've got a glimpse of that and you're scared! You might never have the courage to race anymore. You may never have had it! (...) God, I hate you for this! You son of a bitch! You made me sound like a doctor!

→ 16 Cole: [keeps silent]      [Claire goes away]

The use of the imperative (expressing command) and prosodic phenomena (the speaker is shouting) suggest that there is a problem. The dialogue which follows is composed of imperative statements and incisive remarks produced by the woman who demonstrates a desire to avoid the conversation. The man, on the contrary, insists that they converse so that he is able to express his communicative goal. When she finally decides to hear what he wants to say, he is not able to verbalize his communicative intent and keeps silent. In this way, he plays a submissive conversational role.

The breaking of the silence is marked by the woman's ironic remarks, followed by an interruption (see 2.3.1 for explanations on interruptions) and by long turns full of sharp comments and pejorative language. Again, as a response, the man keeps silent as if agreeing with what was said by the woman (submissive interactional reaction).

To summarize, silence plays an important role in the characterization of the conflict in these interactions. Through the analysis of contextualization cues (opening turns, sequencing

strategies-communicative goal & breaking of the silence, and silent turns) we can see that silent turns conveyed important information that contribute to the hearers' understanding of the conflict.

We have seen that in real cross-sex conversation women may fall into silence when being interrupted or with delayed minimal responses as a protest. Concerning language and sex, in the examples above silence is present in men's turn only. It represents the introduction of damaging information into the scripted dialogue and it functions as a submissive interactional behaviour during the conflict.

Briefly, the conclusions one can draw out of this section is that silence is used as a strategy not to verbalize something that would be shattering to the hearer. Also, that it is a conversational demonstration of submission.

### **2.3 - Conclusion**

In this chapter I have discussed some of the structural features of fictional cross-sex miscommunication. My aim was to observe how far structural features of turn-taking characterized a conflict between the participants. Also, my concern was to describe conversational differences between women and men in cross-sex miscommunication.

One important finding of the research is related to the concept of conflict talk and the use of different conversational styles. Researchers have suggested that women are more concerned with establishing relationships while engaged in conversations whereas men are more concerned with dominance over other participants. In my data, however, these conversational styles oscillated in terms of the use of the turn-taking system and both women and men played dominant and submissive roles. As Vuchinich (1990) suggests, the dominant participant in a conversation is the one who opposes the contribution of other participants. In this perspective, the conversational styles adopted in the fictional interactions analysed depend on a basic component: the conflict (a clash of opposing forces, that is, the participants' management of dominant and submissive conversational roles). As a result, the conflict becomes an essential variant in the characterization of conversational styles. That is to say, being a conversational conflict an instance of friction between opposing forces, it is quite evident that the participants in cross-sex miscommunication adopt both dominant and submissive roles depending on how much they dispute to be winners during the interaction. This, in turn, has a great influence in the characterization of the style a woman or a man adopts regardless of being it the style described by researchers as common to each sex.

In the next chapter, the focus of this study changes to a more semantic approach to the analysis of the data. There I develop an analysis based on the cooperative principle proposed

by the philosopher H P Grice and the **coherence rule** proposed by Tsui. The main issue is to observe the participants' management of the conversational maxims and conversational coherence in the fictional interactions collected.

## CHAPTER 3

### IRONY AND COHERENCE IN FICTIONAL CROSS-SEX MISCOMMUNICATION

So far I discussed and investigated the organization of some turn-taking features in examples of fictional cross-sex miscommunication. Now, meaning and not structure, is the main concern of the next stages of this analysis.

In the same way that the structure of the fictional interactions revealed significant information about interactional conflicts between women and men, the messages conveyed by the speakers also greatly influence the characterization of the conflict. In a broad sense, speakers engage in a conversation fundamentally to get their communicative intentions across. This means that the participants in a conversation know that an amount of information will be provided. They also know that this information may be true or false. It may be germane or irrelevant

and it may be expressed in clear or prolix language. These assumptions are processed and used during the occurrence of a conversational exchange and they are part of the speakers' internalized concept of what conversation is.

Also, conversationalists have some expectations whenever they say something. The basic aim of a speaker is not only to convey meaning (ways of expressing information mentioned above), but also to produce certain effects with what they say. For example, when we ask questions, we expect appropriate answers; when we greet somebody, we expect another greeting in return and so on. Speakers have several conversational expectations, but they may be frustrated because something quite different from what is expected may occur. Thus, in many occasions, conversationalists may give contributions that do not meet the expectations of other participants, though this does not invalidate the utterances if they are conversationally coherent.

In sum, the aim here is to examine the information conveyed by interactants and their conversational expectations in instances of miscommunication. This chapter is, then, divided into two sections where I discuss the use of irony and the violation of the coherence rule.

### **3.1 - The Cooperative Principle and Irony**

Grice (1975) says that conversation is governed by a set of rules which require the participants to provide enough

information and to be genuine, relevant, and clear in what they say. In theoretical terms, these basic rules are labelled the **cooperative principle** (CP), which comprises the following maxims:

Maxim of Quantity - relates to the quantity of information

- 1 - Make your contribution as informative as is required
- 2 - Do not make your contribution more informative than is required

Maxim of Quality - Try to make your contribution one that is true

- 1 - Do not say what you believe to be false
- 2 - Do not say that for which you lack adequate evidence

Maxim of Relation - Be relevant

Maxim of Manner - Be perspicuous

- 1 - Avoid obscurity of expression
- 2 - Avoid ambiguity
- 3 - Be brief (avoid unnecessary prolixity)
- 4 - Be orderly' (Grice, 1975:45-6)

These conversational maxims are part of the speakers' communicative competence. That is, internalizing these maxims and knowing how to use them in actual conversational exchanges is part of the process of knowing what conversation is. In addition, conversationalists expect other participants to share these common principles so that the mutual contributions and interpretations done may be considered cooperative interactional negotiations.

Nevertheless, in real talk the speakers may, sometimes, be uncooperative and violate these maxims in various ways. They may be overinformative, spurious, irrelevant and ambiguous. In all these situations they will be flouting the basic principles



that underline Grice's maxims. An interesting fact about the violation of the conversational maxims is that speakers may flout them purposefully.

In flouting a maxim the speaker is unable to cooperate in accordance with the maxims, but s/he is the one who disdainfully chooses not to. In Grice's terms the speaker **blatantly** disobeys the rule required to accomplish a cooperative contribution. A good example is the use of irony in conversation. When speakers make ironic remarks, they are usually trying to express a contrary information from the one they explicitly convey. In this way speakers clearly show to their listeners that what they actually mean is not stated in what they say, but it is **implicated** through the irony uttered.

Bearing the points above in mind, in this section I discuss how speakers flout conversational maxims by using irony. Also if irony is considered as a violation of Grice's CP, one may say that irony, in cross-sex miscommunication may be considered a marker of an uncooperative behaviour and a marker of conflict. In this sense, I want also to describe how women and men use irony in conflict talk.

A first interesting aspect observed in the data analysed is that irony is present in the women's discourse much more than in the men's discourse. Another aspect also observed is that the irony used by the speakers were demonstrations of conversational dissatisfaction. In this sense, the use of irony portrays instances of interactional malfunction between the speakers. First because it tries to convey a cutting, opposite meaning from

the actual literal utterances produced. Second because during cross-sex miscommunication irony is a subtle way of expressing dominance in the sense that ironic remarks are deliberately produced as a sharp rejection to what was said before.

Viewed from the concept of cooperation that rules conversations, ironic remarks are, sometimes, not informative enough and to a certain extent, they constitute false and ambiguous contributions. For example, in interaction F Robert and Hadley are travelling on a train in Spain. She is pregnant, but Robert does not want her to have the baby. He tries to persuade her to have an abortion (ironic turns are arrowed).

#### Interaction F

- 1 Robert: It's really a very simple operation, Hash. I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. (...) It's just to let the air in. It's not really an operation at all.
- 2 Hadley: If they put a knife in you, I think that you call that an operation-
- 3 Robert: They just let the air in and then it's all. It's perfectly natural.
- 4 Hadley: Air! Everything has another name. It's not liquor, it's 'anis del toro' [they are in a bar at the train station drinking a beverage called 'anis del toro']. It's not a baby, it's a tissue. ... I'm sorry. (...) What will we do afterwards?
- 5 Robert: We'll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before.
- 6 Hadley: What makes you think so?
- 7 Robert: It's the reason why we're unhappy.
- 8 Hadley: And if I do it, we'll be fine and we'll be happy?
- 9 Robert: I know we will.
- 10 Hadley: (...) When we had that house in La Garfina, I thought we'd always hang coloured ribbons into our kitchen door.

- 11 Robert: You're very domestic, (...) very cozy. (...) You can have this kitchen door when we're old. We'll go and live in Lake Forest. Get a door. Get the coloured ribbons. And get dead in Lake Forest with all these coloured ribbons. ... Look, Hash! You don't have to be afraid. I know lots of people that have done it.
- 12 Hadley: So have I. And afterwards they were all so happy. (...) Why do you always wear that hat?
- 13 Robert: What's wrong with this hat?
- 14 Hadley: It's a writer's hat.
- 15 Robert: I'm a writer.
- 16 Hadley: All right. I almost forgot. Writers don't have kitchen doors. They have hats. And any place they hang their hats is home sweet home for them.
- 17 Robert: You got to realize, I don't want you to do this if you don't want to!

As we can see, Hadley's turns are full of irony that questions Robert's arguments. An interesting aspect to be observed in Hadley's ironic remarks is that they are all **expressive speech acts** ('a speech act in which the speaker expresses feelings and attitudes about something' Richards et al. 1985:265). That is to say, by using irony she indirectly makes **complaints** about their relationship. In 12, for example, Hadley changes the subject abruptly asking about Robert's hat. Then, he clearly shows that the information was not enough and irrelevant for they were not talking about hats. In addition, he does not understand her communicative aim. In 16 she ironically says that writers are not family men (a complaint) which is a topic essentially linked to his desire for not having a child. From all this, we can say that the woman flouts the maxims of quality, relation and manner. At one level ironies are false contributions

with irrelevant and ambiguous language. At another level this use of irony works as a conversational strategy to refute oppositional position of the other participant.

In interaction D we have Hobbie and Lauren who meet each other once in a while, but they are not really dating. Hobbie goes out with other women though he does not have a serious relationship with any of them. Lauren is in his flat at the moment. He receives calls from the other women and this makes Lauren angry and jealous.

#### Interaction D

- 1 Hobbie: [after a phone call] How about another cocktail, sweet? Don't you think we ought- (...). What's all this about?
- 2 Lauren: [preparing to leave] I'm sorry, but I surely must go home.
- 3 Hobbie: Oh, really? May I ask why?
- 4 Lauren: [ironically] So sweet you're interested. Thank you, very much. Well, it just happens that I can't stand anymore of this!
- 5 Hobbie: [turns on the lamp. Lauren thinks the lampshades are awful]
- 6 Lauren: Spare me the insult!
- 7 Hobbie: [turns it off]
- 8 Lauren: There is somewhere, I think, some proverb about worms eventually turning? It's gotten from the Arabic, they so often are. Well, good night, Hobbie! And thank you for your delicious cocktails. They cheered me up wonderfully!
- 9 Hobbie: Huh! Listen! Please! Don't do this, Kit! Please, don't darling! Please, this is just the way you were last Wednesday!
- 10 Lauren: [shaking hands] I'm sorry. It's a pity you have little respect for tradition. Now give me back my hand. I'd like to leave nothing behind. [goes to the door] Good night, Hobbie! And good luck always!

- 11 Hobbie: All right, Kit! If this is what you  
wanna do!?
- 12 Lauren: Want to do? It's not what I want. I  
just thought it would be rather easier  
for you if you could be alone with your  
telephone.
- 13 Hobbie: My Lord, do you think I wanna talk to  
those fools? What can I do? Take the  
receiver off? Is that what you want me  
to do?
- 14 Lauren: Why not? It's a good trick of yours.  
Isn't that what you did last Wednesday  
when this fool tried calling you after  
she'd gone home and was in agony all  
night?

Again, it is the woman who is ironic and shows dissatisfaction. Lauren is clearly expressing that she is only trying to mean the opposite of what she is saying. Like in interaction F, this use of irony also represents a complaint about the couple's relationship. At the same time it is a violation of the maxim of quantity. Also irony works as an oppositional conversational strategy during the conflict.

In interaction G, the ironic remarks produced by the woman, as a conversational strategy, are also complaints and they have the function of refuting the remarks produced by the man. Macon and Muriel started living together just after Macon's divorce. Muriel had also been married and she has got a son named Alexander. They are both resting in the living-room when Macon tells Muriel he is worried about Alexander's education. They, then, start discussing their relationship.

## Interaction G

- 1 Macon: I don't think Alexander is getting the proper education.
- 2 Muriel: No, he's ok.
- 3 Macon: I asked him to figure what changes they gave back when we bought the milk today. And he didn't have the faintest idea. He didn't even know he had to subtract!
- 4 Muriel: He's only in the second grade.
- 5 Macon: I think you ought to switch'm to a private school.
- 6 Muriel: Private schools cost money.
- 7 Macon: So, I'll pay.
- 8 Muriel: What are you saying?
- 9 Macon: Pardon?
- 10 Muriel: What are you saying? You're saying you're committed?
- 11 Macon: Oh! That's not really the point!
- 12 Muriel: Alexander's got ten more years of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? I can't just put him in a private school and take him out again in every passing whim of yours. (...) Just tell me this. Do you picture us getting married sometime? I mean, when your divorce comes through?
- 13 Macon: Muriel (...), Marriage is- (...). I don't know.
- 14 Muriel: You don't, do you? You don't know what you want. One minute you're ashamed to be seen with me, the next you think I am the best thing that ever happened to you. Do you think you can just go on like this? Maybe tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll just go on back to Sarah. [his ex-wife]
- 15 Macon: All I'm saying- ...
- 16 Muriel: All I'm saying is: Take away promises from my son! Don't make him any promises you don't intend to keep!
- 17 Macon: But, I just want him to learn how to subtract!?

The above conversation as a whole is composed of irrelevant information and purposeful false contributions. An interesting fact, here, is that Macon clearly acknowledges the

irrelevance of Muriel's ironic turns since he is talking about Alexander's education and not about their relationship. In 9 he asks Muriel to repeat what she said not because he did not listen, but because he did not recognize the relevance of her question. In 13 and 15 he tries to explain his communicative aim, but is not successful. And finally, in 17 perplexed and confused Macon states that the topic he wanted to discuss was not discussed at all. From the man's point of view the irony used by the woman flouts the maxim of relation at the same time it flouts the maxim of quality.

Among the twenty interactions, in only three the men and not the women flouted the conversational maxims by using irony. A good example of men's use of irony is in interaction P. Nathon and Susan are married and they have a child. Susan uses a diaphragm as a contraceptive method. Nathon does not want to have another child and they start an argument about this.

1 Nathon: [putting water in Susan's diaphragm]  
Well!

2 Susan: Why are putting water through my diaphragm?

3 Nathon: To check! To see if it is ok! You didn't know I do that, did you?

4 Susan: No!

5 Nathon: Obviously not! Or you wouldn't have tried this! [shows the diaphragm]

6 Susan: Oh! Are you accusing me of making that hole?

→ 7 Nathon: No, a woodpecker came in here, went into the bathroom, opened the drawers with its little wings, and pecked a couple of holes in your diaphragm! (...) I can't believe you were jeopardizing our plan, Susan! Remember when we read a vast majority of truly exceptional people have their own children or first born when there is at least a five year

- separation between sibs. We agreed  
 [in this!  
 8 Susan: [No, you agreed. And they are not  
 sibs! They are babies! And I wanna have  
 another one!  
 9 Nathon: So, this is how you go about it! By  
 vandalizing a contraceptive device!  
 10 Susan: Because you won't discuss it with me!  
 11 Nathon: I did discuss it with you! Years ago!  
 12 Susan: Oh, I think we were wrong!  
 13 Nathon: Oh, I think we were right! And I'm not  
 discussing it again! [prosodic irony]

In the excerpt above, the speakers violate the maxim of quality in terms of the truthfulness of what they say. Nathon makes an accusation with ironic remarks and Susan, for her part, tries to persuade him that they should have another baby. Like in the other interactions, with irony the man makes complains about his wife's negligence in using a vandalized contraceptive device. Although Susan incisively tries to persuade Nathon, he carries on with a sarcastic tone till the end of the interaction.

I have shown in this section that speakers use irony in fictional conflict talk to show conversational dissatisfaction particularly by flouting the maxim of quality. Also the speakers use irony as a device for refuting oppositional positions of the other participants. The following conclusion can be drawn of these findings: Ironic remarks are false contributions in the sense that they have an opposite meaning to what is actually uttered by the speaker. And irony is a strategy speakers use to counterargue dominant participations.

According to Grice's CP truth has an important role in real talk. Real participants share a social commitment to say the truth. Irony is one way speakers violate this commitment and



disclose an uncooperative behaviour. In my data, irony is also an uncooperative behaviour. But this uncooperative behaviour appears as an evidence of the win/lose logic that rules the interactions. In other words, in the struggle to be winners, the speakers blatantly lie by producing ironic remarks. These ironic remarks, in turn, operate as conversational opposition and dominance - two aspects of conflict talk.

I have also shown in this section that irony was in the majority produced by the women. That is to say women played a dominant role during the conflict. One may say, therefore, that irony is much more a competitive device than a cooperative one. With ironic remarks, the women as participants display a contempt both for the maxims that rules the CP and for the dominant conversational attempts of the other participant. In this sense, women disclose a breakdown in cooperation and adopt a competitive behaviour - a different behaviour from the one described by language and sex studies. This, however, is related to conflict talk.

### 3.2 - Non-Sequitur as the Violation of the Coherence Rule

It has been argued that speakers consider things like the illocutionary intent and pragmatic presuppositions of the utterances in order to produce coherent conversational sequences (Tsui, 1991). The illocutionary intention has to do with the purpose a speaker has when s/he produces conversation. For

instance, the question 'What's the time?' implies that the speaker lacks an information, s/he feels the need for asking for this information, and s/he also believes that the listener is able to provide it. These are the illocutionary intentions that accompany the question above.

The pragmatic presuppositions are the background beliefs or shared knowledge that interactants bring with them whenever they engage in conversation. For example, the answer 'Time for coffee' for the question above takes into account or presupposes a number of different things. To clarify, in 'Time for coffee' both speaker and listener know what time they usually drink coffee. If they drink it at nine, in uttering this answer the speaker is implicitly saying that it is nine o'clock. And this information is grasped by the other participant because it is a knowledge that is shared between the two interactants.

In Tsui's (1991) words,

this suggests that there is a sequencing rule governing what can occur if the discourse is to be coherent: an utterance must be related to either the illocutionary intention or the pragmatic presuppositions of the preceding utterance; if neither, it will fail to form a coherent sequence (p.119).

In other words, there is a coherence rule based on the speakers' purpose and background beliefs which govern the coherent linking of conversational sequences. However, this coherence rule may be violated and lead to miscommunication. In such cases, a participant may produce a **non-sequitur**; an

utterance which marks a break down in communication. Non-sequiturs are often noticed and addressed by the participants.

This section, then, examines the realization of **non-sequitur** in fictional cross-sex miscommunication. The aim here is to observe what the speakers' objective is in acknowledging miscommunication with **non-sequitur**. The following questions will be dealt with: first, is the violation of the coherence rule a marker of conflict talk? Second, is the production of non-sequitur by women and men in this data an expression of conversational dominance or submission?

To begin with, both women and men produced **non-sequitur** and thus signalled interactional malfunction. In **interaction S**, Jack and Frank are brothers and they play the piano in nightclubs and hotels for a living. To improve their shows, they hire Susie as a vocalist. Susie and Jack begin a love affair, but they finally break up when Susie tells Jack she is leaving the group. (non-sequiturs are arrowed)

#### Interaction S

- 1 Susie: I told Frank I'm quitting.
- 2 Jack: (...) Congratulations!
- 3 Susie: As it from now.
- 4 Jack: Well, (...) if you need a recommendation you let me know, huh!
- 5 Susie: Jesus, you're cold! You know that? God, you're like a fucking razor blade!
- 6 Jack: 'Careful or you'll make me thing you're getting soft on me.
- 7 Susie: You don't care about it, do you? About anything!
- 8 Jack: What do you want from me? Do you want to stay? So, this what you're looking for? You want to make me get down on my knees and beg you to save 'The Baker Boys' [him and Frank] from /?/. Forget it.

Sweetheart! We survived for 15 years before you started on this thing. 15 years! Two seconds and you're bawling like a baby! You shouldn't be wearing a dress. You should be wearing a diaper!

9 Susie: Jesus, you and Frank aren't brothers, are you?

Here it is the man who produces a **non-sequitur**. In saying 'Congratulations', a clear compliment, to Susie's informing (and it is not good news), Jack was intentionally breaking the rule that would make the sequence a coherent adjacency pair. That is to say, Susie's utterance does not only have the illocutionary force of informing, but it is also a complaint. The extralinguistic situation is that Susie is unhappy with their relationship and in order to show her dissatisfaction she decides to leave the group. Though linguistically speaking she informs Jack she is leaving. Susie's expectations (pragmatic presuppositions) are that Jack would ask her to stay since their relationship is not only professional but also an intimate one.

Jack, in turn, understands both the illocutionary intent and pragmatic presupposition of Susie's utterances, but he refuses to conversationally attune to the level of affiliation that she is expecting. Jack, on the contrary, engages in a level of control by insisting on a professional attitude and disregarding that there is intimacy between them. In doing this, he violates the sequencing rules developing an ironic discourse (see 3.1 for more details on irony) that portrays a dominant conversational behaviour.

At this point, the conflict is already established but it has not been acknowledged by the participants. In a sense, the breakdown in communication, which was caused by the violation of the coherence rule is addressed by Susie in 5. There she points out that Jack fails to perceive the requirements for affiliation expressed in her discourse (illocutionary intent and pragmatic presuppositions). His ironic remarks, in turn, attempt at counterarguing Susie's dominant participation.

In Interaction J it is the man who produces a non-sequitur again. Debbie arrives home from work and Dan is already there dressing himself up to go out. They start talking and Debbie sees that there is something bothering Dan.

#### Interaction J

1 Debbie: Dan!

2 Dan: In here. [in the bedroom]

3 Debbie: Hi, honey! You're gonna go to the basketball?

4 Dan: yes.

5 Debbie: [kisses him] Huh, before you leave, can I show you something?

→ 6 Dan: Do you think you can clean up some of this shit? [there are some clothes spread over the bed]

7 Debbie: Ok. [disappointed]

8 Dan: Did you get a turkey for 'morrow?

9 Debbie: No, I got a ham.

10 Dan: Ah! You can't have a ham for Thanksgiving. You gotta have a turkey!

11 Debbie: But, there is only the two of us. Unless you wanna be on turkey sandwiches until Easter.

12 Dan: I told Bernie we'd have turkey.

13 Debbie: Oh! You asked Bernie?

14 Dan: Yeah, he's my friend.

15 Debbie: Oh, then, I'll ask Joan.

16 Dan: Suit yourself.

17 Debbie: No, I /?/.

- 18 Dan: Then don't invite her!  
19 Debbie: No, I will. She's my friend.  
20 Dan: Suit yourself.  
21 Debbie: Dan, I don't understand. Did I do something wrong?  
22 Dan: [he gives a deep breath] No, no. I went back to work today. ... with my God damn tail between my legs! [he had been fired]  
23 Debbie: Oh, honey! [Debbie tries to comfort him, but he refuses it] ... I'll leave you alone.  
24 Dan: Thank you.

In 6 Dan produces a *non-sequitur* violating the sequencing rule by changing the topic abruptly. In this particular case, Debbie asked Dan a question 'Before you leave, can I show you something?' which is basically a request. With this question she is conversationally polite for she wants to know if he has enough time or if he is in such a hurry that it would be better to have a conversation when he returns. Dan, however, deliberately asks another question which has the effect of an order 'Do you think you can clean up this shit?'. The pair, thus, turns out to be an incoherent sequence.

Dan's question creates an aggressive conversation atmosphere because it does not convey its real illocutionary intent (we only understand why he is angry in 22 where he verbalizes that he went back to a job he did not want to). Debbie, on the other hand, does not share this background information. Consequently, she perceives some kind of conversational malfunction, but does not know exactly the pragmatic presuppositions and illocutionary intentions behind Dan's discourse.

The conversational exchanges which follow are full of minor discussions of trivial subject matters for both participants engage in a conversational win/lose dispute. Perceiving she has not grasped the illocutionary intentions in the man's discourse, she verbalizes it in 21 saying 'Dan, I don't understand. Did I do something wrong?.' With this, she acknowledges the presence of the conflict which was initiated and expressed in the production of the man's **non-sequitur**.

Considering that the woman was not aware of the man's illocutionary intent and that they did not share the same pragmatic presupposition, the man becomes the dominant participant in conversational terms. That is, he is the one who produces a **non-sequitur** and develops the conversation neglecting the importance of the illocutionary intent and the pragmatic presupposition which are essential for the accomplishment of the coherence rule. The woman ends up questioning if she has done something wrong (in reality, she wants to know what his illocutionary intentions are) in an attempt to establish the conversational cooperation firstly violated by the **non-sequitur** produced. Despite her willingness to be cooperative, the conversational roles adopted do not change: the woman is the submissive participant and the man the dominant one though these roles oscillate a bit after the **non-sequitur** in 6 and the acknowledgement of it in 21.

In **Interaction G**, in contrast with interactions S and H analysed previously, it is the woman who utters a **non-sequitur**. The participants are Macon and Muriel who started living together

just after Macon's divorce. Muriel had also been married and she has got a son named Alexander. They are both resting in the living-room when Macon tells Muriel he is worried about Alexander's education. They, then, start discussing their relationship.

— Interaction G

1 Macon: I don't think Alexander is getting the proper education.

2 Muriel: No, he's ok.

3 Macon: I asked him to figure what changes they gave back when we bought the milk today. And he didn't have the faintest idea. He didn't even know he had to subtract!

4 Muriel: He's only in the second grade.

5 Macon: I think you ought to switch'm to a private school.

6 Muriel: Private schools cost money.

7 Macon: So I'll pay.

→ 8 Muriel: What are you saying?

9 Macon: Pardon?

10 Muriel: What are you saying? You're saying you're committed?

11 Macon: Oh! That's not really the point!

12 Muriel: Alexander's got ten more year of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? I can't just put him a private school and take him out again in every passing whim of yours. (...) Just tell me this. Do you picture us getting married sometime? I mean, when your divorce comes through?

13 Macon: Muriel (...), marriage is- (...). I don't know.

14 Muriel: You don't, do you? You don't know what you want. One minute you're ashamed to be seem with me, the next you think I am the best thing that ever happened to you. Do you think you can just go on like this? Maybe tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll just go on back to Sarah. [his ex-wife]

15 Macon: All I'm saying- ...



- 16 Muriel: All I'm saying is: take away promises from my son! Don't make any promises you don't intend to keep!
- 17 Macon: But, I just want him to learn how to subtract!?

In line 8 Muriel's utterance is a *non-sequitur*. As can be seen, it is in 8 that there is a breakdown in communication. In other words, Muriel's question 'What are you saying?' is, in a sense, a search for Macon's illocutionary intent. That is, is he being literal (he just wants to help paying for Alexander's education) or is he making her a proposal (Alexander is young and he has many years of school ahead, by saying he can pay his education he may be also saying he is committed.)?

Macon, at first, does not understand what Muriel is actually questioning. But, in line 11 he points out that there is a miscommunication for he is not discussing their relationship, on the contrary, he is only concerned with Alexander's education. Muriel carries on bombarding him with questions and ironic remarks. This makes her participation a dominant one and she gains the status of the winner. She disregards the topic proposed by Macon, introduces and maintains the topic she wants to discuss (their relationship).

Overall, from what has been analysed in this section it is possible to draw out the following conclusions: The uttering of *non-sequitur* in fictional cross-sex miscommunication marks the presence of conversational malfunction. As Tsui (1991) says, the very production of a *non-sequitur* implies *per se* a breakdown in communication. Basically, the breakdown is attributed to the

incoherence of the conversational sequence concerning the meaning of the illocutionary intentions and the lack of or wrong pragmatic presuppositions. In the interactions analysed the **non-sequitur** produced were a compliment to an informing (S), an order to a request (J), and a question to an informing (G).

In the first case, the pair informing-compliment is coherent as an adjacency pair, but incoherent in the illocutionary intent expected. The compliment to the informing of bad news turns out to be ironic and signals that miscommunication is initiated. In the second interaction analysed, the incoherence is both in the pair as an adjacency pair (request-order), in the illocutionary intent expected, and in the pragmatic presuppositions shared. Orders are, fundamentally, a direct display of an authoritarian behaviour if participants share similar status. Conversationally, as a foil to a request, an order becomes excessively authoritarian particularly if it is an abrupt change of topic. Although the adjacency pair is coherent in the last interaction discussed in this section (for it is ordinary to ask question when information is not clear to us) the incoherence or violation of the coherence rule is in the illocutionary intent expected. Since the conversational purpose of the informing did not aim at discussing the participants' relationship, the **non-sequitur** uttered is an ironic remark which was carried out as a conversational behaviour along the rest of the dialogue.

At the conflict level, the participants who provided **non-sequitur** in these fictional interactions basically had a dominant

participation. By deliberately violating the coherence rule these participants (two men and a woman) did one thing: they initiated the conflict. For example, by being ironic and by changing the topic. (in Tsui's (1991) terms, by having or expecting different illocutionary intents and misguided pragmatic presuppositions), the producers of non-sequitur were, in fact, adopting an oppositional positioning that established a precondition for the win/lose logic of conflict talk.

### 3.3 - Conclusion

In this chapter I have attempted to explore some of the semantic organization of fictional cross-sex miscommunication through the use of the Cooperative Principle (Grice, 1975) and the Coherence Rule (1991). In the first section, we saw that the speakers violated the CP mostly through the use of irony which, in turn, was also a demonstration of dominance in conflict talk. In the second, section, the violation of the CR through the production of non-sequitur revealed that the speakers may break sequencing rules in the expression or misinterpretation of illocutionary intents and pragmatic presuppositions as a sign of conversational malfunction.

In the next chapter, my main concern will be with the use of indirectness in conversation. I will discuss the concepts of message -- literal information -- and metmessage -- unsaid information -- proposed by Tannen (1989). The management of

metamessages in conversation is basically linked to the use of indirectness. It is in this last sense that I want to explore how cross-sex miscommunication is developed in the fictional-talk collected for the present study.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE USE OF INDIRECTNESS BETWEEN THE SEXES AND FICTIONAL MISCOMMUNICATION

Indirectness has been defined (Tannen, 1986) as the way speakers express what they mean regardless of what they say. Tannen (1986) and Watzlawick et al. (1967), for example, say that there are two levels of communication: the non-verbal and the verbal. In their view, prosodic and paralinguistic aspects (intonation, rhythm, etc.) together with the speakers' body language (facial expression, gestures, eye contact, etc.) and the clues we extract from the conversational context are non-verbal communicative signals that accompany the uttering of verbal messages. To clarify, indirectness is related to circumstances in which the speakers do not spell out what they mean in words, but suggest it in the way they say these words.

Tannen (1986) and Watzlawick et al. (1967) also say that whenever we engage in conversation, we are not only sending out verbal messages, but, at the same time, establishing our relationship to each other. And we do this mostly through the use of indirectness. From this we may say that human communication is endowed with two different levels of communication: the message and the metamessage, which correspond to verbal and non-verbal communication respectively. An interesting difference between the two levels is that messages are expressed in a complex and powerful system of syntactic rules whereas metamessages are, in essence, an expression of our interpersonal relations.

Certain communicative deficiencies are found in both levels. Messages, for example, are expressed in a logic syntax, but they are not enough to express the nature of the relations between the speakers. Metamessages, on the other hand, are rich in expressing our relations, but do not have an appropriate syntax. In other words, translating messages into metamessages and vice-versa is a tremendous difficult interactive task. To exemplify, Tannen (1986) provides an illustrative comment of this difficulty in the passage below:

Information conveyed by the meanings of words is the message. What is communicated about relationships - attitudes toward each other, the occasion, and what we are saying - is the metamessage. And it's metamessages that we react to most strongly. If someone says, "I'm not angry", and his jaw is set hard and his words seem to be squeezed out in a hiss, you won't believe the message that he's not angry; you'll believe the metamessage conveyed by the way he said it -

that he is. Comments like "It's not what you said but the way you said it" or "Why did you say it like that?" or "Obviously it's not nothing; something's wrong" are responses to **metamessages of talk**. (p.29)

From what has been said there are two points which are important in the analysis of this chapter. First, if in the act of sending out a message we also send out metamessages, communication becomes an activity in which the participants have to express and negotiate two types of meanings; the one which is said and the one which is unsaid. Conversationally then, metamessages play a role as important as messages do. Considering that metamessages are not expressed in words, they may have an extra-importance in cross-sex miscommunication if the conflict is not explicit on what is said and the speakers are not aware of this. The participants' tendency will be to look for the problem in the wrong level of communication; that is, on the messages rather than on metamessages.

Second, metamessages are not only communicative unspoken signals, but they are also the communicative level in which we monitor our relationships as we talk. In this sense, in cross-sex miscommunication the speakers also send out clues about their relationship and because it is conveyed indirectly miscommunication may easily occur. In such circumstances, we may say that the speakers are not so attuned to the meaning of words, but to the richness of metamessages. In other words, messages and metamessages are two important communicative levels in every conversation.

Because the aim here is to explore the importance of metamesages in the development of cross-sex miscommunication, two considerations must be also taken into account. Initially, is the conflict established in the message or metamessage level of communication? And how do women and men negotiate their relations by using indirectness?

#### 4.1 - Framing metamesages in cross-sex miscommunication

In practical terms, cross-sex miscommunication may be centred on a single metamessage which frames the interaction that is taking place. A framing metamessage, then, creates an unsaid conversational background which defines and restricts the semantic scope of the interaction. In interaction G the speakers clearly demonstrate that each participant is concerned with opposing levels of communication. While the man sends out the message 'I am talking about your son's education', the woman sends out the metamessage 'I am talking about our relationship' which is also the framing metamessage. Basically, it is the use of different levels of communication by the speakers which creates the conflict. (M = man/W = woman)

#### INTERACTION G

##### TRANSCRIPTION

##### COMMENTS

- 1 M: I don't think Alexander is getting  
the proper education.  
2 W: No, he's ok.  
3 M: I asked him to figure what changes



## TRANSCRIPTION

## COMMENTS

- they gave back when we bought the milk today. And he didn't have the faintest idea. He didn't even know he had to subtract!
- 4 W: He's only in the second grade.
- 5 M: I think you ought to switch 'm to a private school.
- 6 W: Private schools cost money.
- 7 M: So I'll pay.
- 8 W: What are you saying?
- 9 M: Pardon?
- 10 W: What are you saying? You're saying you're committed?
- 11 M: Oh! That's not really the point!
- 12 W: Alexander's got ten more years of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? I can't just put him in a private school and take him out in every passing whim of yours. (...) Just tell me this. Do you picture us getting married sometime? I mean, when your divorce comes through?
- 13 M: Muriel (...), marriage is-(...) I don't know.
- 14 W: You don't, do you? You don't, know what you want. One minute you're ashamed to be seen with me, the next you think I am the best thing that ever happened to you. Do you think you can just go on like this? No plans! Maybe tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll just go on back to Sarah. [his ex-wife]
- 15 M: All I'm saying is- ...
- 16 W: All I'm saying is: Take away promises from my son! Don't make him promises you don't intend to keep!
- 17 M: But, I just want him to learn how to subtract!?
- M & W conversationally negotiate in the message level
- W addresses the metamessage level.  
M does not follow the change of the level of communication.  
W insists on the metamessage level.  
M denies the level that she proposes  
W continues on the metamessage level.
- M sends out a message about their marriage.  
W continues sending out the framing metamessage.
- W sends out a message which is not what she is really trying to communicate.
- M confusingly insists on the message level showing that miscommunication occurred due to the use of different levels of communication by the speakers.

One basic feature in this interaction is that miscommunication occurs because each participant interacts in a different level of communication. While the man stays at the message level, the woman maintains her speech in the metamessage level. In other words, the speech of the woman is marked by the use of indirectness that shows her concern with the relation between the speakers.

In Interaction J the framing metamessage is 'I am not doing fine in my career and that is why I am angry' which is sent out by the man. The crucial point here, though, is that the syntax of the messages does not convey any hint of the metamessage. For this reason, the other participant (the woman) is only able to perceive that there is something wrong, but does not know what it is.

### INTERACTION J

TRANSCRIPTION	COMMENTS
1 W: Dan!	
2 M: In here. [in the bedroom]	
3 W: Hi, Honey! You're gonna go to the basketball?	Both participants keep their speech in the message level.
4 M: Yes.	
5 W: [Kisses him] Huh, before you leave, can I show you something?	
6 M: Do you think you can clean up some of this shit? [there are some clothes spread over the bed]	M interrupts the woman and sends out a metamessage by uttering an abrupt and gross request.
7 W: Ok. [disappointed]	W perceives that there is a metamessage but does not know what it is because there is no hint of it in the message level.
8 M: Did you get a turkey for 'morrow?	
9 W: No, I got a ham.	
10 M: Ah! You can't have a ham for	

## TRANSCRIPTION

## COMMENTS

- Thanksgiving. You gotta have a turkey.
- 11 W: But, there is only the two of us. Unless you wanna be on turkey sandwiches until Easter.
- 12 M: I told Bernie we'd have turkey.
- 13 W: Oh! You asked Bernie?
- 14 M: Yeah, he's my friend.
- 15 W: Oh, then, I'll ask Joan.
- 16 M: Suit yourself.
- 17 W: No, I /?/
- 18 M: Then don't invite her!
- 19 W: No, I will. She's my friend.
- 20 M: Suit yourself.
- 21 W: Dan, I don't understand. Did I do something wrong?
- 22 M: [gives a deep breath] No, no. I went back to work today. ... With my God damn tail between my legs! [he had been fired]
- 23 W: Oh, Honey! [tries to comfort him, but he refuses] ... I'll leave you alone.
- 24 M: Thank you

From 8 to 20 both speakers send out metamesages. The man is annoyed with the problems he is facing in his career. The woman sees that there is something wrong, but does not know what it is. So, they start arguing in the message level, but parts of the conflict is, in fact, in the metamesage level. W verbalizes that the messages sent out are not enough to breed such aggressive conversational behaviour. M translates the framing metamesage into a message.

Translating the metamesage does not solve the conflict.

Interaction ends up.

A clear issue in the interaction above is that one of the participants (the woman) is not aware of the framing metamesage and, for this reason, she engages herself in the conversation taking into account the message level. However, the messages conveyed are about trivial subject matters and they have nothing to do with the framing metamesage. Thus the woman feels herself conversationally attacked without any apparent reason. The gap between what is said and what is unsaid is only bridged in line 22 where the speaker pinpoints the real problem. The conflict is not solved, but the framing metamesage which caused miscommunication is revealed.

In interaction R the use of indirectness also leads the speakers to miscommunication. The basic conflict begins with a conversational challenge uttered by the woman in line 5. There she questions the veracity of what is being said on the message level. In an attempt to avoid the topic the man frames the conversation with the following metamessage: 'I am stronger than you because I am a doctor.' In this way the man establishes a relation of power which he tries to support with a social label.

### INTERACTION R

TRANSCRIPTION	COMMENTS
1 W: Hi. [Doing the dishes].	W initiates the conversation with a greeting.
2 M: [no answer]	M keeps silent and demonstrates an uncooperative conversational behaviour (for details on silent turns and the violation of the coherence rule see 2.3.4 of chapter 2 and 3.2 of chapter 3).
3 W: You're late.	W straightforwardly adopts and oppositional positioning.
4 M: Yes, something came up at the clinic.	W opposes again and questions the veracity of what he says.
5 W: I called the clinic. (...) You weren't there. (...) So, I guess this is a good time. We need to talk about this.	
6 M: (...) About what?	M shows no intention of repairing the misunderstanding. This implies a lack of interest in the conversation.
7 W: Your behavior?	W pinpoints where the problem is.
8 M: (...) what about my behavior?	M disregards her concern.
9 W: Well, for one thing, Charles, what have you got in the trunk of your car that you keep like a secret?	W tries to establish a sequential conversational order in the message level by linking her speech in this turn to the question asked before.
10 M: (...) What is this? You've been spying on me? Inspector Sally? Is that what we got here?	M deliberately disregards her attempts to establish a cooperative negotiation on the message level. M also uses irony to express dominance and to introduce the framing metamessage (see 3.1 for explanations on the use of irony in cross-sex miscommunication.)

## TRANSCRIPTION

## COMMENTS

- 11 W: No, Charles! I'm worried! Now, You're either out somewhere or downstairs locked in your office. What are you doing all this time? (...) Remember you're trying to get your medical licence back. You mustn't do anything to jeopardize that!
- 12 M: Now, look at you! You're all upset! (...) Maybe I should bring some tranquilizers home for you! (...) Will that help?
- 13 W: I don't need any tranquilizers!
- 14 M: (...) You know, I'm not at all surprized you're having this emotional backlash right now! (...) Maybe I'd recommend you to a good psychiatrist. (...) That would be a good idea.
- 15 W: (...) Charles! (...) I see somethings happening around here. I am worried about you. I'm not crazy!
- 16 M: (...) What things? (...) I-I collect magazines and read books. That's what I do. (...) You watch tv. (...) Well, you don't understand. (...) But it's ok! You just (...) watch your tv (...) and don't worry about it!
- 17 W: Are you saying that you're better than I? Is that what I'm hearing here?
- 18 M: Wha-what do you know about AIDS?
- 19 W: What's this? An intelligence test?
- 20 M: Huh! Everybody should know about AIDS these days! (...) Huh! We have a patient at the clinic, Les Goodman. (...) Got AIDS. (...) You know, (...) I can give you three ways that I think the conventional thing about AIDS today is misguided. (...) One:
- W disregards his ironic remarks and the metamessage sent out. Also she tries to keep the sequential order proposed in 9.
- M disregards completely what she says and starts talking like a doctor. Here he completes the framing metamessage introduced above: 'I am stronger and smarter than you because you have lost your control and I haven't. And I am able to say this because I am a doctor.' W gives up the sequential order of her discourse and responds to the message level the man insists on. M carries on sending out messages which support the framing metamessage.
- W returns to the sequential order of her discourse.
- M insists on the framing metamessage.
- W picks up the metamessage sent out.
- M insists on the framing metamessage.
- W tries to make him translate to the message level what he really means. M makes a small scientific speech that intends to serve as a sample of his superiority over her. This scientific speech reinforces the framing metamessage of the interaction.

## TRANSCRIPTION

## COMMENTS

(...) I believe (...) the disease is far more contagious that is generally thought. (...) And two: (...) I believe that women suffer more and (...) experience more pain than men when they have AIDS. (...) Three: (...) I think the virus is- (...) able to exist outside the body much longer (...) and much adverse conditions that is generally thought.

21 W: You'll have to wash your own dishes! I'm through for the day!  
[leaves te room]

W gives up interacting because she perceives that M will simply elaborate the content of his messages in order to evoke the framing metamessage which hamstrings the argument of her conversational contributions.

In interactive terms the analysis above shows us that the conversational strategy used by the man served as a tool to avoid the topic proposed by the woman. At the same time, it defined an unequal relation between the participants. This conversational strategy was basically the use of an authoritative discourse on the message level that disregarded the woman's contributions and sent out the framing metamessage.

#### 4.2 - The interrelation between messages & metamessages: where does miscommunication occur?

Let us now come back to one of the questions proposed at the beginning of this chapter, that of the place where

miscommunication occurs. The main point here is that conversational exchanges are, basically, made up of streams of feedbacks and each speaker is influenced by and influences the conversational participation of the other speakers. The conflict, then, actually originates in the effect caused by the conversational reactions (dominance or submission) of one speaker in face of the reactions of the other (dominance or submission).

--- This means that the conflict breeds from the very 'inter' 'action' between the speakers which is characterized by the circuitous exchange of feedbacks. In this last sense, both messages and metamesages can be the cause of miscommunication for they operate as intrinsic levels of the human communication in every 'inter' 'action'.

To be specific, in the interactions analysed miscommunication occurred when the participants spoke to each other on different levels of communication; when the content of the message level implied that there was a metamesage, but provided no hint of what it really meant; and when the message level clearly expressed the meaning of the metamesage level. From this we may say that miscommunication happened in the interrelation between messages and metamesages within the speech of the same speaker and between the speeches of different speakers.

In other words, miscommunication in my data originated in the use of the two levels in opposition (eg. speaker A is concerned with the message level whereas speaker B is concerned with the metamesage level - interaction G); in the use of the

metamessage level only (one of the speakers send out a metamessage but it cannot be extracted from the message level of her/his speech - interaction J); and in the use of the two levels at the same time (one of the speakers send out a metamessage and it can be extracted from the message level of her/his speech - interaction R).

#### **4.3 - When relations are the focus**

As said earlier, the participants in a conversation do establish and negotiate their relationships along the interaction. In the twenty interactions of this study the participants already have an intimate relationship for this was one of the prerequisite variables for the collection of the data (see 1.3 of chapter 1). Taking this into account, two striking features were drawn out concerning the relationships established and negotiated in the dialogues analysed.

Conversationally, some of the participants expected the other participant to use the same level of communication. In interaction G the man expected the woman to converse on the message level. In J and R it is the women who expected the men to converse on the message level. These expectations, however, were frustrated and in terms of the relationship this meant that the speakers were not attuned to each other and at cross-purposes.

Another interesting feature is that when the relations between the participants is focalized in the conversation, it is



possible to verify that communication on the message level is, in a sense, ineffective. Also, when speakers monitor their relationships through metamesages in conflict talk, the nature of the relation is established by the logic of winning and losing. In the examples presented here, we can see that the participants send out or understand metamesages according to the dominant and submissive relations that are being established.

That is to say, when a man tells his girlfriend he is going to pay a private school for her son, he is, to a certain extent, trying to indirectly say that he is worried about her son's education and that he is willing to pay for it because he likes them both. The woman conversationally establishes opposition. The man may extend the conversation insisting that he is really concerned with her son's education. This will be tantamount to insisting on miscommunication simply because the woman is not interactionally concerned with the content of the message, but with the oppositional positioning which is, at that moment, ruling their relation.

We have seen that the participants' relations are negotiated along with the occurrence of the interaction. Depending on the feedbacks provided, other feedbacks are provided in return making up a system of instigation and reaction and vice-versa. In this sense, we can observe that in the examples of this chapter, all the participants have an intimate social relation (wife/husband, lovers, etc.), but dominant and submissive relations are established during the occurrence of the conflict interaction. First, in interaction 6 the more the woman

sends out metamesages, the more a worsening cycle of interactional differences is established for the man is attuned only to the message level of communication. Because he is not able to follow exactly the meaning of her contributions on the message level, he adopts the role of the submissive participant in the conflict. This relation, thus, merges from the incongruity of their contributions due to the use of different levels of communication.

Second, in interaction J the same occurs except that the submissive participant is the woman, who is not able to grasp the actual meaning of the metamesage because she lacks the information which is not implied in the message level. This is the very cause of miscommunication, consequently, the woman has at her disposal an unequal conversational condition to participate.

Third, in interaction R one of the participants, the man, brings to the interaction a different social variable to express dominance. He clearly states his professional role as a doctor (socially considered as a prestigious profession) to play a dominant participation. Thus in producing a scientific discourse (message), he sends out a metamesage about his superiority in relation to the woman.

In these cross-sex miscommunications, then, metamesages make it difficult for the participants to refute the dominant relation being established. This occurs because metamesages are not explicitly expressed in words and this makes the negotiation of interpersonal relations in such level of communication a rather laborious one. On the one hand, miscommunication occurred

because of the metamessages sent out. On the other hand, metamessages in the examples above help speakers to adopt the role of winners in conflict talk.

#### 4.4 - Conclusion

It is important to observe that the translations from one level of communication to the other will always have a relative sense; that is, one participant may conversationally express anger or happiness, but the negative and positive value of her/his discourse will partly be ascribed to the interpretations of the other interactants. Needless to say, miscommunication is bound to occur in such circumstances. And it was under this perspective, that I considered the analysis above. This chapter, in short, has broadly discussed how indirectness -- the way what we say differs from what we mean -- develops cross-sex miscommunication in fictional-talk. On the one hand we were able to observe that miscommunication occurs on verbal and non-verbal levels of communication. On the other hand, we could also observe how the participants establish dominant and submissive positions through the use of indirectness.

Clearly, a lot still has to be studied in this area, but I hope that what has been questioned here will, at least, enhance our view of how speakers use indirectness in fictional cross-sex miscommunication.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

As we have seen, cross-sex miscommunication may be characterized by turns that do not occur smoothly, by intentions that are misunderstood, and by the loss of coherence, conversational features that lead speakers to unsuccessful conversational exchanges. One can verify, in this study, that the participants' inability to communicate what they mean is fundamentally linked to how conversational rules are used. This, in a broad sense, is also the very root of miscommunication between the sexes (taking into account the analysis on conversational rules and sex differences proposed here).

In the opening chapter of this study, I said that my main objective was to look at fictional cross-sex miscommunication in order to describe how conversational rules and styles (dominance and submission) operate in such circumstances. In short,

miscommunication is one way conflict-talk may develop. Conflict, as said earlier, is an instance of contact between two different forces. This, lead us to investigate how speakers played dominant and submissive roles by using conversational rules.

Conflict-talk, in this sense, is not only characterized by a particular use of conversational rules, but also by the use of these rules to express a win/lose logic in discourse. In argumentation, for example, speakers exchange dominant and submissive roles controlling and constraining their participations through the structure and content of what they say and through the relation they establish. The study of conversational rules, as this study tried to show, is an important way to analyse human communication in general. By examining fictional conflict-talk I tried to suggest that writers base their assumptions on what real speakers do in distressing situation such as cross-sex miscommunication and this gives us insights into real interaction.

### **5.1 - Suggestions for further research**

The findings I present here are not conclusive and definitive. There is still a lot to be elucidated about cross-sex miscommunication as a form of conflict-talk. A good starting point is to search for similarities or differences between what I have described about cross-sex fictional-talk and cross-sex real-talk. As mentioned in the first chapter, fictional-talk, as data

for linguistic analysis, will always be limited by the point of view of its author and for this reason is bound to differ in many ways from naturally occurring conversation. In carrying out such an investigation one can check, however, whether many of the issues I discuss here also occur in real-talk. Needless to say, these findings would be complementary to my own and would largely enrich the field of research on miscommunication between the sexes.

Also, a contrastive analysis between cross-sex miscommunication in English and Brazilian Portuguese, being it on real or fictional-talk, would certainly disclose important information for the studies on cultural differences and second language acquisition. Sociolinguistic studies have already pointed out the importance of the relation between language and the cultural (and social) environment in which it takes place. The cultural differences described by these studies may improve our knowledge about language use and language users. For second language speakers, engaging in communication entails more than just knowing how to speak the language. The knowledge of rules of interaction is an important part of the learning process as well as a prerequisite for more successful communication.

These, it seems to me, are only some of the several issues that can be drawn from this study for future analysis. It is important to notice, that studies in this area are a rich source for the understanding of discourse analyses and cross-sex communication. Grimshaw (1990) suggests that further research is necessary both to ... identify and define conflict-talk and

determine its course and outcome' and to specify the postulates that might rule this kind of discourse' (p.319). In sum, the study of cross-sex miscommunication -- as a form of conflict-talk -- must be taken seriously not only as a scientific subject matter, but as a type of discourse which has social importance and real meaning for the lives and experiences of interactants in general.

## 5.2 - Final remarks

The experience of a perfectly attuned cross-sex communication is more than just satisfying to speakers. It is one of our ways to be human and in particular, one of our ways to be in contact with the other sex. In manoeuvring turns adequately, in contributing cooperatively and coherently, and in understanding each other beyond the messages content, women and men are not simply establishing communication. They are also expressing affiliation and involvement, features so important in cross-sex relationships.

Cross-sex miscommunication, on the other hand, is frustrating. Speakers feel that their communicative efforts are inefficient and that their relations are threatened. Because both communication and relations are essential to social life, cross-sex miscommunication has a vital role in interpersonal relations.

Miscommunication is however, quintessential of human communication. At the same time that we are all alike for being

human beings, we all differ for being individuals. For these reasons, conflicts and arguments will always be present in social interactions. The study of discourse does not undertake the ambitious task of proposing magic solutions for miscommunication. But, it can, as I tried to demonstrate in this study, describe the processes of specific types of discourse. One possible function of discourse studies like this one is to make readers (as potential speakers) more conscious of the entangled linguistic problems they may face in conversation. Nevertheless, increasing our consciousness about what we conversationally do in instances of miscommunication will not help us to avoid or solve the conflict, but it may help us, at least, to identify the effects our speech and the speech of others have upon us all -- as conversational participants. In sum, I believe that being aware of what may occur in miscommunication (fictional or real) is one of the steps we consciously take towards the improvement of our cross-sex communications and consequently the improvement of our interpersonal relations.



A P P E N D I X

## TRANSCRIPTION (A)

Film: Fatal Attraction

Participants: Beth and Dan

Theme: Beth and Dan are married and they've got a six-year old daughter. Dan had an affair with Alex, a girl from the office. She gets pregnant and Dan tries to tell Beth what happened between him and Alex.

1 Dan: (...) Honey, we've gotta talk.

2 Beth: ... What is it?

3 Dan: (...) I know who did this.

4 Beth: (...) You do? Who?

5 Dan: Remember the girl who-huh- (...) came to the apartment?  
The one I met at the Japanese restaurant?

6 Beth: (...) The one with the blonde hair.

7 Dan: [keeps silent]

8 Beth: Huh, you're scaring me.

9 Dan: [keeps silent]

10 Beth: What is it? (...) Do you have an affair with her?

11 Dan: yes. ... Beth! (...) Beth, I'm so sorry. The last thing  
(...) I ever wanted to do was to hurt you.

12 Beth: (...) Are you [crying] in love with her?

13 Dan: No. No, it was-it was one night. But it ain't mean  
anything.

14 Beth: (...) What does this got to do (...) with (...) with  
what's happened?

15 Dan: ... She's pregnant.

16 Beth: She's- (...). It's yours?

17 Dan: I don't know. That's what she says. Listen Beth, Please!

18 Beth: { Please!  
[Get out of here! I want you out of here! I want you  
out of this house! I want you out now!

19 Dan: { How could you do that? I hate you!  
[Don't you understand!

20 Beth: { I don't wanna hear it! I don't wanna hear it!

21 Dan: [Please, Beth! Please! Just listen to me!

22 Beth: What's the matter with you? [shouting]

[they stop arguing when their six-year old daughter  
comes in]

## TRANSCRIPTION (B)

Film: Out of Africa I

Participants: Karen and Denys

Theme: Karen and Denys have been together for sometime. Denys is a hunter who is always going on safaris and Karen has a farm in Africa. They fly to the beach to spend the evening and there they start talking about their relationship.

1 Karen: When you go away on safari are you ever with someone else?

2 Denys: I'd be with you if I wanted to be with anyone.

3 Karen: Never get lonely?

4 Denys: Sometimes.

5 Karen: Do you wonder if I'm lonely?

6 Denys: No, I don't.

7 Karen: You think about me at all?

8 Denys: Often.

9 Karen: But not enough to come back!?

10 Denys: I do come back. All the time. What is it?

11 Karen: Nothing. (...) Bror has asked me for a divorce. He found someone that he wants to marry. I just thought we might do that someday. [Bror is Karen's husband who is not living with her anymore]

12 Denys: Divorce!? (...) Huh! Oh! No, the wedding changes things.

13 Karen: I would have someone of my own.

14 Denys: No, (...) you wouldn't.

15 Karen: What's wrong with marriage anyway?

16 Denys: Have you ever seen one you admire?

17 Karen: Yes, I have. Many.

- 18 Denys: [Looks puzzled waiting for an example of a good marriage]
- 19 Karen: Bel-Belfields for one; [hesitantly]
- 20 Denys: He sent her home for the rains in 1910. Didn't talk to her over to 1913.
- 21 Karen: It's not a joke. People marry. It's not revolutionary. There's some animals that make for life.
- 22 Denys: Geese.
- 23 Karen: You know, you use the damn animals for your own arguments. You won't let me use them for mine!
- 24 Denys: I'd make for a life. One day at a time.
- 25 Karen: [laughing sadly] I'd just like someone to ask me. Once. That's all. Promise me you'll do that? If I promise to say no?
- 26 Denys: Just trusted on you.
- 27 Karen: ... When you go away (...) you don't always go on safari, do you?
- 28 Denys: (...) no.
- 29 Karen: You just want to be away.
- 30 Denys: It's not meant to hurt you.
- 31 Karen: It does.
- 32 Denys: Karen, I'm with you because I chose to be with you. I don't want to live someone else's idea of how to live! Don't ask me to do that! I don't want to find out one day that I'm at the end of someone else's life! (...) I'm willing to pay for mine. To be lonely sometimes. To die alone if I have to. I think that's fair.
- 33 Karen: Not quite. You want me to pay for it as well.
- 34 Denys: No, you have a choice! And you are not willing to do the same for me. (...) I won't be closer to you. (...) I won't love you more because of a piece of paper.

## TRANSCRIPTION (C)

Film: Out of Africa II

Participants: Karen and Denys

Theme: Denys is going on a safari and Felicity, a friend, wants to go with him. Karen feels jealous of Denys and they start an argument.

1 Denys: Maybe I'll try Sambure the day after tomorrow.

2 Karen: You just got back.

3 Denys: You know, Felicity asked to come along and I almost said no because I thought you wouldn't like it. And there is no reason for her not to come.

4 Karen: Yes, there is. I wouldn't like it. (...) You want her alone?

5 Denys: I want things that don't matter. Not too much.

6 Karen: Then, tell her no. Do it for me!

7 Denys: And then? What else would it be?-

8 Karen: [shouting] Why is your freedom more important than mine?

9 Denys: It isn't. And I've never interfered with your freedom.

10 Karen: No, I'm not allowed to need you or rely on you or expect anything from you! I'm free to leave! (...) But I do need you!

11 Denys: You don't need me. If I die, will you die? You don't need me. You confuse. You mix up. Need with what? Your health!

12 Karen: My God, in the world that you would make there would be no love at all!

13 Denys: Of the best kind! The kind we wouldn't have to prove!

14 Karen: You'd be living on the moon, then!

15 Denys: Why? Because I won't do it your way? Are we assuming there is a proper way to do all this? Do you think I want Felicity?

16 Karen: No.

17 Denys: Do you think I'll be involved with her?

18 Karen: (...) No.

19 Denys: Then, there is no reason for this, is there?

20 Karen: If she's not important, why won't you give it up? (...) I have learned a thing that you haven't. There are somethings worth having (...), but they come with a price and I want to be one of them! (...) I won't allow it Denys!

21 Denys: (...) You have no idea the effect that language has on me.

22 Karen: I used to think that there was nothing that you really wanted. But this is not, is it? You want to have it all!

23 Denys: (...) I'm going to Sambure and she can come or not.

24 Karen: ... Then, you'll be living elsewhere.

25 Denys: ... All right...

**TRANSCRIPTION (D)**

Film: Women & Men - Stories of Seduction I (Dusk Before Fireworks)

Participants: Hobbie and Lauren

Theme: Hobbie and Lauren meet each other once in a while, but they are not really dating. Hobbie goes out with other women, but he does not have a serious relationship with any of them. Lauren is in his flat at the moment. He receives calls from the other women and this makes Lauren very angry and jealous. She pretends she does not care till she blows up at him.

1 Hobbie: [after a telephone call] How about another cocktail, sweet? Don't you think we ought- (...). What's all this about?

2 Lauren: [preparing to leave] I'm sorry, but I surely must go home.

3 Hobbie: Oh, really? May I ask why?

4 Lauren: [ironically] So sweet that you're interested. Thank you, very much. Well, it just happens that I can't stand anymore of this!

5 Hobbie: [turns on the lamp. Lauren thinks the lampshades are awful]

6 Lauren: Spare me the insult!

7 Hobbie: [turns it off]

8 Lauren: There is somewhere, I think, some proverb about worms eventually turning? It's gotten from the Arabic, they so often are. Well, good night, Hobbie! And thank you



for your delicious cocktails. They cheered me up wonderfully!

9 Hobbie: Huh! Listen! Please! Don't do this, Kit! Please, don't darling! Please, this is just the way you were last Wednesday!

10 Lauren: [shaking hands] I'm sorry. It's a pity you have little respect for tradition. Now give me back my hand. I'd like to leave nothing behind [goes to the door] Good night, Hobbie! And good luck always!

11 Hobbie: All right, Kit! If this is what you wanna do!?

12 Lauren: Want to do? It's not what I want. I just thought it would be rather easier for you if you could be alone with your telephone.

13 Hobbie: My Lord, do you think I wanna talk to those fools? What can I do? Take the receiver off? Is that what you want me to do?

14 Lauren: Why not? It's a good trick of yours. Isn't that what you did last Wednesday when this fool tried calling you after she'd gone home and was in agony all night?

15 Hobbie: I did not. The operator must have been calling up the wrong number. I was alone here all night.

16 Lauren: So you said.

17 Hobbie: I don't lie to you, Kit!

18 Lauren: That was the most outrageous lie you've ever told me!  
Good night, Hobbie!

19 Hobbie: Good night, kit! [opens the door]

20 Lauren: [disappointed] I'm sorry it must end like this!

21 Hobbie: Good night! [curtly]

## TRANSCRIPTION (E)

Film: Women & Men - Stories of Seduction II (Dusk Before Fireworks)

Participants: Hobbie and Lauren

Theme: Hobbie receives a call from Cony Holt who is one of the women he goes out with. Lauren listens to what he says on the phone and gets angry with him. She tries to be liberal by telling him to talk with the women who call him, but this is not what she really wants him to do.

1 Hobbie: Well, what've you done if I'd taken your offer and called back Cony Holt?

2 Lauren: I would have died. I only said because I want to hear you say that it is me that you want to be with! I need to hear you say that, Hobbie! It's what I live on, Darling!

3 Hobbie: Kit, you oughta know all that without me saying it. It's this feeling you have to say things. That's what spoils everything.

4 Lauren: Yeah, I suppose so. I suppose I know so. (...) The thing is that I just get mixed up! I didn't always need reassure! Not at first, but things are-. Well, they are the same now, but it seems that there are so many others! How do you think it makes me feel to sit there and hear you lie to Cony Holt? To hear you say you need

to go out with the friends of your sister? Why can't you say you gotta a date with me? Are you ashamed to be by my side?

5 Hobbie: Oh, Kit for Heaven's sake! I don't know why I did it. I did it before I even thought. I did it- well, I guess I did it instinctively. I guess. Because it was the easiest thing to do. (...) I suppose I'm just weak!

6 Lauren: No! You weak?! Huh! Is there any other news tonight?

7 Hobbie: I know I am. I know it's weak to do anything in the world to avoid a scene!

8 Lauren: Exactly what is Cony Holt to you and you to her that she may make a scene if she learn you have an engagement with another women?

9 Hobbie: Oh, God! I told you I don't give a damn about Cony Holt! (...) She's nothing to me. Now will you, for God's sake, drop it?

10 Lauren: She's nothing to you. I see. That will be, of course, why you call her a dear every other word!

11 Hobbie: If I did it, I never knew I was saying it. Good Lord, that doesn't mean anything! It's simply a form of- (...) of nervousness, I suppose (...) Kit, I call the telephone operater "dear"!

12 lauren: Huh, I'm sure you do! ...

13 Hobbie: [kisses her] Will you stop? Can you stop it? Can you just be sweet and loving? And stop fighting?

14 Lauren: To hell with Mrs. Holt!

15 Hobbie: To hell with her! [embrace each other]

## TRANSCRIPTION (F)

Film: Women & Men - Stories of Seduction (Hills Like White Elephants)

Participants: Robert & Hadley (Hash)

Theme: Robert and Hadley are travelling on a train in Spain. She is pregnant, but Robert does not want her to have the baby. So, he tries to convince her to have an abortion.

1 Robert: It's really a very simple operation, Hash. I'll go with you and I'll stay with you all the time. (...) It's just to let the air in. It's not really an operation at all.

2 Hadley: If they put a knife in you, I think that you call that an operation-

3 Robert: They just let the air in and then it's all. It's perfectly natural.

4 Hadley: Air! Everything has another name. It's not liquor, it's "anis del toro" [they're in a bar at the train station drinking a beverage which is called "anis del toro"]. It's not a baby, it's a tissue. ... I'm sorry. (...) What will we do afterwards?

5 Robert: We'll be fine afterwards. Just like we were before.

6 Hadley: What makes you think so?

7 Robert: It's the reason why we're unhappy.

8 Hadley: And if I do it, we'll be fine and we'll be happy?

9 Robert: I know we will.

- 10 Hadley: (...) When we had that house in La Garfine, I thought we'd always hang coloured ribbons into our kitchen door.
- 11 Robert: You're very domestic, (...) very cozy. (...) You can have this kitchen door when we're old. We'll go and live in Lake Forest. Get a door. Get the coloured ribbons. And get dead in Lake Forest with all these coloured ribbons. ... Look, Hash! You don't have to be afraid. I know lots of people that have done it.
- 12 Hadley: So have I. And afterwards they were all so happy. (...) Why do you always wear that hat?
- 13 Robert: What's wrong with this hat?
- 14 Hadley: It's writer's hat.
- 15 Robert: I'm a writer.
- 16 Hadley: All right. I almost forgot. Writers don't have kitchen doors. They have hats. And any place they hang their hats is home sweet home for them.
- 17 Robert: You got to realize, I don't want you to do this if you don't want to!
- 18 Hadley: But, if I do it, you'll be happy and things will be like they were and you'll love me?
- 19 Robert: I love you now and you know I love you.
- 20 Hadley: But, if I do, it will be nice again if I say things like white elephants? You'll like it? [She had said before that the hills in the horizon looked like white elephants and they had started a row because of that].
- 21 Robert: I love it. I love it now. But, I just can't think about it. You know how I get when I'm worried! [stands up and leaves the table]

## TRANSCRIPTION (6)

Film: The Accidental Tourist

Participants: Muriel and Macon

Theme: Macon and Muriel started living together just after Macon's divorce. Muriel had also been married and she's got a son named Alexander. They are both resting in the living room when Macon tells Muriel he is worried about Alexander's education. They, then, start discussing their relationship.

1 Macon: I don't think Alexander is getting the proper education.

2 Muriel: No, he's ok.

3 Macon: I asked him to figure what changes they gave back when we bought the milk today. And he didn't have the faintest idea. He didn't even know he had to subtract!

4 Muriel: He's only in the second grade.

5 Macon: I think you ought to switch'm to a private school.

6 Muriel: Private schools cost money.

7 Macon: So, I'll pay.

8 Muriel: What are you saying?

9 Macon: Pardon?

10 Muriel: What are you saying? You're saying you're committed?

11 Macon: Oh! That's not really the point!

12 Muriel: Alexander's got ten more years of school ahead of him. Are you saying you'll be around for all ten years? I can't just put him in a private school and take him out

again in every passing whim of yours. (...) Just tell me this. Do you picture us getting married sometime? I mean, when your divorce comes through?

13 Macon: Muriel (...), marriage is- (...). I don't know.

14 Muriel: You don't, do you? You don't know what you want. One minute you're ashamed to be seen with me, the next you think I am the best thing that ever happened to you. Do you think you can just go on like this? No plans. Maybe tomorrow you'll be here, maybe you won't. Maybe you'll just go on back to Sarah. [his ex-wife]

15 Macon: All I'm saying is-....

16 Muriel: All I'm saying is: Take away promises from my son!  
Don't make him any promises you don't intend to keep!

17 Macon: But, I just want him to learn how to subtract!?

## TRANSCRIPTION (H)

Film: Hannah and Her Sisters I

Participants: John and Hannah

Theme: John is in love with Hannah's (his wife) sister. Hannah does not know about their love affair, but she notices John is upset about something. They start talking about John's mood and end up discussing their relationship.

1 Hannah: Are you in a bad mood?

2 John: I don't know. I'm just anxious.

3 Hannah: Yes, I know. The last few weeks you haven't been yourself. And tonight-tonight at dinner you-you were kind of curt with me.

4 John: Was I?

5 Hannah: Yes, you were. And when I-when I came up with the idea of having a baby you (...) jumped on my throat!

6 John: Well, I don't think it's a very good idea.

7 Hannah: Why not?

8 John: Because it's the last thing in the world we need right now.

9 Hannah: Why do you say that? Is there something wrong?

10 John: I don't know.

11 Hannah: Tell me. Should I be worried?

12 John: Wait, you got four children!

13 Hannah: I wanna have one with you!

14 John: Huh, I-I think we should wait till (...) things settle.

15 Hannah: Settle-. What-what do you-. What does that mean? We've-we've been married four years. How settled can things get?

16 John: You know, you-you have some very set plans on how your life should be structured. A house, kids, certain



schools, a home in Connecticut. It's-it's all very (...) preconceived!

17 Hannah: Have I? Huh, I thought you need that. When-when we met you said your life was chaos!

18 John: I-I know, but there's gotta be some give and take. (...) Oh, this is not-. Oh, what the hell I'm talking about?

19 Hannah: Are you angry with me?

20 John: No!

21 Hannah: Do you feel-huh-. Are you disenchanted with our marriage?

22 John: I didn't say that!

23 Hannah: Are you in love with someone?

24 John: My God! What-what is this? The Gestapo? No!

25 Hannah: Well, What-what are you not telling me?

26 John: What kind of interrogation-. Su-suppose that I said yes. I-I-I am disenchanted! I'm in love with someone else!

27 Hannah: Are you?

28 John: (...) No! But, you keep asking these-these awful questions! My God, it's-it's- like you want me to say yes!

29 Hannah: Oh! What are you talking about? Of course not. I'd be destroyed!

30 John: [thinking to himself] "For Christ's sake, stop torturing her. Tell her you want to have it and get rid of it right away. You're in love with her sister. You didn't do it on purpose. Be honest! It's always the best away."

31 Hannah: Oh, can I help you? If you're suffering over something, will you share with me?

32 John: (...) You know how much I love you! (...) I have to have my head examined. I don't deserve you! [holds her]

## TRANSCRIPTION (I)

Film: Hannah and Hert Sisters II

Participants: John and Hannah

Theme: Holly, one of Hannah's sisters, writes a book about their family. Hannah reads it and finds out that she wrote private things about her relationship with John. She asks John if he had talked to her sister about them, but he refuses to admit it. In fact, he had talked to Lee (her lover) about him and Hannah and Lee had talked to Holly. This is how Holly's book is so full of details about their personal life.

1 Hannah: Have you been talking to Holly or Lee about us? About our personal life?

2 John: Me? Of course not.

3 Hannah: These things Holly wrote about in the script, about us, they are so personal that they can only come from you!

4 John: Look, I've got splitting headache and I don't like being accused!

5 Hannah: I'm not accusing you! I'm asking! Do you-do you find me too-too-too competent? Too-too disgusting perfect or

something?

6 John: No! [shouting]

7 Hannah: Oh, what is it, then? What-what's come between us? How have I allienated?

8 John: Hannah, my head is/sober/?

9 Hannah: You never wanna talk about it. I-, everytime I bring it up you-you change the subject! What is it? Did you-. We're communicating less and less. You sleep with me less and less-

10 John: Hannah, I'm very mixed up! Please! [shouting]

11 Hannah: Do you talk to Holly or Lee behind my back? Do you? You must! They seem to know so much about us!

12 John: Oh, maybe I've asked advice once or twice or-or made a joke.

13 Hannah: What do you mean? Did-did-did you talk to Holly or Lee or what? Did-did you phone them?

14 John: [Leave me alone, can you? Jesus, I told you I need someone I can matter to!

15 Hannah: You matter to me! Completely!

16 John: You can't be around someone who gives so much and-and needs so little in return!

17 Hannah: Huh, I-I have enormous needs!

18 John: But, I can't see and neither can Lee and Holly! [leaves the room]

## TRANSCRIPTION (J)

Film: About Last Night I

Participants: Debbie and Dan

Theme: Debbie arrives home from work. Dan is already there dressing himself up to go out. They start talking and Debbie sees that there is something bothering Dan.

1 Debbie: Dan!

2 Dan: In here. [in the bedroom]

3 Debbie: Hi, honey! You're gonna go to the basketball?

4 Dan: Yes.

5 Debbie: [Kisses him] Huh, before you leave, can I show

you something?

6 Dan: [Do you think you can clean up some of this shit?

[there are some clothes spread over the bed]

7 Debbie: Ok. [disappointed]

8 Dan: Did you get a turkey for 'morrow?

9 Debbie: No, I got a ham.

10 Dan: Ah! You can't have a ham for Thanksgiving. You gotta have a turkey.

11 Debbie: But, there is only the two of us. Unless you wanna be on turkey sandwiches until Easter.

12 Dan: I told Bernie we'd have turkey.

13 Debbie: Oh! you asked Bernie?

14 Dan: Yeah, he's my friend.

15 Debbie: Oh, then, I'll ask Joan.

16 Dan: Suit yourself.

17 Debbie: No, I /?/

18 Dan: Then don't invite her!

19 Debbie: No, I will. She's my friend.

20 Dan: Suit yourself.

21 Debbie: Dan, I don't understand. Did I do something wrong?

22 Dan: [He gives a deep breath] No, no. I went back to work today. ... With my God damn tail between my legs! [he had been fired]

23 Debbie: Oh, honey! ... [Debbie tries to comfort him, but he refuses it] I'll leave you alone.

24 Dan: Thank you.

## TRANSCRIPTION (L)

Film: About Last Night II

Theme: After having a discussion with Dan in a party, Debbie leaves with a friend. She, then, returns home late at night and they start talking about their relationship.

1 Debbie: Dan!

2 Dan: In here. (...) I'm sorry. It's just not working out, is it?

3 Debbie: Here we go. (...) Just say it, Dan.

4 Dan: What?

5 Debbie: Just (...) say what you're gonna say.

6 Dan: ... I think one of us should move out. ...

7 Debbie: [crying] I do too.

8 Dan: I'm sorry.

9 Debbie: What?

10 Dan: I said I'm sorry.

11 Debbie: For what? What are you sorry for?

12 Dan: I'm sorry that it didn't work out. (...) I need some time.

13 Debbie: What? What the hell is that suppose to mean? You know you started out real strong. And now you are finishing like a wimp. Why didn't you just quit while you were ahead?

14 Dan: That's what I'm trying to do!

15 Debbie: Oh good! Let's see your face on that one. (...) [turns on the lamp] Do you mind? Good. Because I think we've been in the dark long enough - ... I-I know why I'm leaving. What's your story? What killed it for you? The radical change in your life style? Decided you wanted to travel light?

16 Dan: Oh! Come on, Debbie!

17 Debbie: Or it is just that you're afraid that someone better might come along and you'd be stuck with me?

18 Dan: Look! Why can't you see this for what it is?

19 Debbie: And what is it?

20 Dan: What it is: Nothing more, nothing less!

21 Debbie: Oh, what? Two people committed to screw until they get sick of each other? That's so great! That's really special!

22 Dan: Look! I don't want marriage! (...) I don't want kids! (...) I don't want to be tied down! ... I'm not happy. I (...) don't (...) love you anymore.

23 Debbie: (...) Fine. I'm gone! It's done! [crying] And you can go back to doing whatever you wanna do, /?/

24 Dan: Hey, you need to hear one thing! I never fooled around! Not once!

25 Debbie: Oh, let's just give the boy a medal! Forgive me! I didn't realize it was such a sacrifice!

[Debbie leaves the room crying]

## TRANSCRIPTION (M)

Film: About Last Night III

Participants: Debbie, Dan and Bernie.

Theme: Debbie and Dan have been living together for a few months.

On New Year's Eve they go to a bar to celebrate it with their friends. There, Debbie meets with her friend Joan who had had a discussion with her boyfriend. They decide to leave the place for Joan is very unhappy. Debbie tells Dan what happened but he does not want her to go.

1 Debbie: Dan!

2 Dan: What? [drinking with Bernie]

3 Debbie: I'm taking Joan home.

4 Dan: It's almost mid-night!

5 Debbie: She's really a mess!

6 Dan: She does this every God damn time. She falls apart. You gotta take care of her!

7 Debbie: Gary just dumped her.

8 Dan: [laughing] Proving to herself once again that all men are selfish bastards!

9 Debbie: That's not fair!

10 Bernie: Hey! That broad don't know a thing about keeping a guy happy. I mean, I'm surprised he got only skid marks.  
[drunk]

11 Dan: Look! Why don't you call a cab?



12 Debbie: Because it's New Year's Eve.

13 Bernie: [drunk] You know what? Give the cabby 50 bucks and maybe she'll get a New Year's pop!

14 Debbie: [to Bernie] Sometimes you're funny. Sometimes you're just slimy!

15 Dan: [to Debbie] Don't you see the pattern here? She sets him up. She puts her hooks in him. He tries to get away and he's a bad guy. He's the asshole!

16 Debbie: No! You're the asshole! [gets out of the bar]  
[Dan's friends laugh]

17 Dan: Hey! Hey! Come back! [follows her]  
[outside the bar]

18 Dan: Hey! Hey! What the hell was that all about?

19 Debbie: Look! She's in trouble. She needs me.

20 Dan: /Who answers that?/ I need you.

21 Debbie: What now? To have a good time? [ironically]

22 Dan: [ironically laughing] When was the last time we had a good time?

23 Debbie: Dan, just go back to your friends in the bar. The hooks are off. You'd better run for day light!

[Debbie gets into the cab and leaves with Joan]

24 Dan: [shouting] Come back! Debbie! [to himself] That's great!  
Happy New year!

## TRANSCRIPTION (N)

Film: Dead on Arrival

Participants: Dex and Gail (husband and wife)

Theme: Dex goes to Gail's house to give her a Christmas present. She asks him to sign the papers of their divorce. They start to discuss their separation.

1 Gail: [opens the present] Thank you. (...) [stands up and gets the papers] Well, it's a little nicer than what I got you, I'm afraid.

2 Dex: (...) Couldn't ya have thought of something more pleasant? A lump of coal, perhaps?

3 Gail: Come on! This is the season to be jolly! [It's Christmas eve]

4 Dex: Ah! You know, this thing would be a lot easier to take if you were actually hurt.

5 Gail: I'm hurt, Dex. And I think you know how long I'm hurt.

6 Dex: Why? What've I done? Huh? Have I cheated on you? You know, I'm probably the only professor on campus who is not screwing a sophomore.

7 Gail: Maybe you oughta be. This would be a sign of life! A longing for something!

8 Dex: Ok, Gail! Ok! I'll tell you what. You wait here! I'm gonna go out and find myself a chick for a quicky. I'll be right back and we'll resume our marriage!

9 Gail: This hasn't been a marriage in four years, Dex!

10 Dex: [deep breath] It's funny how that kind of coincides with the publication of my last novel. (...) So, that's my great sin! Huh! I'm not prolific enough! Perhaps you should've married Harold Robbins!

- 11 Gail: [she serves him a drink] One for the road, Dex?
- 12 Dex: /?/
- 13 Gail: No, I'm exiting. Make yourself at home. You are after all.
- 14 Dex: Because I stopped writing?
- 15 Gail: Because you stopped caring.
- 16 Dex: God damn it, Gail! Don't run out of me! What did I do to you?
- 17 Gail: You did it to yourself! (...) Oh God, Dex you were so good! And you just gave up on everything that mattered to you. Including me!
- 18 Dex: You know marriages can't always be as hot as a honeymoon. There are ups and downs. Two people when they live together they-
- 19 Gail: You know, you are so smart. And you don't have the faintest idea what I'm talking about, do you? (...) Cause like making love became a matter of just going through emotions was hard enough! But I could take it if you'd only talked to me!
- 20 Dex: Talk? I talk. All day, every day it's what I do!-
- 21 Gail: No, it's ironic /banter/. It's not intimacy. And after a while it's abuse. I'm sorry I lied when I said: "For better or worse". I'm not gonna stick around when someone I love is withering away!
- [Dex holds her in his arms and gives her a kiss]
- 22 Gail: Don't.
- 23 Dex: I got you! Mistletoe! [they are under a mistletoe]
- [they both laugh]
- 24 Gail: (...) [escapes from his arms and leaving the room she says] Sign those papers before you go.

## TRANSCRIPTION (0)

Film: Someone to Watch over Me

Participants: Ellie and Michael

Theme: Michael is a detective who is married to Ellie. He falls in love with a witness of a crime he is protecting and who is a very rich and beautiful woman. Michael and Ellie go to a restaurant. There they start discussing Michael's tour and Ellie finds out about his love affair.

1 Ellie: One teacher says he's an angel another teacher says he's a monster. I think he's an angelic monster, our son.  
[laughing]

2 Michael: Yeah.

3 Ellie: He misses you.

4 Michael: Oh! you know El, this will be over soon and that Venza is such a nut chap that we're bound to pick him up in a few days. (Venza is the murderer)

5 Ellie: Mike?

6 Michael: Huh?

7 Ellie: I'd really like you to switch to days. You know be home for dinner.

8 Michael: Oh!

9 Ellie: Helen insisted that TJ be home for dinner. That's why he's on days. [TJ works with Michael]

10 Michael: Yeah, but TJ, huh (...) a seniority. You know! (...) I'll-I'll talk to lieutenant Garber about it, Ok?

11 Ellie: I already did. Well, I mean I spoke to his wife and his wife spoke to him.

12 Michael: (...) Wait, wait, wait a minute. What am I hearing? (...) You talked to his wife? My wife talks to his wife about which tour I'm gonna work? What is this, Ellie?  
Huh?

13 Ellie: What's the difference which tour you work on, Michael?

14 Michael: Oh, God!

15 Ellie: Unless there's some particular reason that you feel better to be around her at night?

16 Michael: [silence]

17 Ellie: Is there, Michael?

18 Michael: [silence]

19 Ellie: Oh! What is this? (...) Is it serious?

20 Michael: [silence]

21 Ellie: Stop looking at me like that! What is this ridiculous silence?

22 Michael: [silence]

23 Ellie: God damn you!

24 Michael: [silence]

25 Ellie: [crying] You, son of a bitch!

26 Michael: You don't understand-

27 Ellie: What do you mean? Is this a confession? I don't understand?! (...) You get off this case or you don't come home! [getting up] And I'd like to remember that I behaved like a lady! The kind of lady you apparently prefer! [leaves the restaurant]

28 Michael: Ellie! Ellie! [follows her]

29 Ellie: Get away from me Michael! Huh! Oh! The keys! [looking for the car's keys]

30 Michael: Here! Let me drive?

31 Ellie: No! (...) If she means too much to you, then you stay with her Michael! But, if you come back, you come back for me! Not for Tommy [their son], not for your mother, not for your God damn job! You come back for me, Ok?

32 Michael: (...) I'm sorry, El! [crying] I love you! I do!

33 Ellie: No!

34 Michael: And you are a lady and I respect you very much!

35 Ellie: Don't talk to me [hits him on the face] about respect!  
[Ellie gets into the car and leaves Michael there]

## TRANSCRIPTION (P)

Film: Parenthood I

Participants: Nathan and Susan

Theme: Nathan and Susan are married and they have got a child. Susan uses a diaphragm as a contraceptive method. Nathan does not want to have another child and they start an argument about this.

1 Nathan: [putting water in Susan's diaphragm] Well!

2 Susan: Why are putting water through my diaphragm?

2 Nathan: To check! To see if it's Ok! You didn't know I do that, did you?

4 Susan: No!

5 Nathan: Obviously not! Or you wouldn't have tried this! [shows the diaphragm]

6 Susan: Oh! Are you accusing me of making that hole?

7 Nathan: No, a woodpecker came in here, went into the bathroom, opened the drawers with its little wing, and pecked a couple of holes in your diaphragm! (...) I can't believe you were jeopardizing our plan, Susan! Remember when we read a vast majority of truly exceptional people have their own children or first born when there is at least a five year separation between sibs. We agreed in this!

8 Susan: No, you agreed. And they are not sibs! They are babies! And I wanna have another one!

9 Nathan: So, this is how you go about it! By vandalizing a contraceptive device!

10 Susan: Because you won't discuss it with me!

11 Nathan: I did discuss it with you! Years ago!

12 Susan: Oh, I think we were wrong!

13 Nathan: [ironically] Oh, I think we were right! And I'm not discussing it again! [leaves the bedroom],

## TRANSCRIPTION (Q)

Film: Parenthood II

Participants: Gil and Karen

Theme: Gil had quit the job. He gets home very nervous. Karen tells him she is pregnant and they start arguing about it.

1 Gil: I quit my job.

2 Karen: (...) Why?

3 Gil: They gave the partnership to Phil Richards. Phil Richards, this is a guy who-who leaves his wife and kids and puts all his money in his girlfriend's name so that they can't touch for child support! I mean the guy is- (...). Anyway, I couldn't stand that I snapped.

4 Karen: Can you still change your mind?

5 Gil: What do you mean change my mind? I quit.

6 Karen: I know. But did you say anything that would make it difficult for him to take it back?

7 Gil: Jesus, Honey! I was hoping you'd be a little more supportive! it's not like I-

8 Karen: I'm pregnant.

9 Gil: ... What? (...) Since when?

10 karen: Since I-I am. I'm due February. I ain't gonna say anything till I was sure.

11 Gil: How did this happen?

12 Karen: It was an accident. (...) Anyhow, this is why I'm saying maybe- now this isn't the best time to be out of work or starting a new job.

- 13 Gil: You know, if you told me there was a chance of this hapenning, I might have not quit in the first place!
- 14 Karen: Well, you never told me there was a chance you might quit!
- 15 Gil: That was a spur of the moment decision!
- 16 Karen: Pretty big one!
- 17 Gil: So, what do you think I should do? Call back to work and kiss David's [his boss] feet and get my crack job back! I quit! If I-I go back now, they-they got me. I'm not a eunuch!
- 18 Karen: You know, this-this puts a minor cramp in my life too. I was thinking about starting back to work in the fall! Now, I can't.
- 19 Gil: Oh! This is the difference between men and women. Women have choices, men have responsibilities!
- 20 Karen: Oh, really? Oh! Ok! Well, then, I choose for you to have the baby, Ok? That's my choice. You have the baby! You get fat, you breastfeed till your nipples are soar. I'll go back to work!
- 21 Gil: All right! Let's return from the la-la-la land because that ain't gonna happen! And whether I crawl back to David or get another job, it is obviously that I'm gonna have to spend less time at home. (...) I'm gonna have to have business dinners, I'm gonna have to play racket ball, and I'm gonna have to get guys laid! So, I hope you don't mind if I bring a few prostitutes home because that's what it takes to get anywhere and I'm not getting anywhere! So, whatever happens you'll have to count on less help from me.



22 Karen: Why don't you just say what you're really thinking?

23 Gil: What am I thinking?

24 Karen: That I should have an abortion.

25 Gil: (...) I didn't say that! (...) That's a decision every woman has to make on her own.

26 Karen: Are you running for congress? Don't give me that! I want your opinion about what we should do! Let's pretend it's your decision, Ok? Pretend you're-you're a cave man or you're a father. What do you want me to do?

27 Gil: (...) I want- (...) I want whatever you want.

28 Karen: Oh, I wanna have the baby.

29 Gil: Well, great! Let's have it, then! Let's see how we can screw the fourth one up. Hey, let's have five. Let's have six! Let's have a dozen and pretend they're doughnuts! (...) Really happy about the way things are turning up, aren't you?

30 Karen: No, with the frame of mind you are in, not only I'm not sure we should have another baby. I'm not sure if we should keep the three we've got.

31 Gil: Well, I'm not gonna discuss it. However, I can't right now because I gotta go to the God damn little league. Ten little boys are waiting for me to guide them for the last place! [his the coach of his son's baseball team]

32 Karen: You really have to go?

33 Gil: My whole life is "have to"! [leaves the bedroom]

22 Karen: Why don't you just say what you're really thinking?

23 Gil: What am I thinking?

24 Karen: That I should have an abortion.

25 Gil: (...) I didn't say that! (...) That's a decision every woman has to make on her own.

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31 Gil: Well, I'm not gonna discuss it. However, I can't right now because I gotta go to the God damn little league. Ten little boys are waiting for me to guide them for the last place! [his the coach of his son's baseball team]

32 Karen: You really have to go?

33 Gil: My whole life is "have to"! [leaves the bedroom]

## TRANSCRIPTION (R)

Film: Deadly Intentions

Participants: Sally and Charles

Theme: Charles is a doctor who is trying to get his medical license back. He had lost it because of some wrongdoings he did in the past. Sally, his wife, is doing the dishes when he gets home late at night. He says that he had not been able to could not come earlier because he had to solve some issues at the clinic. But Sally had called the clinic and they had informed her that he had left the clinic at the usual time.

1 Sally: Hi. [washing the dishes]

2 Charles: [no answer]

3 Sally: You're late.

4 Charles: Yes, something came up at the clinic.

5 Sally: I called the clinic. (...) You weren't there. (...) So, I guess this is a good time. We need to talk about this.

6 Charles: (...) About what?

7 Sally: Your behavior?

8 Charles: (...) What about my behavior?

9 Sally: Well, for one thing, Charles what have you got in the trunk of your car that you keep like a secret?

10 Charles: (...) What is this? You've been spying on me? inspector Sally? Is that what we got here?

11 Sally: No, Charles! I'm worried! Now, you're either out somewhere or downstairs locked in your office. What are you doing all this time? (...) Remember you're trying to get your medical license back. You mustn't do anything to jeopardize that!

12 Charles: Now, look at you! You're all upset! (...) Maybe I should bring some tranquilizers home for you! (...) Will that help?

13 Sally: I don't need any tranquilizers!

14 Charles: (...) You know, I'm not at all surprized you're having this emotional backlash right now! (...) Maybe I'd recommend you to a good psychiatrist. (...) That would be a good idea.

15 Sally: (...) Charles! (...) I see something's happening around here. I am worried about you. I'm not crazy!

16 Charles: (...) What things? (...) I-I collect magazines and read books. That's what I do. (...) You watch tv. (...) Well, you don't understand. (...) But it's Ok! It's Ok! You just (...) watch your tv (...) and don't worry about it!

17 Sally: Are you saying that you're better than I? Is that what I'm hearing here?

18 Charles: What-what do you know about AIDS?

19 Sally: What's this? An intelligence test?

20 Charles: Huh! Everybody should know about AIDS these days! (...) Huh! We have a patient at the clinic, Les Goodman. (...) Got AIDS. (...) You know, (...) I can give you three ways that I think the conventional thing about AIDS today is misguided. (...) One: (...) I believe (...) the disease is far more contagious than is generally thought. (...) And two: (...) I believe that women suffer more and (...) experience more pain than men when they have AIDS. (...) Three: (...) I think the virus is - (...) able to exist outside the body much longer (...) and under much adverse conditions that is generally thought.

21 Sally: You'll have to wash your own dishes! I'm through for the day! [leaves the room].

## TRANSCRIPTION (S)

Film: The Fabulous Baker Boys

Participants: Susie and Jack

Theme: Jack and Frank are brothers and play the piano in nightclubs and hotels for a living. To make their shows better, they hire Susie as a vocalist. Susie and Jack begin a love affair, but they finally broke up when Susie tells Jack she is leaving the group.

1 Susie: I told Frank I'm quitting.

2 Jack: (...) Congratulations!

3 Susie: As if from now.

4 Jack: Well, (...) if you need a recommendation you let me know, huh!

5 Susie: Jesus, your cold! You know that? God, you're like a fucking razor blade!

6 Jack: 'Careful or you'll make me think you're getting soft on me.

7 Susie: You don't care about it, do you? About anything!

8 Jack: What do you want from me? Do you want to stay? So, this is what you're looking for? You want to make me get down on my knees and beg you to save The Baker boys [him and Frank] from /?/. Forget it, Sweetheart! We survived for 15 years before you started on this thing. 15 years! Two seconds and you're bawling like a baby! You shouldn't be wearing a dress. You should be wearing a diaper!

9 Susie: Jesus, you and Frank aren't brothers, are you?

10 Jack: Let me tell you something! Over the years they drop like flies in every fucking hotel in this city! We're still here! We could never have a day off in our lives. Frank is an easy target. But he's been doing quite fine.

11 Susie: Yeah! Frank is doing great! He's-huh- got the wife, the kids, a little house in the suburbs. Meanwhile, he's brother is sitting in a shitty apartment, with a sick dog, looking after an orphanage, and a tip on his shoulders, but a belly as big as a caddillac!

12 Jack: Listen to me, princess! We fucked twice! That's it! Except for that you still don't know a shit about me! Got it!

13 Susie: I know one thing. While Frank Baker was sleeping last night, little brother Jack was out dusting off his dreams for a few moments. I was there! [She saw him playing jazz in a bar the night before] I saw it in your face! Oh, you're a shitty! You're a fake! Everytime you walk into a shit show we had, you're selling your yourself on the cheap! I know a lot about that! I bribe myself at the end of the night with some creep and tell myself it didn't matter. And you kid yourself that you got this empty place inside where you can put it all. But you do alone and after all you are as empty!

14 Jack: I didn't know whores were so philosophical!

15 Susie: At least my brother is not my pimp! ... You know I had you pictured for a loser the first time I saw you, but I was wrong! You're worse! (...) You're a coward! [She walks away]

## TRANSCRIPTION (T)

Film: Days of Thunder

Participants: Claire and Cole

Theme: Cole is a racer who had an accident while driving in a racetrack. He goes to the hospital and Claire is the doctor who takes care of him. They get involved, but Cole does not overcome the trauma caused by the accident. He puts in risk his and others lives whenever he gets into a car.

1 Claire: Let me out of the car! (...) Let me out or I'm gonna jump! [opens the door]

2 Cole: Hey! Hey! Hey! [stops the car and she gets out] Claire!  
(...) Wait! I just-

3 Claire: Get away or I'll call the police.

4 Cole: You'll what?

5 Claire: You heard!

6 Cole: Ok! Call the police! But I'm not leaving till  
you talk to me.

7 Claire: [I've nothing to say!

8 Cole: Well, I do! [shouting]

9 Claire: Ok, great! Let's hear it!

10 Cole: [Silently looks at her]

11 Claire: That's it! Fine [ironically]

12 Cole: Just-

13 Claire: You shouldn't be driving a car anyway. Not on the road, not on the racetrack and not on a parking lot! You're selfish! And you're crazy! And you're scared!

14 Cole: I'm not scared.

15 Claire: You are scared to death! You and Rowdy [another racer], you have the same sickness! It's called denial and it's probably gonna kill you both! (...) You wanna control something that is out of control. That's what you said to me, wasn't it? Well, I'll let you know a little secret that almost everybody else in this world automatically knows! Control is an illusion, you infantile egomaniac! Nobody knows what's gonna happen next! (...) Nor in a freeway, nor in an airplane, nor inside of our own bodies! And certainly nor in a racetrack with other infantile egomaniacs! Nobody knows and nobody controls anything! And you've got a glimpse of that and you're scared! You might never have the courage to race anymore. You may never have had it! (...) God, I hate you for this! You son of a bitch! You made me sound like a doctor!

16 Cole: [keeps silent]

[Claire goes away]



## TRANSCRIPTION (U)

Film: Goodbye Supermom

Participants: Nora and Jack

Theme: Nora quits her job and is very depressed when Jack arrives home. He tries to comfort her, but when he gets to know that she does not want to work anymore they start quarrelling.

1 Jack: Nora, calm down! Just get control of yourself! What's wrong with you?

2 Nora: (...) I'm sorry. (...) I'm alright. Honestly! See, I'm in control. (...) New shirt?

3 Jack: Yeah.

4 Nora: It's very nice.

5 Jack: Oh, thanks;

6 Nora: No, honey! I-I-I- huh- I-I think its not actually a-  
 (...) breakdown that I'm having. It's-it's-it's more like  
 a-huh- total mental collapse. I can't do it! I won't!

I can't [crying]

7 Jack: [Calm down, sweetheart! I'm here! Don't worry! Everything  
 is gonna be alright! Please! Please! Shhhh!

8 Nora: [cries louder]

9 Jack: Take it easy! Take it easy! Ok? Fine! See? That's  
 better.

10 Nora: [crying] Jack, honest! I can't!

11 Jack: Ok, Oh, look! We'll work it out together. Just the two of us! I promise!

12 Nora: I cannot go back there! They are puerile and evil!

13 Jack: Well, /that's cooperative style!/  
14 Nora: No, I mean it! I told you so on the telephone!

15 Jack: Nora, just relax! Relax! Look, you know you can always take the Whitefield offer. [Other company where she can work]

16 Nora: Oh, no, no, no! No others! Any of it! Don't you understand this?

17 Jack: Oh, what are you gonna do then?

18 Nora: Be a wife! And a mother! Full time!

19 Jack: [starts laughing]

20 Nora: What are you laughing for?

21 Jack: You-you're not serious!

22 Nora: I am very serious!

23 Jack: You can't be.

24 Nora: Of course I am! Why not?

25 Jack: Oh, but ... Jesus, Nora this is ridiculous! That's why! I mean you're educated! You-you wanted a career! You wanted it all, remember? Well, this is it! This is exactly what it is! Oh, yes! Some days it's boring, it's /?/, but you don't quit! They keep trying! They keep going! you gotta make it happen! You gotta make, do something! That's why! You gotta give meaning, hope!

26 Nora: You sound like a motivational tape!

27 Jack: Well? This is exactly what you wanted! You wanted the equality? This is it! Yeah! This is it! Welcome to life, baby! On its own terms!

28 Nora: Oh, no! Not on its own terms! No! On men's terms! Now, look! Just because you guys have been doing it this way for thousands and thous- I refuse! No, I did not fight for equality! Today, I'm just causing my own little egotistical share of this history blood and stupidity! There are so many things, Jack! You're socks should match! I wanna sew up a botton! Something important! And have another time to be a wife the way I should! Be a comfort and your /?/ too! And the children? I don't know them like I should!

29 Jack: Like Mrs. Petty? [their nextdoor neighbour who has seven kids]

30 Nora: Yes! The children love Mrs. Petty! Do you know that they turn to her more than to me? [Nora's children]

31 Jack: Well, we don't need a wife and a mother! What we need is your paycheck!

32 Nora: (...) My paycheck! [leaves the room shocked]

33 Jack: Nora! Nora! [follows her]

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